

Engage & Evaluate

You've spent a lot of time with Angela, who is struggling as a mother of three young children. She's exhausted, isolated and convinced she's a bad mum. She's told you of the many times she's lost her temper with her children and said things she regrets. She wants to be a better parent, but she doesn't know how.

When Angela says, "When it's time to make dinner, and the three kids are arguing and whingeing and throwing tantrums, I find myself screaming at them. I tell them I wish they'd leave me alone. I just feel so tired and overwhelmed at that time of day.

Which response do you think will help Angela?

"You should just set some boundaries for the kids and tell them they can't come into the kitchen while you're cooking. You should punish them if they break the rule. You should make sure they know who the boss is."

"Angela, that sounds exhausting and hard. I understand your frustration. What do you think would really help you while you're trying to make dinner?"

Engage Help

Why do we engage other help? Why do we need support?

Because we were created to be in community, not to be alone. Another goal is so that we can serve each other. Seeking out support is vital for our health but it is hard to ask for help for ourselves. The first step is to acknowledge is that we all need to engage help for ourselves. Even if we are going well, we still need help. We can never outgrow the need to be supported. It's also important to know that God-centred transformation – or becoming more like Jesus – is a lifetime task. We will never achieve it on this earth, but we can grow towards this goal.

The Bible speaks in collective language. Think about the 'one another' verses, 'together' verses, the plural 'you' verses. The message in 1 Corinthians 12 is that we're all parts of the body and need to work together. None of us can do it alone.

Another function of engaging support is to enable us to serve others and lead well. We have to be healthy to serve and love. As they say in airplane safety spots, you have to put on your own oxygen mask before you help others. Life is like that, too. We must be healthy and supported so that we can help others.

The Christian challenge is not just to help others, but to love each other sacrificially. It's incredibly difficult to love this way when you are alone and unsupported. Yet this is what we are commanded to do – and to support each other in doing it.



How do we Engage Help?

To the stressed mother, who do you think could help? There are other people in the body of Christ that could be engaged. Who else could help you in supporting her? Asking the person's growth group is a good place to start.

Now is the opportunity to offer help. Ask her if contributing meals would help – you could ask your small group to contribute meals. In this way, you can show the love of God to others. Or you could offer a book that might help her, suggesting: "I've read this book and found it to be helpful, would you like to borrow it?"

Again, choice is key.

What if it's a dangerous situation?

You may need to engage other help as a matter of urgency. Some responses could be: "What do you think about talking to someone about that? I can come with you to the GP or counsellor." Or "How would you feel if I came and looked after your kids while you cooked dinner?" Or "What do you think about telling your pastor about this situation? I can be with you, if you like."

Evaluation

Always keep asking others with a genuine spirit, how are you going? On occasion, you may also want to ask, how are we going? Don't make it a chore but part of your relationships.

Also, ask yourself, how am I going? If I continue to go this way, where will I end up? How am I going in my relationship with God? Am I drifting? Do I need more support?

The key to healthy relationships is to love each other in truth.