

# NEVER MIND<sup>THE</sup> JONESES

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

8 Sessions  
for Couples or Groups



### AL HSU

Based on the book by Tim Stafford

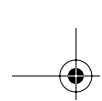


---

InterVarsity Press  
Downers Grove, Illinois

© 2004 by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA. All rights reserved.  
This discussion guide may be copied for use in discussion by couples or small group only.





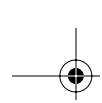
**T**his discussion guide can be used to facilitate a small group or Sunday school class based on Tim Stafford's book *Never Mind the Joneses: Building Core Christian Values in a Way That Fits Your Family*. If members of the group are all reading the book, in addition to the following discussion questions, leaders may also ask questions like, "What parts of this chapter struck you the most? Did you underline or highlight anything that was particularly meaningful to you?" These questions may also be used by individual couples to help each other work through and apply the concepts of the book.



**SESSION 1: FAMILY CULTURE AND VALUES  
(INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTERS 1 & 2)**

1. What does the author mean by the phrase "family culture"? How do you respond to this concept?
2. Some families have a "sports culture," others have a "musical culture." How would you describe the culture of your family of origin? Your spouse's family of origin?
3. How is the family culture for your immediate family like the culture of your families of origin? How is it different?
4. What makes your family different from every other? What is something distinctive about how your family does things?
5. Think about some of your family's habits or ways of doing things.





What underlying values might motivate these family culture patterns?

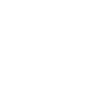
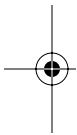
6. What activities or behaviors do you see your children picking up from you?

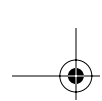
What values might have been transmitted to them from the family culture you have created?

7. What areas of brokenness do you see in your family culture?
8. How have you seen God work in your family despite these broken places?

## **SESSION 2: GOD AND OTHERS (CHAPTERS 3 & 4)**

1. Did your family of origin model ways to put God first? If so, describe what they did. If not, describe things they didn't do that you want to change for your own family.
2. The author describes some parents as being too legalistic and heavy-handed with their faith, and others as being too permissive and hands-off. Which temptation is more likely for your family? What might a more balanced position look like for you?
3. What rituals or activities does your family practice to put God first?
4. Which ideas for putting God first found in chapter three jump out at you as something you'd like to try?
5. What is your family's approach to church involvement? To tithing?





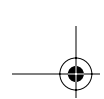
6. What is the relationship between loving God and loving other people? How do activities doing one flow into the other?
7. In what ways does your family show concern for others?
8. What kinds of volunteer service fit the interests and personalities of you and your children?
9. How does your family practice hospitality?
10. When have you seen a family (yours or others) reach out and care for someone outside its usual circles?

**SESSION 3: WORK AND TRUTHFULNESS (CHAPTERS 5 & 6)**



1. Describe your first job. What do you find most memorable about it?
2. What values or lessons did you learn from that job?
3. How did your parents teach you the value of work?
4. Chores, jobs, schoolwork, sports, music and other activities can all contribute to a good work ethic. Which of these are most valued in your family culture? How so?
5. What projects have you worked on together as a whole family?  
What did you learn from the experience?
6. When you were a child, did you ever get caught telling a lie? How did your parents respond?
7. How does your family culture affirm the value of truthfulness?
8. What might a zero-tolerance policy look like for your family?



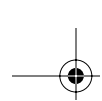


9. Some families are more sarcastic and biting in their humor than others. How might you guard your family against questionable speech?
10. How often do your family members affirm and encourage one another?
11. How else might you cultivate a culture of positive speech and trustworthy words?

**SESSION 4: LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS (CHAPTERS 7 & 8)**

1. Who made up your family when you were growing up?
2. When you were growing up, how close were you to your grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and other relatives?
3. What issues challenge your family's sense of unity and identity?
4. How does your family counteract the forces that pull it in different directions?
5. What mealtime rituals did your family of origin have?
6. How often does your present family eat meals together?
7. What special "family night" kinds of activities, birthday celebrations or family reunions does your family have?
8. How did your family of origin discuss sexual issues?  
How does your family now discuss them?
9. How do you model sexual fidelity? How do your adult relationships help your children see how men and women should relate





to one another and treat each other?

10. Did your parents ever take you on a “date” (p. 111)? What kind of guidance did they give (or not give) you about dating?

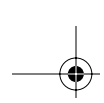
What kind of guidance have you provided for your children in this area?

11. How have you helped your children make wise decisions about movies, fashion, etc.?

**SESSION 5: GENEROSITY AND SUBMISSION (CHAPTERS 9 & 10)**

1. When did you or your children first learn to share?
2. The author says, “I would rather be cheated a hundred times than have a heart of stone” (p. 125). Do you agree? How do you guard against having a heart of stone?
3. What do you do with your children’s finances and/or allowances?
4. How do you encourage them to give to others?
5. What Christmas rituals does your family have that encourage generosity, or how else do you make your possessions or resources available to those who might need them?
6. What did your parents do if you disobeyed them?
7. How do you teach your children to be obedient?
8. How does your family show respect for elders or other authority figures?
9. Teamwork is a form of submission. How have you or your chil-



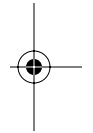


dren experienced submission through team activities?

10. Submission can be understood as knowing your place and serving there with humility. How have you modeled submission at church? At work? Elsewhere?

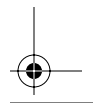
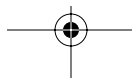
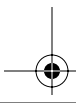
**SESSION 6: BOUNDARIES AND JOY (CHAPTERS 11 & 12)**

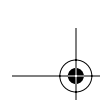
1. When have extended family members or church members infringed on your family's boundaries? How do you set and enforce appropriate boundaries?
2. Why are boundaries important for healthy self-identity?
3. What are some "privacy zones" in your family? (For example, do family members have possessions or areas that are their own space?)
4. What manners or rules of conduct, like "don't interrupt when someone's talking," are understood boundaries in your family?
5. What special rites of passage or transitions does your family celebrate?
6. How often does your family have fun nights? What kinds of things do you do?
7. What is the role of music in your family?
8. How often do your family members affirm and thank one another? What can you do to create a culture of praise and gratitude?



**SESSION 7: REST AND CREATION (CHAPTERS 13 & 14)**

1. How does your family observe the Sabbath? Are there things you





do or don't do?

2. How does your family rest from television or other media? Are there times during each day or week that are set aside for quiet?
3. Describe a memorable family vacation. What did you learn about each other during the trip?
4. Are there things in your family's schedule that should be cut out? What might your life look like without them?
5. Does your family enjoy the outdoors? How do you appreciate God's creation?
6. Some families love dogs or cats; others fill their houses with hippos, ducks or polar bears. (Not real ones!) What are your family's favorite animals? Why?
7. How does your family act as good stewards of the earth and its resources? What do you do to conserve or recycle?
8. Some families don't see care for creation as a core value. How can you make it a key component of Christian discipleship?

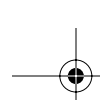


**SESSION 8: CONTENTMENT AND GRACE (CHAPTERS 15 & 16 AND "A FEW FINAL WORDS")**

1. When are you or your children most discontented?
2. What kinds of possessions, events or experiences do you tend to covet?
3. The author suggests that we limit shopping, gifts and TV (pp. 183-84). Why? Which of these might be hardest for you and







your family?

4. What might “simple living” look like for your family?
5. How do spiritual disciplines like fasting, thanksgiving and prayer help cultivate contentment?
6. How does extending grace to one another enhance a family’s culture?
7. When has a grace-full act of forgiveness or reconciliation transformed how your family members treat one another?
8. What can you do to make your family culture a grace-filled environment?
9. Now that you have worked through this whole book, which ideas or suggestions stand out to you as most helpful for your family culture?
10. How is your family different now than it was when you began this study?

