

Biblical Discipleship Through The Home

Life has changed dramatically for me over the last year. I went from just being a husband who worked seven days a week in the oilfield, to being Jenifer's husband, Ella's father, and a full-time minister. Stepping into the roles of father and pastor have made this year the most eye-opening time of my life. I now see things in a whole new light. I have new fears, concerns, responsibilities, and desires that I've never had before. The Lord has opened my eyes to see the great responsibility He has placed on parents to disciple their children in the midst of juggling family life, work, and the surprises we face each day. I believe the Lord is molding and stretching me to better minister to my family.

As I have studied this area of family discipleship, God has placed a great burden on my heart for the families of our church. He has transformed the way I see life and believe He has called me to come alongside other families to help in the discipleship of their children. My greatest desire is to see Christ glorified in our church body by parents who love and live for Jesus and then teach their children to do the same.

In saying this, please do not think I feel that I have all the answers. I do not. But what I do have are strong convictions based on what God has revealed to us in His word. As I have studied, He has shown me the high calling we have as parents. Let me explain...

The High Calling

As we read through the Scriptures, we clearly see that the greatest responsibility that Christian parents have is to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. There is no greater privilege than for a parent to help their child know who their God is. Parents are called by God to tell their children about all His words, works, and glories. Teaching our children to fully trust in their Creator is a far greater responsibility than teaching them to ride a bike, hit a ball, or color between the lines.

If we are honest, however, most of us have placed the discipleship of our children on the back burner (or taken it completely off of the stove). There is a strong pressure from our culture to be our children's friend, give them a good education, and help them achieve their dreams. This pressure has led many of us to fold under the weight of society and just go with the flow. This is dangerous because, as parents, we are always teaching our children. Whether through words or actions, we are always teaching.

If we use all the time God has given us with our children to pursue perishing vanities such as sports, entertainment, and school activities, we are teaching our children that these things are the most important part of life. If we do this, we sabotage the very purpose for which our children were created. These passing joys pale in comparison to knowing Christ. Now, please do not hear us saying that we need to get rid of all of the activities we just mentioned. Playing t-ball, dancing, or participating in a spelling bee are not evil things necessarily, but they can become evil if they become our priority. The primary priority for both us and our children should be to honor God in all things.

God has graciously given us numerous passages of Scripture to help us understand the responsibility He has placed upon us as parents (especially the father) for the raising and teaching of our children. To help you even further, God has provided pastors of our local congregation to equip the saints (you) for the work of service to build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). As the Family Pastor of Graham Bible Church, my calling is to come alongside you to equip and encourage you in the discipling of your children for the glory of God. To get started, please prayerfully read the following Scriptures:

Biblical Passages Regarding Family Discipleship

(Deuteronomy 6:1-25, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:1-4)

Deuteronomy 6:1-25

God longed to give His people the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis). They, however, became enslaved in Egypt and knew nothing but hardship (Exodus). God delivered His people from Egypt and led them to the Promised Land but, rather than rejoicing, they rejected God and said they would not go in (Numbers). God punished that generation by allowing them to wander for forty years in the desert because of their unbelief. After that generation died off, He promised the children of the previous generation He would take them into the Promised Land.

The book of Deuteronomy tells of the preparation for the new generation to inherit God's blessed land. He gave them His law again so that they would know who He was and what He required of them. In Deut. 6: 4-9, God instructed the new generation to obey all He had commanded them. The previous generation (the parents) did not honor the Lord, keep His commands, or teach them to their children. They hardened their heart against the Lord and grumbled against His provision and the leadership He had placed before them. This is a close parallel of what is happening currently in the church.

Many Christian parents are not honoring the Lord with their lives, and they also are not teaching the next generation (their children) what the Lord has done, is doing, and will do. We have a tendency to focus on the trivial and transient things of this world, causing us to miss the forest because of the trees. In the passage of Deut. 6, God is laying out for the children what the parents should have taught them previously, and He is calling them not to make the same mistake. This instruction applies to us as well.

In v.4-5, Moses calls the children to acknowledge that there is only one God and that He is the Lord. They are called to love Him with all of their life (heart, soul, and might.) He tells them that these words should first consume them (be on their heart) and also that they should **diligently teach** them to their children. God gives them, in v.7, the frequency that they should be taught to the children in order to not make the same mistake as their parents. *"When you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."* How often should we be speaking about the Lord to our children? Constantly. God also called them, in v.8, to make visible reminders of His commands by binding them on their hands and heads and also writing them on the gate to their homes.

We should be saturating our children and ourselves with the words and works of God so that we/they may put our/their hope in the everlasting Savior. The discipling of our children is a difficult task, but that does not negate our responsibility before the Lord to be good stewards of what He has entrusted to us. We should be creative and intentional in all situations, taking full advantage of telling our children of the glories and works of God.

Psalm 78:1-8

In this passage, Asaph gives a charge to God's people to teach their children all of what God has done through the history of the deliverance of Israel. He recounts the history and failures of those who do not obey His commands and the grim consequences in the history of Israel. In v. 1-4, they are called to tell their children of the works and wonders of the Lord to bring Him praise. In v.5-8, God commands **the fathers** to teach their children so that the generation to come might know God's works and faithfulness. This help is held out even to the children yet to be born, so that they too may arise and tell their children to put their confidence in God and not forget His works. They are called to keep His commandments and not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation that did not prepare its heart or be faithful to God.

I want to encourage you brothers and sisters so that we may not be like the past unfaithful generations. Let us, instead, declare to our children the glory of God in the face of Christ. I hope that we will produce multi-generational faithfulness in the teaching of the glories of God, from parents to their children and grandchildren that the next generations may know their God. In the same way Asaph used the history of Israel to prove the faithfulness of God, we should tell our children how faithful God has been to us over the course of our walk with Him, even when we have been unfaithful. We should take any and every opportunity to give God the glory He deserves and to show our children that we serve an awesome God.

Ephesians 5:22 - 6:1-4

The apostle Paul, in writing his letter to the church in Ephesus, laid out clearly how the Christian family should operate in their relationships. God has placed the man (father) as head over his home. He is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (sacrificially) and give himself up for her, and the wife is to be subject to her husband in all things and to show him respect. God has partnered the two together for the raising of children and put the primary responsibility on the father as the teacher within the home, and the mother is to assist in the teaching of their children.

Children are called by God to obey their parents in the Lord, so that it may be well with them and that they may live long upon the earth. After having already addressed the husband/father in relation to their wives, Paul tells them not to provoke their children to anger but instead to raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The Lord has entrusted the fathers with a huge responsibility to steward His children. I want to encourage you fathers - let's take our biblical mandate seriously, let's prepare our children to stand before their maker. Let us lay aside the entanglements of this world and pursue with passion the God who is worthy of our praise.

So...Now What?

If you are like me, the concept of discipling your children sounds easy on paper, but when you read those passages, understand the weight of responsibility, and then try to implement it into everyday life, things can be confusing and difficult. We are not alone. Many parents don't disciple their children, not because they don't want to, but because they don't know how.

Implementing discipleship into our homes is much like training for a marathon. We would not start training for a marathon by running the full 26+ miles everyday of training especially if we've not been running previously! In the same way, it is illogical if you have not been doing biblical discipleship in your home to start with reading your Bible and discussing it for 2 hours a day, 7 days a week. I would encourage you to start with baby steps and gradually build on them. Start with praying with your family at meals and before bed. Explain to your children why you pray and that it is the life blood of the Christian faith. Then, try reading a short Bible passage before prayer and take a moment to explain what it means. For example...

Matt 6:25-27, 33 "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?... But seek first His kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

Explain that God takes care of us because He is our heavenly father and He loves us. We do not have to be worried about food and clothing because, if He provides even for the least of His creation, He will also provide for us. He tells us that worrying about these things will not benefit us in any way but, instead, we should seek Him and His kingdom and He will provide what we need.

Pray and thank God for providing your house, job, clothes, food, toys, etc. for He is a good father and gracious to His children. Teach them to be thankful for these things and that they are gifts from God.

Recommended Resources for Family Discipleship

There are many resources available to help you and your family grow in your walk with Christ. Some of the most profitable resources for parents to use in family discipleship are catechisms. A catechism is a set of questions and answers that help to teach truths about God. Many catechisms have proof texts beneath the answers to show where you can find them in the scriptures. Working through a catechism is a wonderful way to start family discipleship. Some catechisms are broken into sections consisting of fifty-two lessons - one for each week of the year - and others are divided into topics or themes. By reading and memorizing one lesson per week as a family, you can grow in your knowledge of God together.

- *Westminster Catechism & The Heidelberg Catechism* (both can be found in modern English)
- *Catechisms for children* (www.reformed.org)
- *Truth and Grace Memory Book* – T. Ascol

(There are some answers in the catechisms we may not fully agree with, but that does not take away from the value of the overall work.)

There are countless other resources available to share together as a family. Two of the most useful are:

- *Jesus Story Bible* – Sally Lloyd Jones
- *The Child's Story Bible* – Catherine Vos

Recommended Books for Parents

- *Family Driven Faith* – Voddie Bauchum
- *Shepherding a Child's Heart* – Tedd Trip (also available on DVD series)
- *Say Please, Say Thank You* – D. McCullough
- *The Duties of Parents* – J.C. Ryle
- *Family Man, Family Leader* – P. Lancaster
- *For Instruction in Righteousness* – P. Foster
- *Creative Family Times* – Hadidian & Wilson

GBC has also purchased Nest Family Resources animated gospel DVDs that teach through numerous Old Testament and New Testament Bible passages and stories. Each DVD has a quiz at the end to review and reaffirm what the scriptures teach in that video. Most children enjoy watching TV so, instead of watching regular movies or cartoons, you could watch these DVDs with your children and use them as a discipleship tool to teach your children the glories of Christ.

I desire to help you in any way possible to disciple your children to the glory of God. I will help you find whatever resources you choose to use for the training of your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. May Jesus be glorified in our lives and in the lives of our children, and may the Lamb receive the full reward for His suffering.

Your brother in Christ,

Reagan Kelley

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