

Fellowship's Children and Youth Vision and Philosophy

Fellowship's Mission Statement:

"Joining God's Mission, to disciple all peoples, for the sake of His Name."

God is about the business of making His name great by drawing unto Himself worshipers of every tribe, people and nation. God has charged His Church to join Him in that mission by making disciples.

Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Key Building Blocks

- 1. Every true believer must think of himself or herself as a disciple of Jesus.** Discipleship is not a "second step" in Christianity as if one first becomes a believer in Jesus and then, if he chooses, a disciple. In the book of Acts the word "disciple" was the usual word for all believers in Christ (6:1-2, 7; 9:1, 10, 19, 26-31; 11:26). All who profess to be believers in Jesus should embrace the truth that discipleship pertains to them. Owing this truth is a key step is seeing one's self as a disciple and in becoming the disciple God wants them to be. The bottom line is to believe in Jesus is to follow Jesus as His disciple.
- 2. Discipleship is not a distinct category or activity, but a synonym for Christian living.** Discipleship is not one of many activities or ministries of the church. Making disciples is our primary mission (See also Colossians 3:5-17). Everything in the church must be viewed through the lens of making disciples. Every ministry must be a discipling ministry.
- 3. The Gospel is the essential tool needed for making disciples.** The Gospel is not just for unbelievers it also empowers those who already believe to live a life of following Jesus (Romans 1:16). God never intended his followers to "move on" from the Gospel after conversion, but rather to grow deeper into the Gospel as a disciple.
- 4. There is no discipleship without community.** Spiritual growth occurs in the context of the body of Christ. God's appointed arena for making disciples is the church. The weekly gathering of the church is the starting point and the hub in making disciples in the local church.
- 5. Following Jesus includes following Jesus in His mission.** Jesus made it clear that His call to follow Him as a disciple had a purpose – a mission – His mission (Mark 1:17; Luke 4:16-21,43); Acts 1:3; John 20:21). A disciple of Jesus is a person with a mission.
- 6. Discipleship begins with the next generation.** The task to disciple the nations begins with the discipleship of our own children (Mark 19:13-15; Acts 2:39). We must create an environment where parents are given all support possible in raising their children to follow Jesus.

Vision for Fellowship's Discipleship of Children & Youth Vision Passage:

Psalm 78:2-7 (Msg)

"I'm chewing on the morsel of a proverb; I'll let you in on the sweet old truths, [3] Stories we heard from our fathers, counsel we learned at our mother's knee.

KEY VERSE...

[4] We're not keeping this to ourselves, we're passing it along to the next generation— God's fame and fortune, the marvelous things he has done.

[5] He planted a witness in Jacob, set his Word firmly in Israel,
Then commanded our parents to teach it to their children

[6] So the next generation would know, and all the generations to come— Know the truth and tell the stories so their children [7] can trust in God, Never forget the works of God but keep his commands to the letter."

Vision / Purpose Statement:

Discipling the next generation to know God, trust God and obey God for the fame of His name.

What do we want to see in our ministry to children and youth now?

- Teaching that is Bible focused and God-centered.
- Teaching that is theologically deep and systematic.
- Teaching that is incremental, building biblical truths as children mature, and is application-oriented.
- Teaching that includes a practical understanding of biblical manhood and womanhood.
- Teachers who are in love with Jesus, love children and youth and love to teach and lead them.
- Teachers who present the Gospel clearly and compellingly.
- Teachers who teach to reach the heart of their students.
- Teachers who model the life of a disciple of Jesus by living out what they are teaching.
- Teachers who pray with and for their students.
- Students challenged to systematically memorize the Bible.
- Programs that partner with parents, not replace parents in discipleship.
- A mission-orientation where students are taught and challenged to be involved in God's heart for the nations.
- Students being taught and challenged to pray.
- Students being taught how to win non-believers to Christ and to disciple them.
- Students encouraged to use their God-given gifts and talents in the body of Christ.
- Parents who are being taught the biblical functions of fatherhood and motherhood.

What do we want to see our children become 20 years from now?

- Adults who are in love with Jesus Christ.
- Adults who possess a biblical worldview and can read their Bible from a God-centered perspective
- Adults who are living their lives for the glory of God with a God-centered orientation to all of life.
- Adults who are Bible-saturated, possessing a thorough understanding of God's Word and who are rejecting worldly values and are living with biblical values.

- Adults who understand the sovereignty of God and whose faith won't crumble when they face adversity, heartache and persecution.
- Adults who can correctly handle the Bible.
- Adults who are involved in discipling the nations.
- Adults who are extravagant givers of their God-given resources for the kingdom of God.
- Adults who say, "My parents were the greatest spiritual influences in my life".
- Other:

The Responsibility of Parents Towards Their Children

The two primary needs that children have from their parents are:

1. Children need to be taught. The Bible consistently and explicitly lays upon parents the primary responsibility for teaching and modeling God's truths to children. It is crucial that there be a clear understanding of the primary role parents have in the training of children, so that the biblical responsibility given to parents is not ignored and laid on the church (Deuteronomy 6:5-7; 11:18-21; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4).
2. Children need to be disciplined. Children not only need to be taught, they need to be disciplined. The Bible teaches that children are neither naturally good or wise. "Folly" is in their heart. Parents therefore have the responsibility to discipline their children in the Lord (Ecc. 12:1; Proverbs 22:15; 29:15, 17). Parental discipline should be rooted in love. Failure to discipline children is a failure to love children (Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; See also Hebrews 12:5-11).

Teaching and discipline, while commanded in the Scriptures, does not guarantee that our children will commit themselves to Christ. Children have wills of their own and can walk in either obedience or rebellion (Matt. 10:21). Parents must teach, but children must grow in their own faith. Proper teaching, discipline and modeling will encourage them to consider seriously the claims of Christ on their lives, but only God can draw them to Himself.

The Church's Role

Parents exert the most significant influence on their children. Since the Bible consistently and explicitly lays the primary responsibility for teaching children on their parents, the efforts of the church should strengthen, confirm and reinforce what parents are teaching. Parents should not abdicate their God-given role in favor of church programming, nor should the church take parental authority away from them in any way. When children are entrusted into the care of the church, we will seek to provide faith-nurturing programs that will fit their needs and will support home-based training.

Sunday morning classes are Fellowship's primary vehicle for imparting Biblical truth to children. Other programs or activities may also be implemented to provide positive learning and ministry experiences which will complement the Sunday morning experience and the teaching received at home.

Necessary elements of ministry to parents and children (based on Deuteronomy 6:2-18):

1. God is central in all parenting and teaching.
All teaching should be characterized by the centrality of God. God is the goal of our teaching.
 - Deut. 6:2a (NASB) "So that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments..."
 - Deut. 6:4-5 (NASB) "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! [5] "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."
2. God is the source of our teaching.
 - Deut. 6:17-18a (NASB)
"You should diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. [18] "And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord..."
3. God should be the main character in our teaching.
 - Deut. 6:22-23a (NASB) "Moreover, the Lord showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; [23] and He brought us out from there..."
 - Young disciples must be helped to recognize in concrete ways how God relates to absolutely everything in life. We must help them see that God's ultimate purpose in everything is His glory.
4. Children must learn to love and fear the Lord.
 - Deut. 6:2a (NASB) "So that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments..."
 - Deut. 6:4-5 (NASB) "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! [5] "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

The church and the home provide an environment where God often does His saving work in the heart of children. Our obedience to God and our faithfulness as parents does not ultimately save our children from wrath, but it is very often the means by which God saves our children. In a similar way, our disobedience and unfaithfulness as parents does not necessarily condemn our children, but is often the means by which our children are led to destruction. God has ordained that parents bear the responsibility of acquainting their children with the Word of God and the life of faith. Our success in this endeavor matters more to Him than it does to us, and He has made all the resources of heaven available to us. Our greatest challenge is to teach our children to fear and love God in the fullest sense of those words. Our children can know all about God. They can know endless Bible stories, and even have vast portions of Scriptures memorized yet not honor God or have fellowship with Him.

When we teach children we must aim for their hearts as well as their heads. We must choose programming and curricula that best assists us in this aim. But even with the best programming and curriculum in place several key elements must also be in place:

- a. Parents and teachers must love God and love His Word. It is almost impossible to teach something you have not experienced. Children will not be excited about God unless those that are teaching them are excited about God. God will not be real to them if He is not real to us. Therefore, parents and teachers must be diligent in keeping their own hearts alive for the sake of the children.
- b. A healthy love and fear of God is more easily cultivated in children that have a healthy love for and fear of their parents. It is very difficult for children to learn to honor God if they defy their parents and resist their authority. It is very difficult to nurture a reverence for God and humility before Him when children are permitted to treat parents and adults in general with disrespect. As a church we must be earnest in our efforts to help our people be courageous parents. The permissiveness that is encouraged and taught in our culture not only makes life miserable for those who have to be with our children but can lead our children to destruction.
Proverbs 19:18 (NLT) "Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin their lives."
- c. We can model, teach and discipline in a way which encourages the heart to respond but only the Holy Spirit can effectually change the heart of the child. Therefore, priority must be given to prayer, interceding for children and their parents.

Three Ways to Impart a Fear of God and Love for Him and His Word (based on Deut. 6:4-9):

1.) Formal teaching – “teach them diligently...”

Children need purposeful, intentional, formal instruction in the Word of God. If we use a “hit or miss” approach to teaching the Bible, there will be gaps in their knowledge. This will limit their faith in God or there will be a misunderstanding of God because of an incomplete picture of who He is. This mandates that we strive for an accurate, God-centered, complete, formal curriculum which acquaints young disciples with the whole counsel of God. In essence, children need a theology. They need doctrine. They need to know the Word of God intimately. Children likewise need to memorize Scripture.

2.) Informal teaching – “and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

Parents and teachers who love God and His Word will naturally speak of the Word in connection with ordinary circumstances. The key ingredients are a love of the Word and a “teachable moment”. This requires spending time with our children. Both quality and quantity of time are essential in informal teaching. Families must have seasons of un-frenzied time to work and play together.

For our church, children must be woven into the fabric of church life. They must be included in our activities – not always, but often. They must be allowed to minister alongside their parents and other adults. They must be encouraged to discover their gifts and be treated as members of a team (1 Corinthians 12:12-26).

3.) Modeling – “And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

When we love God with our whole heart and soul and might, and His words are in our hearts, our whole lives are permeated with Him and His Word becomes part of us. We all benefit

from the example of someone more mature in the faith than ourselves. Children and youth should be given the opportunity to learn from more mature believers. This begins in the home. At church, curriculum should be designed to expose our children to the great Biblical, historical and contemporary role models of the faith. We must strive to involve mature leaders with our children and youth; leaders who have a mature understanding of God and a mature faith in Him.

Goals of Fellowship's Ministry to Parents and Children

1. Prayer as a foundation
2. Equipping parents and strengthening families
3. Inspiration of Fathers
4. Trust God to raise up and empower gifted teachers and helpers for ministry to children
5. Careful selection of curriculum

Curriculum employed in our ministry to parents and children should have the following characteristics:

- A. Bible focused - the Bible should be the primary text, not just one source that the curriculum is based on. The curriculum must lead children to the Word of God and teach them to handle the Word of God correctly. Bibles should be seen as an essential tool that every child will need.
 - B. God-centeredness – God should be seen as the center of the Bible – not people. He should be exalted and celebrated.
 - C. Depth and Theology – Children can handle deep truth even at a young age. Children should be taught solid biblical truth that will give them a foundation to fall back on when they go through deep waters, yet done so in a child-friendly manner.
 - D. Incremental – Truth presented on a simple level in the preschool years should be reinforced and expanded at primary levels and so on. As children grow older they should dig deeper and their scope of understanding should be widened. Curriculum should be taught sequentially with a clear scope and sequence.
 - E. Application-oriented – We want truth to be clearly understood by the children, explained through illustrations, and reinforced as children look up Scripture passages, discover God's truth and respond as God leads.
 - F. Partnering with Parents – Curriculum that recognizes the parent's responsibility to their children and provides resources for children to take home that connects parents with their children in the learning process.
6. Emphasis on Bible memory
 7. Assisting children in coming to faith in Jesus Christ
 8. Provide wholesome activities and models of godliness who will faithfully call them away from conforming to the world.
 9. Weaving children into the life of the church
 10. Foster a love for and service to those outside the family of faith
 11. Structure that includes both large group and small group elements for maximum interaction between adult leaders and students.
 12. Missions education included in our Sunday morning programming.

References:

[What is Discipleship?](#) by Stephen Smallman

[A Vision for Ministry to Children and Their Parents](#) by David and Sally Michael