



Family Discipleship

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BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS of DISCIPLESHIP

The purpose of discipleship is to foster the spiritual growth of every disciple so they become more Christ-like in every way possible. (Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 1: 2-8; 1 Corinthians 4:15--17) A disciple is someone who knows and follows Christ, is being changed by Christ, and is committed to the mission of Christ. (Matthew 4:19) A disciple maker is a mature follower of Christ who helps a younger disciple, the child, grow toward spiritual maturity. (Colossians 1:28-29) This process is called disciple-making, through which over time, the child develops from a state of spiritual immaturity into a state of spiritual maturity. (Colossians 2:6-7; Ephesians: 4:11-16) Discipleship is a lifetime journey of obedience to Jesus resulting in knowing Him deeply, reflecting Him authentically, and sharing Him intentionally. (2 Timothy 4:6-8; Hebrews 11:39-12:1) We are all called to be disciples of Christ. Spiritual maturity happens at the point in time where a person is able to reproduce the disciple-making process in the life of another individual. (John 20:21; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2)

Principles and Practices of Discipleship

Principle #1: Relational – one life impacting another in an environment of grace and truth. (Mark 3:13-15; John 17:6-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12)

Practice: Build healthy relationships based on, authenticity, transparency, vulnerability and accountability, while engaged in an environment that is accepting, caring, safe, and challenging.

Principle #2: Transformational - there is an expectancy of continuing life change. (Roman 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

Practice: Create learning and practical experiences that promote life change which emulates Christ-likeness in thoughts and words, and in character and conduct.

Principle #3: Missional & Generational: disciples make disciples, reproducing multi-generations of Christ followers. (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2)

Practice: Teach and model the importance of spiritual multiplication as God's means of expanding His kingdom.

Principle #4: Biblical – a reasoned understanding of the truth of scripture and living it out daily. (John 14: 15, 23; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Timothy 2:15)

Practice: There is always an open Bible between the disciple-maker and his or her disciple.

Principle #5: Gospel-Centered – disciples are made and matured by the Gospel. (Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 1:3)

Practice: Enable and encourage a disciple to never stop learning, relating to, and communicating the gospel.

THE FOUNDATIONS of FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

The Biblical Mission of the Family

In the beginning, God created man. His name was Adam, and God gave him authority over every living creature. This man was made in the image of God, mirroring back characteristics of God. He created man to “know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him.”¹ Furthermore, to glorify him, “we enjoy him, love him, trust him and obey his will and law.”² And God looked at Adam and saw that he was alone, so he created Eve, bringing into existence the first family.

Marriage was designed and instituted by God between one man and one woman. They were commanded to “be fruitful and multiply,” and their children were to live under the authority and leadership of their parents (Genesis 1:28). Throughout the Bible, God clearly explains and expands upon the role of each member of the family.

When sin came into the world and disrupted earthly order and perfection, the family was separated from God. God promised to restore humankind to himself through the coming of a Savior (Genesis 3:15). Through the coming of Jesus, we received the ability to accept the gift of salvation and to be restored to the family of God. Romans 8 tells us that when we receive salvation, we receive the spirit of adoption. God becomes our father. Marriage and family is meant to be a picture of God’s love for us, the restoration God has brought us to by adopting us into his family. This is a spiritual family, created through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

The purpose of humankind and the family did not change with the existence of sin. The mission still was, and remains today, to bring glory to God through enjoyment, love, and obedience of him.

Your family exists with this same mission. Your family is meant to be a place that models our relationship with God and impacts the world for Christ. We are meant to be committed to our families and to share with them authentic love and care. We are meant to trust our families. Our families are meant to be life-giving to the world around us and to those in our family. We are designed to build one another up and serve one another.

¹ “Question 4.” *The New City Catechism: 52 Questions and Answers for Our Hearts and Minds*, by Kathy Keller, Crossway, 2017, pp. 22–23.

² “Question 6.” *The New City Catechism: 52 Questions and Answers for Our Hearts and Minds*, by Kathy Keller, Crossway, 2017, pp. 26–27.

Parents, the Church & Discipleship of Children

While your family exists to model relationship with God and impact the world for Christ, the church also exists as models of relationships with God and global impact. Our vision as a church is for every person, together, following Jesus, engaged where we live and involved around the world. This is based on the Biblical model of the church we see in the New Testament.

We know this to be true, that the church is the Bride of Christ, and that he is the Bridegroom. As such, the church exists to be devoted to God. This is described in Acts 2:42-47. The first church was devoted in the following areas: the apostles' teaching (the Word of God), fellowship (authentic community with believers), to the breaking of bread and to prayer. On a smaller scale, the marriage and the family are meant to follow this same example. As a family, you should be devoted to spending time in the Word, to fellowship with each other, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Through these combined avenues, your children will be discipled and brought up with a truth and grace filled understanding of the Gospel. The church exists to support your role as parents to disciple your child. It does not fulfill the goal of doing so on its own. Primary responsibility of your child's spiritual instruction falls to the family. And the importance of this is vital.

We see a great example of this in Judges 2:8-15. Only a few generations removed from the great works of God in leading the Israelites out of Egypt, we see a generation who did not know the Lord or walk with Him. This is a result of parents and spiritual leaders failing to take the time to lead and to guide children to an understanding of God's plan for them or for the importance of walking through life in pursuance of Him. We guide because we want them to learn to have a personal relationship with Jesus that is not reliant on others doing the work for them and spoon feeding them, but in which they are the ones reading the Word, pursuing fellowship with other believers, and having an authentic relationship with God.

So what role should the church play in the discipleship of your family? Ephesians 4:11-16 states, "11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried

about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

The church is called to come alongside, support, equip, and encourage parents to be the primary disciple makers in their homes. The goal then is that each family would make it their responsibility to create and sustain gospel-centered homes that thrive in grace, truth, love, and teamwork. We have structured our ministries to support you in the best way possible, offering resources, participating in teaching your children through instruction and by example, serving as both listening ears and wise counsel, and with topical events that strive to train you and spur you on toward discipling your children.

THE VALUES of FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Values of Family Discipleship

- ◆ Show and Tell
- ◆ Creating Opportunities
- ◆ Spiritual Landmarks

In all of these values, we want you to know first and foremost that God's love for you is not based on your wins or losses as a parents. We have all had those days where we lay in bed at night, feeling regret over the way we handled or didn't handle situations or conversations with our kids. But God's love for us is centered in Jesus, who never fails. His strength is made visible and perfect in our weakness. And His grace abounds.

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

2 Corinthians 9:8

Show and Tell

Show and Tell is the process through which, in Family Discipleship, the parents (disciple-makers) serve their family by acting as a godly example. You do this by living as a disciple yourself and by practicing authenticity in your walk with God. Know that you are called to disciple your children, but before you can be a disciple-maker, you must be a disciple.

Creating Opportunities

When you commit to discipling your family, you commit to shifting priorities. While not all things about your schedule or demands at work are within your control, learn to set boundaries over those things. Your priority shifts to creating opportunities for Family Discipleship. There are some very practical places that you encounter daily that have natural room for intentional conversations.

Practical Places for Creating Opportunities:

- **Meal Time:** Meal times provide an opportunity for you to ask your children about their highs and lows from the day. What was the best thing that happened today? What was the worst thing that happened today?
- **Bedtime:** Include some or all of the following in your bedtime routine: a story from the Jesus Storybook Bible and prayer. As you send your children off to bed or tuck them in, speak an encouraging word as the last thing you say to them for the day, telling them what you appreciate about them from that day.
- **Prayer Time:** see calendar
- **Car Ride Time:** Some questions to ask during car ride time:
 - Highs and lows, (Best and worst thing about the day?)
 - How can/did you share Jesus' love with someone today?
 - What made you feel confident today?
- **Sunday Celebration:** We encourage you to make regular attendance a priority, showing and telling your children that we are instructed to be a part of the Body of Christ, which is the church, and that we each have an important role to fulfill

in that body (1 Corinthians 12). While at church, make sure your children have the opportunity to see you worship, take notes, open your Bible, and serving in some capacity.

Other Ideas for Creating Opportunity

What are some things you can do to intentionally create opportunities where you can disciple your family? Maybe some of these are already a part of your life as a family, but that time could use a focus shift.

- **Family Night:** Watch something together that would allow you to start a conversation about Gospel themes: heroism, good vs. evil, sacrifice, friendship, redemption. Or, while you play a game together, encourage one another by telling each other ways you see God in their lives, how they live out virtues of the Fruit of the Spirit, and/or things that you admire about each other.
- **Family Bible Study/Devotions:** Pick a study/devotions from our list of resources to work through together.
- **Mission Projects:** Find a mission partner project to work on together. This could mean participating in donating items, Christmas shopping or wrapping with Help Give Hope, or any number of ways to give back to our community. Discuss how God asks us to love and care for others and how doing so can give us opportunities to talk to others about Jesus.
- **One-on-One Time:** Spend one-on-one time with your children, choosing an activity to do that is special to your child. This should be a time where that child receives intentional and complete attention from you. You can also be intentional about giving your child a note in their lunch box. In addition, Dads can grab times with sons and Moms with daughters to train them up in Biblical masculinity or femininity.

Resources for Creating Opportunities

- DISCOVER Box
- The Jesus Storybook Bible
- Right Now Media (Gain free access through fbclife.org)
- The New City Catechism

Weekly Calendar Ideas

As you plan your own discipleship calendar, here are some ideas of what you can include:

	Morning	Daytime	Dinner	Bedtime
Sun	Attend church. Serve. Discuss what was learned at church. What is their main takeaway? What goal should they set with that in mind?			
Mon	Discuss: How do you want to see the gospel lived out today?	Include a note in your child's lunch, or send your child a text with a prayer for them or an encouraging word.	Discuss highs/lowes of the day. What was the best thing that happened? The worst thing?	Read a devotional and the Bible together. Pray.
Tues	Discuss: What can we do today to show Jesus to others?	Include a note in your child's lunch, or send your child a text with a prayer for them or an encouraging word.	Discuss: What made you feel confident today?	Read a devotional and the Bible together. Pray.
Wed	Discuss: Do you remember what you learned about on Sunday? How can we apply that today?	Include a note in your child's lunch, or send your child a text with a prayer for them or an encouraging word.	Tell your children and spouse one thing you really appreciate or admire about them.	Read a devotional and the Bible together. Pray.
Thurs	Discuss: What act of kindness can you do for someone today?	Include a note in your child's lunch, or send your child a text with a prayer for them or an encouraging word.	Discuss highs/lowes of the day. What was the best thing that happened? The worst thing?	Read a devotional and the Bible together. Pray.
Fri	Pray together.	Include a note in your child's lunch, or send your child a text with a prayer for them or an encouraging word.	Discuss one thing you learned about Jesus this week or one thing Jesus helped you with.	Read a devotional and the Bible together. Pray.
Sat	Plan a family day. Fun together. Serve somewhere together.			

Spiritual Landmarks

Spiritual landmarks are points in time, which can be different for each person, in which a significant event takes place in a person's lifetime walk with the Lord. For your children, it is important to bring both significance and honor to these landmarks, just as you mark birthdays and other holidays. This sets the example of prioritizing spiritual growth and evaluating that growth. Identify as a family what you can do to make each event special and memorable.

Examples of Spiritual Landmarks:

- **Child Dedication:** this is an important moment where you dedicate your child to God and where the church publicly commits to supporting in your role of discipling your child.
- **First Bible:** as your child grows, it is important to gift them with age appropriate Bibles and to draw attention to the significance of continuously learning how to study the Bible.
- **First Study Bible:** When your child reaches middle school age is a fantastic time to gift them with their first study Bible. This is a point in time where your child will start learning that their faith is their own.
- **Salvation:** the most significant moment in your child's walk with the Lord is the moment they recognize that they are sinful and in need of a Savior, calling on Jesus to forgive them of their sins and to commit to following Him.
- **Baptism:** following salvation, your child is called to take their faith public, acknowledging before the Body of Christ that they have accepted Jesus as their Savior. This is an important moment of following Jesus by faith and giving public testimony to their faith.
- **Missions/serving with family:** find a serving project that is important to your family and work on it together, teaching your children about God's call to us to serve.
- **Communion:** After your child has accepted Jesus, explaining communion and taking communion together at church is a great next step and significant moment.
- **Rites of Passage:** Biblical manhood/womanhood conversations and studies.

Healthy Discipling Relationships

In all relationships we need to live by grace. This means that we need to rest in God's grace when we fail, and extend grace to others when they fail. It can be easy to become discouraged when discipling others. You're entering a path that is not easy, and there will be pushback and struggles. So how can you continue to take steps forward when you feel like you're going backward?

- 1) Seek and rest in truth.
- 2) Seek restoration of relationship.
- 3) Seek answers.

SEEK AND REST IN TRUTH

When we say truth, we aren't talking about the whole "my truth" vs. "your truth" debacle. We are talking about THE TRUTH, which is what God says about anything, and it is found in the Word of God. The enemy thrives on and works to destroy others through lies. It started with a lie in the garden, which led Eve and Adam to sin, hurtling the rest of humanity into a broken relationship with God that could only be restored through Jesus. The issue with these lies that Satan tells, are that they aren't always blatantly obvious. This is because most of the time, these lies are half truths, disguised behind veils of familiarity and designed to be easily bought into and believed because they prey on our weaknesses.

From the beginning of time, Satan has been preying on the family. Family and marriage are designed by God to reflect his goodness and his love. Naturally, Satan is against this, and he will work to feed lies to you as you commit to discipling your family, because he does not want you to succeed. Due to this, it is vitally important that you spend time seeking Truth. Spend time in God's Word and in his presence. Rest in your identity in Christ.

Below are Scriptural References that assure us of our identity in Christ. Go through each verse and write out the truth that each says about who you are in Christ.

Ephesians 1:4	I am _____
Ephesians 1:7-8	I am _____
Ephesians 2:19	I am _____
Romans 8:17	I am _____
Colossians 2:9-10	I am _____

Colossians 3:3	I am _____
Colossians 3:12	I am _____
1 Peter 2:9-10	I am _____
2 Corinthians 3:18	I am _____
2 Corinthians 5:17	I am _____

SEEK RESTORATION OF RELATIONSHIP

Being open and transparent about our failures and sin can build trust, but more than that, it demonstrates the true repentance that is a part of our walk with Christ. Not only does admitting to your failures break down barriers of pride and hurt between you and others, but you are literally discipling your kids through the act of repentance.

When your spouse or children fail, extend grace to them. Forgive them when they repent. And seek restoration and peace so that your family can be unified.

SEEK ANSWERS

It is important to evaluate your health as a family. Here are some questions you can ask:

Self-Eval:

- 1) Have you reminded yourself of who you are in Christ?
- 2) Where do you need to build confidence?
- 3) Of what do you need to repent?

Marriage-Eval:

- 1) Are you intentionally taking time to invest in your spouse?
- 2) Have you spoken an encouraging word to your spouse? What do you most admire/appreciate about them?

Family-Eval:

- 1) Is there something at the center of your home other than the gospel?
- 2) What do I prioritize? What does my family see me putting most of my time and effort into? *(Consider asking your spouse or your children this question as well.)*

What are they seeing you prioritize?)

- 3) How can you share stories of God's faithfulness to your family?
- 4) When was the last time you demonstrated repentance? Has your family ever heard you admit to a mistake, ask for forgiveness, and place effort into turning the other way?

Parenting-Eval:

- 1) Have you spoken a specific encouraging word to your children today?
- 2) Have you given more affirmations than corrections?

An Encouraging Word:

Parenting is one of the hardest, if not the hardest, jobs out there. You will fail, multiple times a day. And you will see success and growth. Know this: God is the one who does the heart work in your family. He is the one who is working to redeem and restore. Your goal is to open the door and allow space for Him to move. Allow him to use you, and trust in him as he works. God is a good father who loves his children, and you are one of them.

Creating Common Language

In Kidslife we have found that there are words we use every day in the life of the church that can be easy to skim over, not realizing that children are not fully comprehending us because they are not understanding the words we are using. In 2018, we began to make a list of these words and define them on Sunday mornings with definitions that place them in the Biblical context in which we are using them.

Bless/Blessing: to ask God's favor, to grant someone with a specific quality, to praise

Confess: to admit to sin

Disciple: a follower of Jesus

Faith: belief or trust

Faithfulness: loyalty, keeping of promises

Gospel: "the good news" of God's plan and work to restore us to Him

Grace: the free gift of forgiveness and favor with God

Holy: perfect, completely clean

Holy Spirit: God's spirit that lives in us from the time of salvation

Mission: an important assignment/job given to us by God; a goal given to us by God

Praise: to admire, celebrate, cheer, compliment

Prophet: a messenger, a person bringing a message from God to other people

Prophecy: a message from God

Redeem: to buy back

Restore: to bring back, to return

Recreate: to make new

Repent: forgiveness followed by change, to turn around

Reverence: recognition of God's greatness and holiness, to be in awe of God

Righteousness: right living that follows God's expectations and instructions

Salvation: to be rescued from sin and death

Sin: anything we do, think, or say that goes against God, the condition of our heart, we are all slaves to sin

Sovereign: to rule over all, all things are in God's control

Temptation: wanting to do something that is wrong, to be lured or led toward sin

Wisdom: using what we know in a correct way, thoughts aligned with God's truth

Worship: to bow down to God, to recognize how awesome he is and respond

Topical Scriptural Index

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 - Ephesians 4:26-27
- Complaining:
 - Philippians 2:14-16
- Encouragement:
 - Hebrews 3:13
- Fear/Courage:
 - Jeremiah 17:7
 - Hebrews 13:6
 - Psalm 56:3
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 - Psalm 68:3
 - Luke 10:20
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