

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

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PA BIBLE
TEACHING FELLOWSHIP

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ESV - *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, 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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

What is family discipleship and why is it important?

Family discipleship is leading your home by doing whatever you can whenever you can to help your family become followers of Jesus Christ. Family discipleship is the critically important and mostly ordinary spiritual leadership of your home - it is also an often thankless one that demands much perseverance and grace - and is one of the most important things you will do with your life!

1. **This isn't optional** - it's required of Christian parents as followers of Christ to be disciple-makers in our house.
2. **You have been commissioned and equipped by God to lead your family.** No matter your family situation or your background, families need to be led in their discipleship to Christ, and you are the ones to do it.
3. **You are making disciples, one way or another.** We will be modeling something for our family – the question is not whether we are disciple makers, the question is what are we discipling them in.
4. **Family discipleship demystified.**
5. **The primary place where faith is transferred is in our homes.** The primary purpose of the home is evangelization and discipleship of your children. You are making eternal deposits in your children, for their faith and for their (eternal) life.

"God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls..." - Martin Luther

Family discipleship is both "when you sit in your house," and "when you walk by the way."

- This will take dedicated, set aside time to "sit in your house" and systematically (intentionally) make eternal deposits in your children's heart by teaching them the gospel of Christ.
- And it will be "when you walk by the way," in the day-to-day rhythms of life.

Here we stand...

Josh 24:15 - But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

- Joshua's epic and courageous stand at the end of his life shows just how much emphasis God puts on leading our families in humble worship of God.
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Workshop Goal: to equip you and your family for the work of discipleship, to help your children grow up in every way in Christ. The biggest success of this workshop will be if **every family here prayerfully meets together and crafts a plan to provide a framework for their children's maturity in Christ.**

Scriptural Foundations for Discipling in the Family

- A core principle of the Christian life is making disciples (the great commission, **Matthew 28:16-20**). As followers, disciples of Christ, we must disciple and we cannot be a Christian family if we are not a disciple-making family, as that is what Christ has commanded.
- **Colossians 1:28-29** we are to present everyone mature in Christ, exerting every effort through the grace of Christ within us.
 - We plant the seeds of truth, water them, and we trust God above our shortcomings. Family discipleship requires reliance upon God.
- **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** consider the truth of the oneness of God - His complete exclusivity and consequently the necessity of our honoring His decrees, desires, and character with everything we've got, first living in our own hearts and then flowing out in everything we do (**Colossians 3:15-17**)
- There is no child or family that is a hopeless case. **Isaiah 59:1** Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear.
- **Proverbs 22:6** Training up a child in godliness is giving them a gift for their entire life, of all the paths available to take, we endeavor to give them the clarity of the path of life for them to walk upon.
- **Ephesians 6:4** Father's nurturing/nourishing (same word in **Eph 5:29**) your children in the discipline (the paideia of the lord - shaping and forming his or her desires, passions, and loves - narrative through which every one of us views everything) (consider **Heb 12:5**) and instruction (admonition) of the lord.

Failure to disciple is a great harm to the child, to God's people, and to God's kingdom (Eli and his sons in **1 Samuel 2, 1 Samuel 3:13**)

Building a Strong Foundation

How the Bible shows the importance of families

Genesis 1:28 - "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"

- A man and a woman would form a "one-flesh" union through marriage (**Genesis 2:24**), and they with their children become a family, the essential building block of human society, and ultimately the unit where faith is transferred.

Two of the ten commandments relate directly to families – parenting and marriage – honor your father and mother and do not commit adultery. The rest of the commandments demonstrate the values that are to characterize God's holy people in their households and society: respect towards the life and property of others; truthfulness; and contentment (**Exodus 20:13–17**).

Families are the primary vehicle through which these distinct values—right worship and right relationships—are passed on from one generation to the next.

The Importance of the Parental Role

- Beauty of God's design in the impressionableness of children
- Being a "student" of your child – learn what they need to grow.

- God invites us into His work, into how He saves and raises a child to know Him
- As in all our efforts, we cannot do this apart from God (**Psalm 127**) nor apart from the life source He provides in Christ (**John 15:4-5**).
- This role, while supported and equipped by the church, cannot be outsourced. The importance of the parental role sits as the primary way the gospel is transferred into young lives and hearts.

The Importance of Personal Devotion

Luke 6:45 ESV - 45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

- We desire to love, serve, teach, instruct, and disciple our children **not out of rote duty or obligation**, but rather out of the **abundance of the fruit of the gospel** that has transformed our lives and continues to transform us day by day.
- Consider your personal rhythm of spiritual devotion and discipline. In what ways can I grow or continue to prioritize these daily parts of the Christian life? (*Not exhaustive list!*)
 - Personal Bible study
 - Prayer (together and individually)
 - Corporate discipleship and worship (Church)
 - Rest
 - Giving and generosity
 - Evangelism
 - Repentance and seeking forgiveness
 - Hospitality

The Importance of a Healthy Marriage

Ephesians 5:22-27 ESV - 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

- Marriage is your most important human relationship – it is to be prioritized above all others.
- One of the best ways you can love your children well is by loving your spouse well!
 - “Gospel relationship in 3D” - show a love that isn’t based on performance or merit, a love that is unconditional, forgives easily, shows grace. That’s one of the best ways to model maturity and lead your family well.
- Christ-centered marriage: love like Christ, submit like the church; the standard of Christ in all interactions; bear fruit to the glory of God through Christ.

The Ordinary Means of Family Discipleship

Remember Deuteronomy 6: teach it when you “sit down” and when you “rise up”

- Both “caught and taught”
- Highlighting and bringing increased awareness to incorporating this into each unique family

- Awareness of how the family of God provides the structure and support for family discipleship - many mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers

Ordinary ways we communicate the gospel of Christ:

- **Conversation** - bring this up while you're in the car, at the dinner table, going for a walk, etc. Ask them open-ended questions.
- **Consistency** - not just a one-time conversation. You keep bringing the gospel up.
 - "What did you learn at the middles' teaching today?" "I don't know."
- **Clarity** - revisit often to make sure these concepts are really clicking.

Discipleship in Light of the Church

- Discipleship doesn't happen apart from a church community
 - The organizational nature of the church exists to help the organic expressions of the church family flourish.
 - One of the best ways to reinforce family discipleship is to be a part of a healthy church, to align your family within the teaching of that church, and to be thoughtful about ways to reinforce what the church is teaching your kids.
- In the New Testament, a family is often referred to as a "household." (Often used as the Greek word *oikos*.) Not simply referring to two parents and children – it could be several generations, aunts/uncles, cousins, or even non-blood relatives that live in close proximity.
 - How can each member of the household of God help support the work of discipleship, recount God's goodness and power, testify of his faithfulness and diligently raise up future generations to do the same?
 - What about those who come into our church who are the "spiritual orphans"? Many heard the gospel through our families – others heard it from a pastor, from a camp counselor, or a Sunday school teacher.

Modeling Maturity in Our Families

Observing your daily, ordinary basic Christian life with God following Christ will have one of the most significant impacts upon your child's life. Your attitudes and actions will be far reaching into the depths of your child's heart. I

John 2:6 ESV - whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

- Have genuineness in your walk with God, and be quick to demonstrate true repentance when you fall short of the glory of God. This is your foundation for being 1) reliable, and 2) relatable.
- Being **reliable** (trustworthy, righteous, and repentant) and **relatable** (being genuine and letting your life be seen)
 - If there is something that you would like to see formed in your children, pray that it would be formed in you to model for them.
 - The importance of modeling genuine repentance.
 - In being relatable, give the rare gift of your full attention (looking and listening).
- **Importance of family days at PA Bible**
- **Modeling love toward our children:** We obey God because we love Him. We do not obey Him to earn His love. Likewise, we are to love our children better than they deserve with a love that is not dependent on how closely they've met our standards.

Sharing your life with your children means that they will see your many shortcomings. In modeling godly repentance, take heed not to wallow in failure nor run toward worldly affirmations to soothe yourself.

Philippians 3:12-14 ESV - Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Being relatable includes being genuine and letting your life be seen. Consider the manner of Paul in Thessalonica:

I Thessalonians 2:7-8 ESV - But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

Philippians 2:3-5 ESV - Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

Modeling prayer: Praying with, for, and in front of your children are all important aspects of family discipleship. Consider the ACTS model of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

- Join in prayer for the 6 pillars at PA Bible:
 1. The Faithful Proclamation of the Word of God
 2. The Growth of our Existing Church Body
 3. For Others to Rise in Commitment and Service
 4. For the Word of God to Carry to the Next Generation
 5. For Outreach to the Community with the Gospel
 6. For God to be Glorified

Making Time, Milestones, and Being Intentional

Structuring Family Time

Setting structure and intentionality – without letting the plan take precedence over the people!

- Setting regular times for family devotion and worship
- Incorporating church attendance and community involvement
- Being sustainable doesn't necessarily mean adding things to your daily routine. Rather family discipleship needs to be woven into all of it, thereby becoming the fabric of your ordinary Christian life and a sustainable rhythm.
 - Reprioritizing family discipleship may involve reevaluating how you're spending your time
 - You can repurpose (give greater purpose to) your existing family times.

Ephesians 5:15-17 ESV - Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Recognizing and Celebrating Milestones

Exodus 12:24-27 ESV - 24 You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. 25 And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. 26

And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' 27 you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

- God has wired us to be people that remember. Stories connect us, shape us, and show our values.
 - Examples: rainbow for Noah, festivals and holy days, the stones of remembrance in Joshua, the Ebenezer in 1 Samuel, the Last Supper/Communion, etc. - These are all examples of how God gave his people something to remind them of his faithfulness and mercy

One of the evidences that not all is well in our hearts is what we choose to forget.

Milestones: Making and Marking

- *Making and marking*
 - **Making** - creating significant milestones to commemorate, celebrate, or commend spiritual growth
 - **Marking** - Appreciating God and his work as you live life and recognize it with your family
- Milestones - cause us to remember God's faithfulness to all generations
 - Examples of this now are diverse as there are life experiences in unique families
 - Dedications, birthdays, anniversaries, memorable "firsts" (first day of school, first car, etc.), graduations from youth ministry, days that are special to your family, etc.

Goal: transferring your faith via milestones as your greatest family inheritance.

- *How can everyday moments and milestones be seen from the lens of Christian discipleship? What regular rhythms of life (birthdays, holidays, special occasions) can be marked and made to remember God's goodness in our lives?*

Intentionality in Daily Life

- Seizing everyday moments for spiritual lessons
- Being present and engaged with children's spiritual development
- Communicate clearly the reasons why you're doing what you're doing. Give clarity to the values you're pursuing as a family.

Some questions to help guide your family discipleship plan

- If I asked your child what is most important to their parents, what would be on their list?
- List some things you would like to see reproduced and repeated from your own childhood in your family's upbringing. Then list what you would like to see redeemed/changed for the better.
- What characteristics do you want to see nurtured and grown in your child? How can you model those characteristics better, and how can you provide ways for your child to have opportunities to grow in those areas?
- Where are the times in your weekly schedule that are most conducive to family gathering and gospel sharing? What are the most challenging times of the week for your family to grow together?
- What milestones in our family can be marked or made for worshipping God? (Think: birthday, anniversaries, "firsts," family vacations, important or special occasions.)
- Think about ways to use prayer calendars (see attached) as daily reminders for prayer and petition for our family. This helps us use Biblical language in our prayers.
- How can you better set aside time for 1:1 with your child? Think about ways to foster a strong relationship with your family in these times: play a special game, "interview" them about what they love, write them a "bless note," etc.
- If you are married, what are simple steps to take to ensure your marriage is Christ-centered and full of prayer, Bible, devotion, service, and quality time together?

Remember, the aim and goal is raising families that worship God and are mature followers of Christ. There is no such thing as a "perfect plan," – it will need constant prayer, wisdom, and recalibration. **Start simply, and simply start!**