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EQUIPPING PARENTS AT WESTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH,
ALABASTER, ALABAMA TO DISCIPLE THEIR
TEENAGERS FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

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EQUIPPING PARENTS AT WESTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH,
ALABASTER, ALABAMA TO DISCIPLE THEIR
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PREFACE

It is my prayer that this project will be completed by the grace of God, for the good of his church and the glory of his name. He has transformed my heart and life by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and I pray that all of my life, including my academic endeavors, will be used to make him look beautiful and majestic.

My number one fan and encourager is my wife, Kristy. She is my best friend in all the land and a gracious gift from God. Her faithful encouragement and support has enabled me to work toward the completion of this project. Kristy does me good all the days of her life, and she is far more precious than jewels (Prov 31:10-31). God has blessed us with four incredible sons: Noah, Adoniram, Asa, and Nathan. They are precious gifts from God whom I love and of whom I am proud. I thank God that I have the honor of being their daddy (Ps 127:3-5). I pray that they will be dangerous for the Kingdom and that God will make his name great in and through their lives. I want to also express my love and appreciation to my parents, Doug and Sharon Bruce, who have championed me throughout my life (Prov 23:24-25).

I have had the privilege of serving and loving two local churches over the past twelve years: Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, and Westwood Baptist Church in Alabaster, Alabama. I praise and thank God that he has given me the privilege of serving these two churches. The people of these two churches believe the Bible, take the Gospel seriously, and want the nations to know and treasure Christ above

all things. May God continue to use these churches to shine the light of Jesus to the nations and their neighbors.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Through my masters and doctoral studies, I have grown to love Jesus more; to think more biblically; to teach and preach more accurately; and to lead more faithfully. God has used Southern Seminary to change my life, and I am grateful.

Six faculty members in particular at Southern Seminary have shaped my thinking, prepared me to be more effective in ministry, and assisted me in the completion of this project. Dr. Albert Mohler, Dr. Russell Moore, Dr. Randy Stinson, Dr. Michael Wilder, Dr. Troy Temple, and Dr. Wes Feltner have been instrumental in my growth and effectiveness as a Christ-follower, husband, father, pastor, and student. I am grateful for the influences they have leveraged to make me more faithful.

My hope is that God will use this project in the lives of families to make disciples of all nations, beginning in their homes. The psalm writer, Asaph, says to tell “the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done . . . so that they should set their hope in God” (Ps 78:4,7). May God continue to raise up husbands, wives, fathers, and mothers who love the Gospel and will teach their children and grandchildren what it means to follow Christ.

Kenneth Preston Bruce

Alabaster, Alabama
May 2016

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of the project was to equip parents to disciple their teenagers for life after high school at Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster, Alabama.

Goals

Three goals dictated the effectiveness of the project. The first goal was to survey 42 parents who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old. The purpose of this goal was to discover what parents did to invest in the spiritual formation of their teenager; how Westwood equipped them to disciple their teenager; and to discern the current spiritual condition of their college-age child. This goal was measured by the “Survey of Parents Whose Children Are Between the Ages of 18 to 24 Years of Age” (appendix 1) given to parents who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old. The purpose of this survey was to discover the parent’s perception of the current spiritual status of their college-age child, the discipleship strategies they implemented at home when their college-age child was a teenager, and the role Westwood played in equipping them to disciple their teenager.

This goal was deemed successful when the 42 surveys were completed and analyzed. The surveys provided insight on the current spiritual status of the college-age

child, the discipleship strategies used at home during the teenage years, and the role Westwood played in their child's spiritual formation through the teenage years.

The second goal was to develop a biblically-based curriculum to equip parents to disciple their teenagers. This curriculum instructed parents on the Bible's command to disciple their teenagers and taught parents how to disciple their teenagers utilizing "faith talks." The curriculum was informed by the responses of the completed surveys of the parents who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old.

The curriculum was validated by an expert panel of church leaders, comprised of Westwood's Executive Staff. This panel used "The Executive Staff Curriculum Rubric" (appendix 5) to review the curriculum for biblical foundation, theological accuracy, and practical application to parents of teenagers at Westwood. The approved curriculum was used to teach the "Parents of Teenagers" class comprised of eight families. This goal was deemed successful when the Executive Staff evaluated and approved the curriculum to be used to equip parents to disciple their teenagers.

The third goal was to equip parents to implement a discipleship strategy in their home by teaching a "Parents of Teenagers" class. Throughout the "Parents of Teenagers" class the parents discovered the biblical mandate to disciple their children and received training them to lead a "faith talk" with their teenagers. This goal was measured by the "Pre-project Family Discipleship Survey" (appendix 8) and was given to parents before the class began to test their knowledge of the Bible's teaching on family discipleship and their confidence in leading a "faith talk" with their teenagers. The "Post-Project Family Discipleship Survey" (appendix 9) was distributed at the conclusion of the "Parents of Teenagers" class to measure each participant's growth in biblical knowledge and

confidence to lead a “faith talk” with their teenagers. The third goal was deemed successful because a t-test for dependent samples determined that there was a positive statistically significant increase between the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” scores (appendix 8) and the “Post-project Family Discipleship Survey” scores (appendix 9).

Ministry Context

Westwood Baptist Church has a rich history of mission, vision, and passion for the Great Commission. The church’s mission statement is to “multiply disciples who live on mission.” The church proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ both locally and globally and has many strengths, which make it a viable kingdom outpost. However, one glaring weakness of the church is that historically it has not done a sufficient job training parents how to disciple their teenagers. Westwood’s failure to adequately equip parents has led to a poor retention rate of high school graduates transitioning to the college ministry; a failure to assimilate these students into the church as a whole; and heartbreakingly, seeing some of these students walk away from the Christian faith altogether.¹

Scripture is clear. God has ordained parents, and fathers in particular, to lead

¹ “Retention rate” refers to the transition of teenagers from the student ministry to the college ministry, the assimilation of teenagers into the larger church culture, and the allegiance of teenagers to the Christian faith. It is estimated that over the past four years, 100 teenagers have graduated from high school who also attended Westwood Baptist Church. Many of these students after graduating from high school do not connect to the college ministry and stop attending worship gatherings; some cease displaying evidences of a relationship with Christ. The challenge before Westwood Baptist Church is to encourage and equip parents of teenagers and the church as a whole to help teenagers stay connected with the church, but more importantly, walk faithfully with Jesus.

their families spiritually. Parents are to be the primary disciple-makers of their children² and teenagers.³ Unfortunately, Christian parents, particularly those at Westwood, appear to have little knowledge of that responsibility. Even for those who do understand the need to invest in the spiritual life of their teenagers, many do not know what it looks like or how it can be accomplished. In the context of Westwood, the parents of teenagers have not received formal and intentional training on how to disciple their teenagers. Therefore, many parents have not been discipling their teen; either because they did not know they should or because they did not know how.

Historically, the student ministry at Westwood has not made any effort to be intentional in teaching, equipping, or training parents to disciple their teenagers and points them toward Christ. Although there have been parent meetings and letters sent home to inform families of upcoming events and activities, there has never been an intentional effort to equip mothers and fathers to teach their teenagers about Christ or the Scriptures. Furthermore, the leadership at Westwood has done little to equip parents how to lead a “faith talk” with their teenager. The church’s lack of a strategy to equip parents to disciple their teenagers is a glaring weakness I have observed after serving at Westwood for the past three years.

² Gen 19:18; Deut 6:1-9; Prov 1-7; Ps 78:1-8; Eph 6:4; Col 3:21; 2 Tim 1:5, 3:14-17.

³ The word “teenager” is never used in the Bible. The word “teenager” first appeared in the magazine *Popular Science* in 1941 and was used to describe the demographic grouping of those who are between the ages of thirteen and nineteen; see Philip Graham, *The End of Adolescence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 25-43. However, teenagers can be considered children in the Bible because they are under the authority, rule, and care of their parents. Therefore, throughout chaps. 1-5, the word “teenager” is synonymous for the word “children,” as it unfolds from the biblical texts.

The lack of training and equipping of parents has certainly played a role in the alarmingly low retention rate of post-high school students at Westwood. Although the college ministry is staffed with competent and faithful volunteer leaders, it has been a challenge transitioning graduating seniors to the college ministry. Unfortunately, it is common for students who have been consistent in their attendance to a small group throughout their high school career to no longer seek connection with a small group comprised of other college-age students, some of whom were their high school peers.

More importantly, as small group and church attendance among college students is dropping, there is a perceived decrease in their commitment to Christ. Many of these students were at one time consistent in their attendance to church activities such as small group Bible studies, Wednesday night worship gatherings, and student ministry fellowship events.⁴ However, as they graduate from high school, the students slowly fade away from attending and participating in church activities and worship gatherings. Sadly, these students have not only stopped coming to college ministry activities and church gatherings, they no longer maintain a walk with Jesus when they go to college. For the church to fulfill its mission to “multiply disciples who live on mission,” there is an urgency to reduce the large number of post-high school students walking away from the college ministry, the church, and the Christian faith during the college years.

Rationale of the Project

Parents at Westwood desperately need to be trained and equipped to disciple their teenagers for life after high school. It is imperative for the church to respond to the

⁴ Though a college student’s commitment to Christ does not equate church attendance, a regular gathering with God’s people is a mark of spiritual health (see Heb 10:25).

amount of college-age students walking away from the college ministry, their church, and their faith in Christ. Westwood has a biblical responsibility to equip parents to disciple their teenagers and help them continue to follow Christ after high school graduation.

This project was implemented as an intentional first step to equip parents to disciple their teenagers and to help them continue to follow Christ after high school.

The aim of this project was to equip parents by teaching them the biblical mandate to disciple their children and training them how to lead a “faith talk” with their teenagers. Parents of teenagers at Westwood learned this through a “Parents of Teenagers” class. This training course provided a means for parents to become equipped and trained in how to raise their teenagers to follow Christ. As mothers and fathers learn how to disciple their teenagers, it may lead to a higher retention rate of graduating seniors transitioning to the college ministry, a better assimilation of teenagers into the larger church context, and a lifelong commitment to Christ.

Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The following definitions explain and clarify key words that the writer used in the project:

Discipleship. In his book *Family Ministry Field Guide*, Timothy Paul Jones defines *discipleship* as “a personal and intentional process in which one or more Christians guide unbelievers or less-mature believers to embrace and apply the gospel in every part of their lives. Discipleship is a process that includes personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ, as he has been revealed to us in Scripture. Discipleship involves

developing perspectives and practices that reflect the mind of Christ.”⁵

Family equipping. Jay Strother describes *family equipping* as a model of “churches [who] retain some age-organized ministries but restructure the congregation to partner with parents at every level of ministry so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable for the discipleship of their children.”⁶

Faith talk. Timothy Paul Jones defines *faith talk* as “designated time, at least once per week, for the household to gather for prayer and to study a biblical truth together. This household gathering may include not only parents and children, but also other individuals who have been invited to share this time with the family.”⁷

Family ministry. Timothy Paul Jones defines *family ministry* as “the process of intentionally and persistently coordinating a ministry’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives.”⁸

Patriarchal. *The Holman Bible Dictionary* states, “the word patriarch comes from a combination of the Latin word part, ‘father,’ and the Greek verb archo, ‘to rule.’ A patriarch is thus a ruling ancestor who may have been the founding father of a family, a

⁵ Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 17.

⁶ Jay Strother, “Family-Equipping Ministry: Church and Home as Cochampions”, in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2009), 144.

⁷ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 154.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

clan, or a nation.”⁹

One of the limitations of this project was the 15-week length of time allowed in this project to disciple parents. Faithfully and effectively equipping parents to disciple their teenagers requires consistency, diligence, and accountability that cannot be realized in such a limited time frame. Therefore, future training courses providing parents with further instruction on how to disciple their teenagers will be vital for long-term impact. Furthermore, additional training courses are needed to equip the maximum amount of parents possible.

The delimitation of this project was that the “Parents of Teenagers” class training was applied and available to the parents of sixth through twelfth graders who are members of Westwood.

Research Methodology

Three goals dictated the effectiveness of the ministry project. The purpose of the project was to equip parents to disciple their teenagers for life after high school at Westwood Baptist Church.

Goal 1

The first goal was to survey 42 parents who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old. Westwood has seen high school graduates disengage from the college ministry, the church, and the faith that they held onto as a teenager. The purpose of this goal was to discover what parents did to invest in the spiritual formation

⁹ *Holman Bible Dictionary*, ed. Trent C. Butler (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 1077.

of their teenager; how Westwood equipped them to disciple their teenager; and to discern the current spiritual condition of their college-age child.

This goal was measured by the “Survey of Parents Whose Students Are Between the Ages of 18 to 24 Years of Age” (appendix 1) given to parents who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old. The purpose of this survey was to discover the parent’s perception of the current spiritual status of their college-age child, the discipleship strategies they implemented at home when their college-age child was a teenager, and the role Westwood played in equipping them to disciple their child when they were a teenager.

The survey consisted of 20 multiple choice questions and two short-answer essay questions based upon the spiritual practices of the parents and the role Westwood played when their college-age child was a teenager. The survey was given to parents after morning worship services for two consecutive weeks. The parents’ identities remained anonymous to encourage honesty and transparency in their responses. The parents returned the survey promptly upon completion.

This first goal was deemed successful when the 42 surveys were completed and analyzed. The surveys provided insight on the current spiritual status of the college-age child, the discipleship strategies used at home during the teenage years, and the role Westwood played in their child’s spiritual formation through the teenage years.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a biblically-based curriculum to equip parents to disciple their teenagers. This curriculum instructed parents on the Bible’s command to disciple their teenagers and taught parents how to disciple their teenagers utilizing a

“faith talk.” The curriculum was also informed by the responses of the completed surveys of the parents who have college-age children between 18 to 24 years of age.

The curriculum was validated by an expert panel of church leaders, comprised of Westwood’s Executive Staff. This panel used “The Executive Staff Curriculum Rubric” (appendix 5) to review the curriculum for biblical foundation, theological accuracy, and practical application to parents of teenagers at Westwood. The approved curriculum was used to teach the “Parents of Teenagers” class comprised of eight families. This goal was deemed successful when the Executive Staff evaluated and approved the curriculum to be used to equip parents to disciple their teenagers.

Goal 3

The third goal was to equip parents to implement a discipleship strategy with their teenagers by teaching a “Parents of Teenagers” class. The “Parents of Teenagers” class equipped the parents by teaching the biblical mandate to disciple their children and training them how to lead a “faith talk” with their teenagers. This goal was measured by the “Pre-project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) and was given to parents before the class began to test their knowledge of the Bible’s teaching on family discipleship and their confidence in leading a “faith talk” with their teenagers. The “Post-Project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) was distributed at the conclusion of the “Parents of Teenagers” class to measure each participant’s growth in biblical knowledge and confidence to lead a “faith talk” with their teenagers.

The third goal was deemed successful because a t-test for dependent samples determined that there was a positive statistically significant increase between the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” scores (appendix 8) and the “Post-project Family

Discipleship Survey” scores (appendix 9).

During the six-week class, fathers led a five-minute “faith talk” for other parents in the class, followed by a five-minute debriefing on the effectiveness of the teaching using the “Role-play” rubric (appendix 4). The parent’s “faith talk” was graded on three competencies: biblical accuracy, practical application, and engagement of the learner. The “faith talk” was deemed successful if the participant demonstrated a competency in leading a “faith talk” by scoring 80 percent or higher based upon the grading rubric.

A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) and the “Post-project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9). Mendenhall and Beaver define t-test as a test that examines the rejection or acceptance of “the null hypothesis . . . based on information contained in a sample drawn from the population of interest.”¹⁰ The p-value would be considered high if the result was greater than 0.05, thus accepting the null hypothesis. Therefore, the t-test in this project measured the difference in means between the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) taken before the “Parents of Teenagers” class and the “Post-project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) taken at the end of the “Parents of Teenagers” class.

The data sets for the “Pre-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) and the “Post-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) were entered into two columns in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The sets of collected data in both columns were compared through the t-test function on the spreadsheet. The p-value representing the result of the t-test was 0.00117496, therefore, leading to a rejection of the null hypothesis.

¹⁰ William Mendenhall and Robert Beaver, *Introduction to Probability and Statistics*, 9th ed. (Belmont, CA: Duxbury Press, 1994), 309.

The third goal was deemed successful because there was a statistically significant relationship between the “Pre-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) scores and the “Post-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) scores.

This project took place over the course of a 15-week period. Weeks 1 through 3 consisted of surveying 42 parents who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old. During weeks 4 and 5 the curriculum was written for the approval of the Executive Staff of Westwood. Week 6 entailed recruiting and enlisting parents from 8 family units who would participate in the six-week “Parents of Teenagers” class. During week 7 the Executive Staff at Westwood approved the curriculum to be used for the “Parents of Teenagers” class. Week 8 required printing surveys, contacting families, and reviewing curriculum in preparation for the “Parents of Teenagers” class. The six-week “Parents of Teenagers” class to equip parents to disciple their teenagers began in week 9 and concluded in week 14. Week 15 demanded a post-teaching analysis of the “Parents of Teenagers” class.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR PARENTS AS PRIMARY DISCIPLE-MAKERS OF THEIR TEENAGERS

The biblical paradigm for discipleship begins in the home with parents. The Scriptures urge parents to invest in the spiritual development of their children by intentionally teaching what God has revealed through his word. Though it has many references to passing the faith on to future generations, the Bible places responsibility primarily upon mothers and fathers to teach their children to love God and to keep his commandments. This chapter will address the biblical and theological foundations for parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their teenagers.

Within this chapter, passages from both the Old and New Testaments will be explored to help grasp the weight of responsibility that God has given to fathers and mothers to pass the faith on to the next generation. Each of these passages addresses family discipleship from different perspectives, backgrounds, and contexts; however, all of them place the responsibility of the discipleship of children primarily upon parents.

For some parents, the responsibility of teaching their children how to love and obey God seems overwhelming. Yet, as one grabs hold of the truths within these texts, they will discover how God uses ordinary mothers and fathers to teach his commands to future generations.

Genesis 18:19

The book of Genesis begins with God creating the world. He spoke into existence the heavens and the earth, plants, animals, water, land, and the cosmos. The crowning achievement of God's creation was the making of the first people, Adam and Eve (Gen 1:1-2:24). Their disobedience to God's command brought calamity and death into the world, but immediately God revealed and initiated his plan to restore what was broken through the fall of man (Gen 3:6-7, 15-19). After Adam and Eve sinned, God dismissed them from the Garden (Gen 3:23-24). The rest of the book of Genesis displays the tragedy of sin and its consequences as a result of the disobedience of our first parents.

From the Fall to Abram

The first several chapters of Genesis address the devastation sin has on the earth, including the first murder between Cain and Abel, the increase of evil and corruption throughout the earth, God's judgment of evil through a worldwide flood and his preservation of mankind through Noah, the pride of man to build a tower to the heavens, and God's confusing the languages of the people.¹ Yet, in the midst of the wide-spread devastation of sin, one reads of God's faithfulness through a covenant he made with Abram.²

God Covenants With Abram

God called Abram to leave his country and go to a land he would show him (Gen 12:1). God then made a covenant with Abram, promising to make him a father of many nations (Gen 12:2-3, 17:4-5). Indeed, the Lord promised Abram that his offspring would

¹ Gen 4:1-16, 6:1-7, 6:8-10:32, 11:1-6, 11:7-9.

² Gen 12:1-7; 15:1-11; 17:1-14, 16, 19, 21.

outnumber the stars in the sky (Gen 15:5). In the New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Victor P. Hamilton asks, “Why will Abraham’s influence be so enormous and worldwide? The simple explanation is that God has *covenanted with Abraham*.”³ God identified Abram and his offspring as the conduit through whom the whole earth would be blessed.

After God made his covenant with Abram that his offspring would outnumber the stars in the sky, Abram went outside of God’s design. Rather than having a son through his wife Sarai, Abram went into her Egyptian servant, Hagar (Gen 16:1-4). Hagar gave birth to a son named Ishmael, yet the Lord’s promise would not come through him, but through another son (Gen 16:15, 17:18-20). In Genesis 17, God changed Abram and Sarai’s names to Abraham and Sarah (Gen 17:5, 15). Abraham obeyed God’s command to circumcise every male in his household as a sign of the covenant God made with him (Gen 17:1-14). God renewed his promise to Abraham that a son would be born to Sarah, and she eventually gave birth when she was ninety years old and Abraham 100 years old (Gen 17:16-17, 19).

God Commands Abraham to Lead His Children and Household

In Genesis 18, Abraham encountered three men who were on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:1-3, 16). After Abraham, Sarah, and their servants fed the men cakes, meat, curds, and milk, the men gave Abraham a message from God about his son to be born (Gen 18:4-15). The Lord said through these men in Genesis 18:17-19,

³ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 18.

Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.⁴

Before the Lord revealed to Abraham his plan to destroy the two cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, God reminded Abraham of what he was to do as the recipient of the covenant and the leader of his family. Gordon J. Wenham writes, “If the ground of election was God’s promise, its fuller purpose is now stated for the first time: to create a God-fearing community.”⁵ The Lord told Abraham to lead his children and his household to “keep the way of the Lord” because all of the nations would be blessed through him.

God chose Abraham to be the recipient of the promise and God would make his name great amongst the nations through Abraham’s offspring. Therefore, God told Abraham he was to command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord. Victor Hamilton explains, “With Abraham’s position as a covenant vassal of Yahweh comes certain responsibilities. He is to instruct his family . . . to observe the way of Yahweh by practicing righteousness and justice. Sandwiched between Abraham’s role as host and intercessor is that of instructor.”⁶ God gave Abraham the responsibility of leading and teaching his children and his household to follow the Lord. Abraham was charged by God to lead his family to obey God.

God’s Promise Kept through Abraham’s Obedience

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version.

⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), 50.

⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*, 19.

Genesis 18:19 speaks to God’s choosing of Abraham for the purpose of leading his family toward obedience to the Lord. Tom Schreiner writes, “Abraham’s children and heirs would only enjoy the promise if they kept ‘the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.’”⁷ In order for Abraham to receive the Lord’s promise, he was commanded to point those under his leadership to obey Yahweh. The text indicates that if Abraham’s family did not walk in obedience to God’s command to do righteousness and justice, they would not be included recipients of the promise. John Sailhammer echoes this sentiment when he writes, “Here the attention is directed internally with the end in view that Abraham and his descendants do ‘what is right and just.’ Only then will the Lord fulfill what he had promised to Abraham.”⁸ God placed upon Abraham a heavy responsibility to command his children to obey God’s law and walk in his ways.

The evidence of Abraham’s commitment to God and his acceptance of the promise was in the leadership of his family to live righteous lives and to do justice on the earth. Kenneth Matthews states in his commentary,

The consequence of Abraham’s election includes his instructions to his household to observe the “way of the Lord.” “Way” in its metaphorical sense conveys the idea of a lifestyle or pilgrimage. The “way of the Lord” indicates a life whose conduct conforms to the prescriptions of the Lord. The “way” in Deuteronomic language is observance of the stipulations of the covenant, showing loyalty to the Lord by keeping “the requirements of their God.” In the case of Abraham the prescriptions are expressed in ethical terms alone, meaning right behavior toward others: “by doing what is right and just” . . . “Right and just” are popular forensic terms, but here their meaning is the carrying out of ethical demands; it is a matter of “doing” what is right, especially social justice . . . “Justice” is achieved by upright conduct,

⁷ Tom Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 559.

⁸ John H. Sailhammer, *Genesis*, in vol. 1 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 149.

truth, and equity.⁹

Abraham was called by God to lead his household to walk in the way of the Lord. His wife, children, and household servants would reveal their commitment to Yahweh through their lives. Yet, before the family would walk in obedience, the lead shepherd, Abraham, must set the example and teach his household to do likewise.

In order to bring about what he had promised, God chose Abraham to command his children and household to keep the way of the Lord and do what is right and just. Kenneth Matthews further states that God's choosing of Abraham was for the purpose of "blessing all nations; this appointment also included the intermediary step of creating a righteous people whose conduct would be a beacon for the nations."¹⁰ God chose Abraham to lead his family and household to keep the way of the Lord as a way to show God's elect people how they are to live in their homes and as a nation.

Parents Are to Lead Children to Obey God

As seen in the example of Abraham, God's intent for parents is to lead their children to live righteous lives by teaching and instructing them to consistently do what is right and just, in order that future generations might know and obey him. John Calvin states,

Wherefore, it is the duty of parents to apply themselves diligently to the work of communicating what they have learned from the Lord to their children . . . in order that the truth of God, which is eternal, may live and flourish after our death; and that

⁹ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 223-24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 223.

thus, when we are dead, a holy course of living may survive and remain.¹¹

As parents intentionally teach their children God's word, future generations will hopefully obey the commands he has given.

As God commanded Abraham to lead his family to keep the way of the Lord and to do righteousness and justice, likewise, all parents are commanded by God to lead their families to keep the way of the Lord. Walter R. Bowie pens in *The Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, "There is a charge that belongs to every parent for every family as surely in the twentieth century as in Abraham's far-off age."¹² The responsibility God gave to Abraham was also placed upon the shoulders of all parents, throughout the ages, to lead their children and households toward obedience to God.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

The book of Deuteronomy is a repetition of the law God gave to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai.¹³ The word "Deuteronomy" literally means "second law,"¹⁴ however, the book does not provide a "second law" as the name advocates, but rather, "provides an important summary of the history of the wilderness period and organization

¹¹ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 481.

¹² Walter R. Bowie, *General and Old Testament Articles, Genesis, Exodus*, in vol. 1 of *The Interpreter's Bible Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), 621.

¹³ Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1977), 77.

¹⁴ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 21.

of the legal material.”¹⁵ Moses’s season of leadership was coming to a close and Israel was anticipating their forthcoming future in the land of Canaan.

Moses Addresses Israel

Deuteronomy begins with Moses addressing God’s people, the descendants of Abraham, intending to encourage them to obey God as they prepare to go into the land he had promised. The first verse states, “These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness” (Deut 1:1). Mark E. Biddle writes,

Indeed, Moses pauses now, forty years after the giving of the Law at Mt. Horeb, to explain the importance and validity of this covenant to the second generation. They had not freely chosen to enter into covenant relationship with God. . . . They have the opportunity for and indeed the responsibility of living up to this ancestral identity. They, too, can be “Israel” if they choose as their ancestors did to live in covenant with YHWY.¹⁶

The purpose of Moses’s final sermon to Israel was to summarize the law, which God gave them, and to plead with them to obey. The ESV Study Bible notes, “Deuteronomy is largely a sermon, or set of sermons, preached by Moses to all of Israel shortly before his death and not long before the conquest of the land under the leadership of Joshua.”¹⁷ With the understanding of his imminent death, Moses pointed God’s people back to their failures, God’s faithfulness, God’s provision, and God’s law. He challenged them not to make the same mistakes they made in the wilderness, but to ready themselves as they

¹⁵ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 131.

¹⁶ Mark E. Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, vol. 6A (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001), 15.

¹⁷ ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 326.

prepared to go into the land God had prepared for them.¹⁸

Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the Shema, and Teaching the Next Generation

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is a biblical text referred to as the Shema. The *Holman Bible Dictionary* defines the Shema as

transliteration of [the] Hebrew imperative meaning, “Hear,” (Deut 6:4) and applied to 6:4-9, as the basic statement of the Jewish law. The Shema became for the people of God a confession of faith by which they acknowledged the one true God and His commandments for them.¹⁹

Loving and obeying God are paired together within the Shema revealing how God’s people are to live in covenant before the Lord. John M. Frame notes, “Here the fundamental confession of Yahweh as Lord is followed by a command to love him. Then there is an extended appeal to Israel to keep all of God’s commands.”²⁰ Loving and obeying God are themes that show up not only in the Shema but throughout the book of Deuteronomy as well. Duane L. Christensen states,

In some respects it can be argued that the whole book of Deuteronomy is simply a commentary on this one verse: You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your soul-life, and with all your might. The command to love is central because it concerns renewal of the covenant with God which demands obedience. That obedience is possible only when it is a response of love to the God who brought the people out of Egypt and was now about to bring them in to their promised land.²¹

¹⁸ Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, 78.

¹⁹ *Holman Bible Dictionary*, ed. Trent C. Butler (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 1261.

²⁰ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002), 85.

²¹ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1991), 143.

Peter Craigie further emphasized the correlation between love and obedience in the Shema when he writes, “The people were called upon to love God with their whole beings – with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. The all-encompassing love for God was to find its expression in a willing and joyful obedience of the commandments of God.”²²

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses reveals God’s clear and specific instruction to parents to teach their children to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength (Deut 6:4). God’s desire is for generation after generation to love him and keep his commandments.

J. A. Thompson states,

The demand of love towards God implies all other demands, and the disposition to love God implies the disposition to obey His commandments and to impart these to the children of the following generations, so as to maintain an attitude of love and obedience among the people of God from age to age. The book of Deuteronomy attaches a special importance to this task of teaching the family (4:9b; 6:20-25; 11:19). But the demands of Yahweh’s covenant are to be the subject of conversation at all times in the home, by the way, by night and by day. Israel is to teach them diligently, talk of them constantly, bind them as a sign on various parts of the body, and write them. God’s love and His covenant demands were to be the central and absorbing interest of a man’s whole life.²³

Parents are to teach their children these commandments throughout their everyday life.

The commands God gave to Moses, and Moses had passed to God’s people, were to be intentionally communicated to the next generation on a constant basis.

God’s primary intent in this passage of Scripture is for multigenerational faithfulness to occur through the teaching of fathers to their children and on to future

²² Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 170.

²³ J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 123.

generations. His command, as seen in Deuteronomy 6:2, is that “you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son’s son.” God placed the responsibility of discipleship upon fathers, that they would teach their children to keep his statutes and commands, so they may have long life in the land God is gave to them (Deut 6:2-3). Parents, particularly fathers, are called upon by God to pass the faith on to future generations by teaching their children and grandchildren the ways of God.

In this passage, God commands Israel’s allegiance and articulates his strategy for passing the faith on to the next generation. Mark E. Biddle states, “The words of the Shema, which Moses commanded ‘upon’ Israel’s ‘heart’ are also to be taught ‘on’ their children. They are to be the topic of conversation at home and away from home, in the evening and in the morning.”²⁴ Parents carry the weight of teaching God’s law to their children so they might learn to love God with their heart, soul, and strength.

Parents Teaching through Repetition

Passing the faith on to the next generation within one’s own family was a command given by God in Deuteronomy 6. This transference of the faith is realized when God’s commands are taught and repeated to the children. Robert Bratcher notes, “Teach . . . diligently: this translates a Hebrew word that seems to mean ‘repeat,’ or ‘say again and again’; this meaning is reinforced by the following ‘shall talk of them.’”²⁵ Parents are commanded to repeat God’s word to their children throughout the day and wherever they go. Peter Craigie echoes this when he explains,

²⁴ Biddle, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, 127.

²⁵ Robert G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy* (London: United Bible Societies, 2000), 139.

Having understood the commandments for themselves, the people were then responsible for their children: you shall repeat them to your children (a theme already familiar; see Deut. 4:9). The commandments were to be the subject of conversation both inside and outside the home, from the beginning of the day to the end of the day. In summary, the commandments were to permeate every sphere of the life of man.²⁶

Through the intentional repetition and teaching of God's commands to their children and grandchildren, parents fulfill their responsibility of raising another generation to love God.

Parents Teaching with Diligence

Deuteronomy 6:7 emphasizes diligence in teaching children the commands of God and gives specific instruction about when teaching is to take place: when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise. Mark E. Biddle writes,

The focus on teaching your children "these words" diligently within the context of the family – at all conceivable times and places – illustrates once again the pedagogical purpose of Deuteronomy. The content of this book was the primary curriculum in an ongoing program of religious education in ancient Israel.²⁷

This passage admonishes parents to be consistent in the instruction of their children to obey God's commands. Duane L. Christensen comments, "The commandments were to be the focus of constant discussion inside and outside the home. In short, they were to permeate every sphere of human life."²⁸ The text emphasizes the diligent teaching of God's commands in daily life and the repeating of God's word throughout the day. S. R.

²⁶ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

²⁷ Biddle, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, 143.

²⁸ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 143.

Driver writes, “And thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in order that they may not be forgotten, they are to be a subject of conversation at all times.”²⁹

Parents are to allow God’s word to season their daily conversations with their children as they instruct them in the Scriptures. Robert Bratcher echoes this sentiment when he explains, “When you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way: this means while at home or away from home, which includes, of course, the whole time. The following when you lie down and when you rise is also a way of including the whole day.”³⁰ As parents take the time to persistently and consistently teach God’s word throughout the day, their child’s understanding of the law will grow, and will, by God’s grace, lead to a greater love of God and obedience to God.

Psalm 78:1-8

In Psalm 78:1-8, Asaph articulates a strategy for how families can experience multigenerational faithfulness to God through the father’s teaching of God’s word to his children. Multigenerational faithfulness can be accomplished through fathers intentionally telling the next generation about God’s commands and the works he has accomplished in the past.

Patriarchal Leadership and Multigenerational Faithfulness

In this text fathers are commanded to tell their children what God has done. Willem A. VanGammeren writes,

²⁹ S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1907), 92.

³⁰ Bratcher and Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy*, 139.

Through Moses, [God] had commanded all Israelites, regardless of tribal descent, to instruct their children at home The Israelites were expected to teach this revelation to their children from generation to generation so that each generation might “put their trust in God” by remembering “his deeds” and keeping “his commands.”³¹

Parents were expected to articulate “the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done” to their children and grandchildren (Ps 78:4). God commands his people to teach the next generation so that they might know his deeds and wonders and in turn put their hope in him.

Intentionality in Family Discipleship

Throughout the text Asaph uses words like, “I will open my mouth,” “I will utter,” “we will not hide [God’s law],” and “but [we will] tell the coming generation” (Ps 78:2). These texts communicate an intentionality and a desire in the psalm writer to ensure God’s story is told to Israel’s children and grandchildren. C. A. Briggs and E. G. Briggs interpreted verse 4, “We will transmit it in our turn to our successors.”³² Without fathers teaching their children what God has done for them, they will forget his works and, in turn, they will forget him. Willem A. VanGemeran further states,

The goal of the teacher of wisdom is to open Israel’s history from God’s perspective. The act of ‘telling the next generation’ (v.4) is a continuation of the tradition ‘heard and known’ from the fathers. The contents of the tradition of redemptive history are transmitted without further explication, so that each generation may draw lessons from the ‘parables’ and ‘riddles’ of God’s interaction with the previous generations.³³

³¹ Willem A. VanGemeran. *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 593.

³² C. A. Briggs and E.G. Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, The International Critical Commentary, vol. 11 (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1907), 182.

³³ VanGemeran, *Psalms*, 592.

In order for the next generation to know the law and the wondrous works of God, men of old must open their mouths and speak of what God has made clear. Marvin E. Tate writes, “God’s instruction is to be the subject of discourse among God’s people.”³⁴ If the fathers in Israel stop telling their children what God has done, the next generation will not know him or love him. God makes it abundantly clear in this text that fathers carry the responsibility of telling their children about him.

Patriarchal Leadership in Family Discipleship

The Psalm 78:1-8 passage conveys the importance of the father being intentional in teaching God’s word to his children. It is clear that God’s intent is for the father to be the leader and primary instructor of the word of God to the family. This text uses masculine language to describe those who would be telling the next generation what God has done. For example, verses 3 and 5 state, “our fathers have told us” and “he commanded our fathers to teach their children” (Ps 78:3,5); this is patriarchal language describing those who are to be teaching God’s commands to the children within the home. C. A. Briggs and E. G. Briggs explain, “The story has come down by oral tradition from father to son through many generations.”³⁵

God’s intent is for fathers to be the spiritual leaders of their homes and play the role of primary disciple-maker of their children. Sclater, Poteat, and Ballard reiterate the

³⁴ Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Commentary, 1990), 289.

³⁵ Briggs and Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, 182.

headship of fathers teaching their children when they say, “From father to children, from the next generation to children yet unborn and to their children, the intention of the testimony and the law was to be realized in two ways: they should set their hope in God, and they should keep his commandments.”³⁶ Fathers are to invest in their children through intentional conversations about who God is and what he has done. Lord willing, through the passing down of the gospel, a new generation may come to know God and put their hope in him.

Significantly, Psalm 78 is also a warning to a new generation to keep from making the same mistakes of their forefathers. Fathers are to be intentional and purposeful in teaching the next generation of children and grandchildren to not become like the rebellious generation in the wilderness. J. Clinton McCann, Jr. comments,

The repetition in vv. 3-8 emphasizes knowing and telling, an ongoing process that involves “ancestors” and “children” from generation to generation. The content of the proclamation involves God’s “praiseworthy deeds,” God’s “power”/“might,” and the “wonders” God has done. The latter two words especially recall the exodus, an event that led soon after to Sinai, which is recalled in Ps 78:5 and is also to be proclaimed. In short, every generation is to know God’s sovereignty and God’s sovereign claim, not simply as a matter of information but as a matter of life-saving hope. Interestingly, the ancestors who told their children the right things were apparently not able to do the right things. Knowledge does not guarantee faithfulness; the ancestors were “stubborn,” “rebellious,” not steadfast, and “unfaithful,” as the rest of the psalm makes clear.³⁷

After the first 8 verses introduce the importance of passing on the faith to the next generation, the subsequent 63 verses detail Israel’s rebellion against the Most High God.

³⁶ J. R. P. Sclater, Edwin McNeill Poteat, and Frank H. Ballard, *Psalms, Proverbs*, in vol. 4 of *The Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), 417.

³⁷ J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *1 & 2 Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, Job, Psalms*, in vol. 4 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, ed. David L. Petersen (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 990-91.

Sclater, Poteat, and Ballard further state,

Because they had not put their hope in God, they were not steadfast – words that mean insecurity and unsteadiness. Lacking this hope, they scorned to observe the testimony; they were a stubborn and rebellious generation. In order that the children of the unborn generations should not be like their fathers, the great testimony must be spoken, and it was to this that our poet invited his audience.³⁸

Israel became a nation that did not know, trust, or love the Lord; therefore Asaph is encouraging fathers to remind their children what God has done so they do not forget him as their forefathers did. As fathers intentionally tell their children about who God is and what he has done, it may potentially lead to multigenerational faithfulness.

The Apostle Paul and Family Discipleship

God's purpose for fathers to be the primary disciple-makers of their children is clearly seen throughout the Old Testament (Gen 18:19; Deut 6:1-9; Ps 78:1-8).

Patriarchal spiritual leadership is not a precept found only in the Old Testament. This is seen in the New Testament as well. The Apostle Paul addressed fathers in particular, admonishing them to fulfill their role as the primary spiritual leaders and teachers of the Bible in the home.

Paul's Letters to the Ephesian and Colossian Churches

In Paul's letters to the churches at Ephesus and Colossae, he gave specific instruction to parents, particularly fathers, about how to raise their children to know God. Paul commanded fathers not to provoke their children to anger, but to be patient with them, to steward them, and to teach them.

³⁸ Sclater, Poteat, and Ballard, *Psalms, Proverbs*, 417.

Fathers, do not provoke your children. The Ephesian and Colossian letters admonish fathers, “Do not provoke your children” (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). Paul added to his letter to the Ephesians that fathers should not provoke their children to anger. Frank Thielman states, “Just as in his treatment of wives and husbands (5:22-33), so here in his treatment of children and parents, Paul instructs the male head of the household to conduct himself toward those under his authority with restraint and for their good.”³⁹ The epistles highlight the importance of fathers showing restraint and no stirring up frustration or anger within their children. Andrew Lincoln comments,

Fathers are made responsible for ensuring that they do not provoke anger in their children. This involves avoiding attitudes, words, and actions which would drive a child to angry exasperation or resentment and thus rules out excessively severe discipline, unreasonably harsh demands, abuse of authority, arbitrariness, unfairness, constant nagging and condemnation, subjecting a child to humiliation, and all forms of gross insensitivity to a child’s needs and sensibilities.⁴⁰

Paul admonishes fathers to not provoke their children, lest their children harden their hearts and turn away from the faith. F. F. Bruce states, “As in Colossians 3:21, fathers are urged not to assert their authority over children in a manner more calculated to provoke resentment than ready obedience.”⁴¹ Thus in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3, Paul places the responsibility of discipleship squarely on the shoulders of fathers.

Fathers, be patient with your children. Fathers who provoke, belittle, nag,

³⁹ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 401.

⁴⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Waco, TX: Word Publisher, 1990), 406.

⁴¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 398.

humiliate, or criticize their children disobey the provocation commands in Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21. Peter T. O'Brien writes, "If children are exhorted to render obedience to their parents, then the latter, especially fathers, are enjoined not to irritate or provoke their children lest they lose heart and become timid."⁴² When fathers provoke their children to anger, it may lead their children toward dejection and misery. N. T. Wright comments,

"Embitter" is literally "arouse," usually in the bad sense of "provoke." Paul refers to the constant nagging or belittling of a child, the refusal to allow children to be people in their own right instead of carbon copies of their parents or their parents' fantasies Children treated like this became "discouraged" or "dispirited": hearing continually, both verbally and nonverbally, that they are of little value, they come to believe it, and either sink down in obedient self-hatred or over-react with boastful but anxious self-assertion. The parents' duty is, in effect, to live out the gospel to the child: that is, to assure their children that they are loved and accepted and valued for who they are, not for who they ought to be, should have been, or might become.⁴³

Fathers are admonished by Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 to be patient with their children so as not to lead them to exasperation. T. K. Abbott notes, "A child frequently irritated by over-severity or injustice, to which, nevertheless, it must submit, acquires a spirit of sullen resignation, leading to despair."⁴⁴ God calls fathers to refrain from provoking anger in their children because it may lead them away from following and obeying the Lord.

⁴² Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 44 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 225.

⁴³ N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 148-149.

⁴⁴ T. K. Abbott, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), 294.

Fathers, steward your children. The authority God has given fathers to lead their families and to disciple their children is a responsibility they are to steward faithfully (1 Tim 3:4-5). Richard Melick explains, “In Ephesians 6:4 fathers were told to 'bring them up.' The training process involved teaching children how to obey, and those who heard these words would respond properly,” (Melick, 314).⁴⁵ God will hold fathers accountable for the leadership of their families (2 Cor 5:10; Heb 4:13). PHEME PERKINS states,

It is noticeable that the writer does not exhort fathers to exercise their authority. Instead, he presupposes that authority and then sets the bounds for its use. He also presupposes that children are not simply their fathers' legal property but are owed dignity as human beings in their own right. Fathers should not, therefore, drive their children to exasperation or resentment. This would rule out excessive discipline, unreasonably harsh demands, arbitrariness, constant nagging and condemnation, and any gross insensitivity to children's sensibilities that would break their spirit and make them listless and unresponsive.⁴⁶

God places a holy calling upon all fathers to lead their family faithfully. In order to faithfully steward their calling, they are to be diligent not to provoke their children to anger.

Unfortunately, many fathers neglect their responsibility to show the love of Christ by being patient, loving, and kind to the children God has given them. G. Preston MacLeod explains,

Severely conscientious fathers can frustrate their own good purposes for their children by frustrating the children. On the other hand, Paul would not have regarded as Christian the laxness of parents who fail to curb their children's willful

⁴⁵ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 314.

⁴⁶ PHEME PERKINS. *2 Corinthians – Philemon*, in vol. 11, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, ed. Leander Keck (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 656.

disregard of moral duty, lest they forfeit their affection, and thereby relinquish moral control of the immature, and sometimes wayward, lives for which they are responsible. The exercise of parental authority is a duty for parents. It is the mishandling of it which Paul deplors. Love is the clue to the discipline that does not drive with goads, but leads and guides in mutual respect and cordial partnership.⁴⁷

As fathers leverage the influence God has given them as an authority in the life of their children, the greatest impact will come when they do not provoke their children to anger, but lovingly lead them to love and follow the Lord.

Fathers, teach your children. Paul went beyond the admonishment to “not provoke children to anger” in Colossians 3:21, and added, “but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” in Ephesians 6:4. Francis Foulkes writes, “The discipline and instruction of the Lord is that which the Lord is able to bring into the life of a child if parents do their work of teaching and training in the word of the Lord. This is the highest due of Christian parents.”⁴⁸

Paul extended his provocation admonishment to the fathers of the Ephesians church by adding how they were to bring up their children. Francis W. Beare writes, “Far from relying on sternness, which may do more harm than good, the Christian father is urged to instill into his children the principles of the faith, to teach them the doctrines and duties of their religion.”⁴⁹ Lincoln further comments,

⁴⁷ G. Preston MacLeod, *Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Pastoral Epistles, Philemon, Hebrews*, in vol. 11 of *The Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), 227.

⁴⁸ Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 173.

⁴⁹ Francis W. Beare, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, in vol. 10 of *The Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), 732.

By specifying that the various forms of instruction are to be ‘of the Lord,’ the writer underlines that the education that goes on in the household has a new orientation. The learning of Christ and being taught in him spoken of in 4:20, 21 is to be an activity that takes place not only in the Christian community in general but also specifically in the family, with the fathers as those who teach their children the apostolic tradition about Christ and help to shape their lives in accordance with it.⁵⁰

As fathers obey the Apostle Paul’s charge to “not provoke their children to anger,” but to “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” more children may grow to know and love the Lord and keep his commands. It is through the godly example and teaching of fathers that children are developed into disciples of Christ.

Paul’s Letter to Timothy

The Apostle Paul concluded his canonical writing ministry in a Roman prison by penning a letter to his young protégé in the ministry, Timothy.⁵¹ In Paul’s second letter to Timothy, Paul encouraged Timothy to persevere in the faith despite the severe suffering that would come for those faithful to the gospel message. George W. Knight III states, “In the midst of persecution and suffering, where fidelity is so very important, Paul is thankful to God that he can remember Timothy as one in whom there was a faith that neither wavered nor was double-minded, [but had] a genuine trust in God.”⁵² This letter revealed Paul’s influence in Timothy’s life, as well as that of Timothy’s family, who played an instrumental role in his spiritual growth and development.

⁵⁰ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 408.

⁵¹ ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 2335.

⁵² George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 369.

Timothy and matriarchal influence. Chapter 1 of Paul's second letter to Timothy revealed the names of Timothy's mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois, and the impact they had on his spiritual formation. Paul states, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well" (2 Tim 1:5). Philip H. Towner explains, "Timothy's spiritual heritage is traced back to his grandmother and mother . . . we know . . . that Timothy's grandmother and mother apparently came to faith in the Messiah prior to Timothy and provided an environment crucial to his conversion and spiritual development" (cf. 2 Tim 3:15).⁵³ Under the influence of his mother and grandmother Timothy developed an authentic faith in Christ. J. J. Van Oosterzee comments, "Timothy, in respect of his spiritual life, was indebted extremely to his mother and grandmother."⁵⁴ Paul had a tremendous impact on Timothy's spiritual development, but as he remembered Timothy, he was reminded of his faith that had been cultivated through the influence of his mother and grandmother.

Paul affirmed what the Old Testament writers emphasized: spiritual leadership in the home begins with fathers. The Bible tells us Timothy's father was Greek and did not teach him the Scriptures when he was young (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim 3:14-15). Mounce notes, "Since the time frame is Timothy's childhood, it supposedly would have been the Hebrew Scriptures that played a vital role in Timothy's upbringing, even in the

⁵³ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 454.

⁵⁴ J. J. Van Oosterle, *The Two Epistles of Paul to Timothy*, in vol. 11 of *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, ed. and trans. E. A. Washburn and E. Harwood (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 77-120.

nontraditional household of a Jewish mother and a Greek father.”⁵⁵ In the life of Timothy, the spiritual leadership of his home began with his mother and grandmother. Philip H. Towner states, “From the account in Acts 16:1, which identifies Timothy’s father as being a Gentile, we should probably conclude, in conjunction with 1:5, that his Jewish mother and grandmother would have been mainly responsible for his learning of ‘the holy Scriptures in the early years.’”⁵⁶ In spite of Timothy’s father not being the primary spiritual influence in his life, God used the reading and teaching of the Bible through his mother and grandmother to cultivate a sincere faith.

The centrality of the Word in family discipleship. What appears to have had the greatest impact on Timothy’s spiritual formation as a child was the faithful reading and teaching of the Holy Scriptures. Paul writes,

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:14-17).

Paul emphasized that for Timothy to continue to be faithful with the gospel and in the ministry, he was to “continue in what [he has] learned and [has] firmly believed . . . from childhood . . . the sacred writings” (2 Tim 3:14-15). As a result of the discipleship that took place in his home, Timothy “learned,” “believed,” “knew,” and was “acquainted” with holy Scripture (2 Tim 3:14-15). Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr. explain,

⁵⁵ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 563.

⁵⁶ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 582.

“The aim of the content of the sacred writings is to relate God’s saving purpose in Christ. Timothy’s study of the Scriptures had grounded him in that wisdom and enlightenment that leads to faith in Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷ Knight further writes, “In regard to his background, Timothy had a strong religious heritage in his own family, biblical training from his youth, and a strong commendation already as a young man from the church, both his own congregation at Lystra and the neighboring congregation at Iconium.”⁵⁸ Though God’s intent is for fathers to be the primary disciple-makers of their children, one sees in the life of Timothy that mothers and grandmothers can still have tremendous impact on the spiritual formation of their children and grandchildren. The implication of this truth is that women can influence and impact their children and grandchildren by reading and teaching the Bible.

Conclusion

The Bible has many references to God’s mandate for parents to teach their children God’s word, as evidenced in the passages studied above. The Scripture repeatedly exhorts parents to spiritually invest in their children and to tell the next generation what God has revealed in Holy Scripture. Seven passages of Scripture have been examined in this chapter to demonstrate the weight of responsibility God has given to fathers and mothers to pass the faith on to the next generation: Genesis 18:19, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21, and 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-17. Each of these passages addressed family discipleship from different

⁵⁷ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 234.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 368.

perspectives, backgrounds, and contexts; however, all of them place the responsibility of discipleship of children primarily upon the parents, and fathers in particular. As parents leverage their God-given authority and influence in the spiritual development of their children, may a new generation rise up knowing the commands of God so that they might “set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” (Ps 78:7).

CHAPTER 3
PARENTS AND CHURCHES PARTNERING
TOGETHER TO DISCIPLE
TEENAGERS

In chapter 2, seven passages of Scripture were studied to address how discipleship begins with parents. Throughout the Bible (Gen 18:19; Deut 6; Ps 78:1-8; Eph 6:4; Col 3:21; 2 Tim 1:5, 3:15-17) God commands and exhorts parents to pass the faith on to the next generation, starting with their children. Though many Christian parents understand that they should help their teenagers know and love God, many parents do not understand how that can practically happen in their homes. They feel ill-equipped and lack confidence to carry out their God-given responsibility. Parents frequently ask, “Who is going to help me do this?” “What role does the church play?” “Where do I begin?” “How do I disciple my teenagers?” and “What does this look like practically in my family?”

Chapter 3 answers these questions by addressing the theoretical, sociological, and practical issues of parents and churches partnering together to disciple teenagers. This chapter addresses these issues in three sections: Section 1 speaks to the “Family-Equipping” model and family discipleship, Section 2 discusses parents discipling their children with competence and confidence, and Section 3 addresses churches equipping parents to disciple their teenagers.

Section 1: Family-Equipping Model and Family Discipleship

God has given parents a tremendous responsibility to teach their teenagers what it means to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus. John Westerhoff affirms, “No matter where you look in our Judeo-Christian heritage it is the parents who have the prime responsibility to bring up their children in the faith.”¹ The good news is that God has not left parents alone in this endeavor to disciple their teenagers.

The local church is the primary vehicle God has ordained to partner with parents in the discipleship process. Jay Strother states, “God designed church and household to serve as the two faces of one intentional process of proclaiming and practicing the gospel. The church and the household function as two sides of a single coin.”² Strother further writes, “The goal of equipping families is a church-wide emphases [that is] owned by all church ministries and leaders.”³ When churches and parents work together in the discipleship process, an even greater impact can be made in the lives of teenagers.

The Family-Equipping Model

There are several contemporary discipleship models that churches can utilize when developing a strategy to equip parents to disciple their teenagers. One such model is the “family-equipping model.” Jay Strother states that the family-equipping model

¹ John Westerhoff, *Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1980), 7.

² Jay Strother, “Making the Transition to Family-Equipping Ministry,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 255.

³ Strother, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 256.

seeks to, “partner with parents to raise not just a youth group but a generation that loves God with heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:28-34).”⁴ Strother continued to explain that the family-equipping model’s “ultimate goal is to bring the home and the church together in a biblical partnership to raise up a generation that loves God and loves others. In the simplest possible terms . . . discipleship through partnership.”⁵ The family-equipping model affirms that God has ordained the church to partner with parents in the process of raising teenagers to follow Christ.

Primacy of Parental Responsibility

Family-equipping churches seek to put the primary responsibility for the discipleship of teenagers squarely on the shoulders of parents. Timothy Paul Jones states, “Family equipping ministry simply means coordinating every aspect of your present ministry so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives.”⁶ The family-equipping model does not relieve parents of their divine calling to spiritually lead their teenagers, but rather equips them to do so. Strother states,

Family-equipping churches refuse to allow parents to abdicate their roles as primary faith trainers. Students will graduate from our programs and may lose their connections with pastoral leaders – but they never graduate from their relationship with the parents that God has placed in their lives. Family-equipping churches create a culture that honors the central role of the parents in the spiritual formation

⁴ Jay Strother, “Family-Equipping Ministry: Church and Home as Cochampions,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 144.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶ Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 132.

of their sons and daughters.⁷

The family-equipping model seeks to obey the Bible's instruction of encouraging and equipping mothers and fathers to be teaching their teenagers to love and follow Jesus.

Age-organized and Intergenerational

One role that the church plays in the discipleship process is equipping parents to disciple their children. Unlike other family discipleship models, the family-equipping model does not forsake age-organized ministries, but rather celebrates and utilizes them. Furthermore, family-equipping churches seek to connect people of various age ranges and life stages. Timothy Paul Jones notes,

Nothing is wrong with camps, retreats, or gatherings of believers to study Scripture. The problem is that these activities have become so radically segmented that different generations rarely interact with one another. Even worse, parents are neither acknowledged nor equipped as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives. Parents remain untold and untrained when it comes to discipling their children – and, with so many activities on the roster, many parents don't have enough time to disciple their children even if they know how.⁸

Family-equipping ministries seek intergenerational interaction, while simultaneously utilizing programs and activities for various age demographics.

The Student Ministry Championing Parents

The family-equipping model seeks to champion and support mothers and fathers to teach their teenagers to follow Christ.

For too long what has been missing is a co-championing mentality that places equal importance on family and church. Parents have, in most church contexts, handed over their biblically assigned task as primary disciplers to a church pastor who has

⁷ Strother, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 261.

⁸ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 126.

been taught to accept it Teens need family and church working hand-in-hand surrounding them with truth and godly models to follow.⁹

One of the key roles student ministry plays in the family-equipping model is to champion parents as the greatest influence in their teenager's life. Strother writes, "The home has the greatest impact on young lives; with few exceptions, if we fail to impact the home, we will never make a lasting impact on students."¹⁰ As student ministries champion parents to leverage their God-given influence in the life of their teenagers, an even greater impact can be made on the next generation.

Student ministries can also maximize their impact on the next generation by investing in parents and equipping them to disciple their teenagers. Jim Burns and Mike Devries write,

If we truly desire to be more effective in seeing the lives of our students transformed into the likeness of Christ, the greatest resource we have is the greatest influence in their lives – their parents. Our goal is to come alongside parents to help them pass on the faith to their children We should never underestimate the power of parents in the spiritual formation of their children. If spiritual formation is the key – and we believe it is – parents are too valuable to leave out of the equation.¹¹

Student ministry, from a family-equipping model perspective, views parents of teenagers not as enemies to work against, but as allies to partner with when passing on the faith. Steve Wright states, "Student ministry from a biblical framework views parents as

⁹ Steve Wright, *ReThink: Decide for Yourself Is Student Ministry Working?* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest Publishing, 2007), 75.

¹⁰ Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 141.

¹¹ Jim Burns and Mike Devries, *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry: The Practical Guide to Today's Family-Based Youth Ministry, The Key to Reaching Youth and Parents for Christ* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2003), 17.

indispensable ministry partners.”¹² When student ministries work alongside parents the discipleship process can have a greater effect in the lives of teenagers.

Other Family Ministry Models

As churches seek to partner with parents and implement the most biblical and effective way to disciple teenagers, there are several family ministry models to be compared and examined. Three of the more popular family ministry perspectives are: the family-integrated model, the family-equipping model, and the family-based model.

Although there are distinct differences in each of these models, there is one common similarity among them. Strother explains, “Family-equipping churches stand with family-integrated and family-based congregations in their call for parents to serve as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives.”¹³ Wright affirms this as he states, “God created the family. God created the church. And in His wisdom, He created the two to function together. The biblical ideal is one of the family supporting the church and the church supporting the family.”¹⁴ The family-integrated model, the family-equipping model, and the family-based model all come to different conclusions about how the family and church relate to one another.

The Family-Integrated Model Versus the Family-Equipping Model

The family-integrated model of ministry seeks to unify families by eliminating all forms of age specific ministry and calling upon parents to be the primary disciple-makers

¹² Wright, *ReThink*, 51.

¹³ Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 144.

¹⁴ Wright, *ReThink*, 105.

in the lives of their teenagers. Voddie Baucham Jr. affirms the family-integrated model of ministry as the most biblical model because it consists of families worshiping together, with no systematic segregation of ages or life stage, evangelism and discipleship taking place primarily in and through homes, and an emphasis on education as a key component of discipleship.¹⁵ Family-integrated churches do not have student ministries that partner with parents but follow a pattern of intergenerational worship and learning.¹⁶

The distinct difference between the family-integrated model and the family-equipping model is how different age groups integrate and relate with one another within the church. Baucham states, “There is a world of difference between the family-based youth ministry movement and the family-integrated church . . . the family-integrated church movement is easily distinguishable in its insistence on integration as an ecclesiological principle.”¹⁷ Paul Renfro further explains, “Family integration means there is no age-segregated Sunday school, youth group, or children’s ministry. Different generations worship together, learn together, serve together, and fellowship together.”¹⁸ Family-integrated ministry differentiates from the family-equipping model by keeping families together for worship and discipleship, rather than organizing groups by age or life stage.

¹⁵ Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk With God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 193-216.

¹⁶ Paul Renfro, “Family-Integrated Ministry: Family-Driven Faith,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 62.

¹⁷ Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 196.

¹⁸ Renfro, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 62.

The family-equipping model calls upon fathers to lead their homes spiritually and for families of all stages to serve together as the body of Christ, yet it still allows for age-graded and life stage ministries to work alongside Christian families. Strother states,

Unlike proponents of family-integrated ministry, family equippers do not call for complete abolition of all age-organized ministries. In family-equipping churches one is likely to find some youth and children's programs or activities. At the same time, family-equipping ministries place a far higher premium on intergenerational interaction than the typical family-based church.¹⁹

Pastors and church leaders who function in the family-equipping model have the freedom to lead their families faithfully as well as equip other parents to disciple their teenagers.

Jones explains,

God places people in distinct roles within the church (Eph 4:11-16). As such, it seems that some ministers could be gifted to relate primarily to families with children in a particular stage of life just as other ministers might be particularly skilled in worship leadership or administration. And so, in family-equipping ministries, age-focused ministers and volunteers remain in place, but they find themselves playing very different roles than ever before.²⁰

The family-equipping model affirms the importance of parents being the primary disciple-makers of their teenagers, while also utilizing age-graded and life stage ministries to encourage intergenerational relationships and age-graded discipleship.

The Family-Based Model Versus the Family-Equipping Model

The family-based model of ministry does not seek an integration of age-groups, like the family-integrated model proposes, but pursues an intentional partnership with families in the discipleship process while maintaining age-graded and life stage

¹⁹ Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 144.

²⁰ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 132.

ministries.²¹ Mark Devries states, “Family-based youth ministry accesses the incomparable power of the nuclear family and connects students to an extended family of Christian adults to the end that those students grow toward maturity in Christ.”²² Family-based ministries practice age-graded, gender-specific discipleship groups, student ministries, and life stage gatherings throughout the church. Furthermore, they affirm the evangelistic responsibility the church has to those who are not raised in a Christian home.

The family-based approach utilizes age-graded ministries as a springboard for families and other people from various generations to serve together and to interact with one another. Devries further writes, “Implementing a family-based youth ministry requires a systems approach, thinking beyond the specific needs of teenagers and considering the patterns within families that influence youth along with the patterns within the culture that influence families.”²³ Though family-based ministries have a programmatic structure, they are intentional to draw different generations together to participate in the discipleship of teenagers.

Compared to the family-equipping model, the family-based model has more similarities than differences. Although both models have age-graded programs and events, the family-equipping model champions and equips mothers and fathers to be the

²¹ Brandon Shields, “Family-Based Ministry: Separated Contexts, Shared Focus,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 98-120.

²² Mark Devries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2004), 176.

²³ *Ibid.*, 181.

primary disciple-makers of their teenager.²⁴ Jones writes,

Family-equipping leaders recognize with proponents of family-integrated ministry that age-organized programs, as they are presently practiced, have failed to empower parents as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives. At the same time, the family-equipping model (a bit more like family-based at this point) still sees a valid place for age-organized ministries.²⁵

Though the family-based model does seek to connect teenagers with other generations and creates opportunities for parents to serve alongside their teenager, the aim of the family-equipping model is for the church and the home to work in tandem to maximize the opportunity to disciple teenagers.

Section 2: Parents Discipling with Competence and Confidence

There is no mistaking the role parents play in the life and spiritual development of their children. Based on the National Study of Youth and Religion, Kenda Dean writes in her compelling book *Almost Christian*, "Research is nearly unanimous on this point: parents matter most in shaping the religious lives of their children."²⁶ Though it appears to some that friends, media, and culture have a stronger influence, no one has greater impact on teenagers than their parents. Based on the same National Study of Youth and Religion research, Christian Smith and Melinda Denton contend,

Contrary to popular misguided cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misperceptions, we believe that the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents. Grandparents and other relatives, mentors and youth workers can be very

²⁴ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 133.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁶ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 112.

influential as well, but normally parents are the most important informing their children's religious and spiritual lives. . . .The best social predictor, although not a guarantee, of what the religious and spiritual lives of youth will look like is what the religious and spiritual lives of their parents look like.²⁷

Indeed, parents must learn to leverage their influence to point their teenagers to Christ.

As parents fulfill the biblical mandate of discipling their teenagers with confidence and competence, a greater impact will be had on generations to come.

The importance of parents using their influence to shape their children's spiritual lives is not a new trend. Wesley Black states,

The [ancient Hebrew] home was the context where children and parents encountered God – where teaching and learning occurred in natural, informal ways through example and loving words. Through an environment of warmth and acceptance, parents communicated the meaning of a personal relationship with God.²⁸

The home is the place where spiritual growth and nourishment begins in the life of a child. Parents have the responsibility and the opportunity to cultivate a God-ward trajectory for their teenagers. Steve Wright affirms this in his book *A Parent Privilege*, “God has given parents an incredible job assignment and responsibility. We have an apparent privilege without equal, every parent's privilege. Clearly our children are listening to us and we can influence them more than anyone else.”²⁹ The Gospel can have impact when it is taught through the parent and child relationship. Wright

²⁷ Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford, 2005), 261.

²⁸ Wesley Black, *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church: Inclusive Congregational, Preparatory, Missional, and Strategic* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 53.

²⁹ Steve Wright, *A Parent Privilege: That the Next Generation Might Know* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest Ministries, 2008), 25.

continues, “[Parents] have the privilege to tell [their] children the most important news they will ever hear: that Jesus Christ loves them, and died to save them from their sins.”³⁰

Parents have a tremendous opportunity to initiate and cultivate the spiritual development of their children, if they wisely leverage their influence. Family ministry expert Reggie Joiner rightly states, “It is critical for every family to establish the home as a place where God is central I have always believed wise leaders in the church work hard to keep God in the spotlight, and the same principle applies to parents.”³¹ In light of the God-given responsibility and opportunity afforded to parents, they can practically disciple their teenagers with competence and confidence through: living the gospel, teaching the gospel, loving their spouse, loving their teenagers, and praying fervently.

Parents Are to Live the Gospel

Parents play a vital role in the spiritual development and growth of their teenagers’ love for God and joyful obedience to his Word. Joiner comments, “The role of the family [is] strategically positioned as the primary platform to display God’s message of restoration to the hearts of every generation.”³² With this opportunity to encourage the next generation to follow the Lord, parents have the responsibility of showing their children what it means to live the gospel. John MacArthur states,

Nothing makes the truth more distasteful to a child than to have a hypocritical or spiritually shallow parent who affirms the truth publicly but denies it in the home. Parents, ours is a solemn and awesome responsibility, but it’s also a wonderful

³⁰ Wright, *A Parent Privilege*, 28.

³¹ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 56.

³² *Ibid.*, 66.

privilege. One of the most fulfilling experiences in all the world is to have children committed to following the Lord, no matter what the cost, because they have seen the same commitment in us.³³

Parents who tell of the importance of loving God and obeying his commands but do not live out what they teach, nullify all they verbally communicate to their teenager. One sees this in Scripture as Solomon's teachings "to his son were sound. But the example he set nullified his wise counsel. His own life was inconsistent with his teaching. There is no greater mistake a parent can make."³⁴ Teenagers who do not see consistent, faithful, godly living from their parents who claim to be followers of Christ may question the validity of the faith and walk away from it completely.

Conversely, parents who display a love for God not only in their words, but in their actions as well, can have a significant impact on their teenagers. Authors Tedd and Margy Tripp comment, "Parenting that exhibits a vital relationship with God in all the joys and storms of life is irresistible to children and young people...our relationship with God will beckon our children to draw near to him as their source of comfort and rest."³⁵ Teenagers who see love, kindness, truth, mercy, grace, and justice lived out in front of them in the lives of their parents, are compelled to trust the authenticity of their parents' message. Parents who live the gospel gain the respect and admiration of their children and become faithful witnesses to Christ.

³³ John MacArthur, *What the Bible Says about Parenting: God's Plan for Rearing Your Child* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 233.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁵ Tedd Tripp and Margy Tripp, *Instructing a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2008), 29.

Some parents wrongly believe that they have to be perfect to effectively show how to live for Christ. However, the Bible does not require parents to be perfect. Instead, parents can model grace after failure, forgiveness after sin, and restoration after disagreements.³⁶ Parents can have tremendous impact on the lives of their teenagers by intentionally and faithfully living out the gospel, especially in failure and difficulty. Parenting expert and Christian leader Jim Burns contend, “The home is where children must be taught faithfulness and fidelity to God. They must see it lived out authentically with their parents. No one is perfect, but the intentional nature of faithful living is critical.”³⁷ Teenagers do not need parents to pretend to be perfect or even have all of the answers to teach them to love God. In fact, “Jesus does not ask parents or congregations to be theological experts. He asks us to follow him, to remember him, to love him – and to let it show.”³⁸ When parents live what they believe, their child has living proof that the gospel is true and God can be trusted.

Mothers and fathers also have daily opportunities to display what authentic, faithful, and biblical gender roles look like. The current culture is confused on gender identity, masculinity, femininity, and the roles of men and women in marriage. Christian leader and theologian Randy Stinson notes,

Husbands and wives should, in front of their children, clearly model the gospel-picture of the roles that God has given them. This is the primary means by which children will understand their own gender identity, embrace their roles as men and women, and pursue these roles with Spirit-driven passion in their future

³⁶ Wright, *A Parent Privilege*, 65.

³⁷ Jim Burns, *Confident Parenting* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishing, 2007), 60.

³⁸ Dean, *Almost Christian*, 122.

households.³⁹

When parents live out a Christ-centered marriage, they teach their teenagers God's design and purposes in creating us male and female.

When parents live a godly life, they are demonstrating before watching adolescent eyes how God intends for his people to live according to his commands. Christian parents are to be ever-growing in their knowledge, love, and obedience to God's word. Biblical counselors Stuart Scott and Martha Peace challenged parents to be faithful to, "continue to grow in God's grace and take delight in his commands. Let your children see God's commands are your joy and not a burden. No matter the ages of your children, love and enjoy them. Show love by being patient and kind."⁴⁰ Parents who live out the love of Jesus have a terrific opportunity to show their children what God is like. "The one thing our children really need is the gospel of grace. They need to be absolutely dazzled by the kind of love that would suffer the way Christ suffered, forgive the way he forgives, and bless the way he blesses."⁴¹

Parents who live for Christ are ultimately displaying what discipleship looks like. Pastor and author Matt Friedman comments, "Discipleship at its core is whispering into our children's lives for the glory of God and the salvation of the nations. The Great

³⁹ Randy Stinson, "Male and Female, He Created Them: Gender Roles and Relationships in Biblical Perspective," in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 82.

⁴⁰ Martha Peace and Stuart W. Scott, *The Faithful Parent: A Biblical Guide to Raising a Family* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 210.

⁴¹ Elyse M. Fitzpatrick and Jessica Thompson, *Give Them Grace: Dazzling Your Kids with the Love of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 166.

Commission starts in our families.”⁴² As teenagers see their parents living out what they profess, they too may become disciples of Christ who grow in their love for God and spread the gospel to the nations.

Parents Are to Teach the Gospel

There is nothing more important than for mothers and fathers to be communicating to their children the gospel of Jesus Christ. MacArthur writes, “Your top-priority job as a parent, then, is to be an evangelist in your home. You need to teach your children the law of God; teach them the gospel of divine grace; show them their need for a Savior; and point them to Jesus Christ as the only One who can save them.”⁴³ Parents do well to live the gospel, but teaching the gospel to their teenagers is of utmost importance. Donald S. Whitney states,

But blessed is the family where the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ is declared and discussed, day after day, generation after generation. Regardless of what anyone else does, let every father, let every Christian commit himself to this: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” in family worship.⁴⁴

Parents who do not teach their teenagers how to be reconciled to God through faith in Christ are unfaithful to the responsibility God has placed upon them to pass the faith on to the next generation. Youth culture expert Walt Mueller writes, “the most successful parents in the world are ones who determine that the spiritual well-being of their kids is

⁴² Matt Friedman, *Discipleship in the Home: Teaching Children. Changing Lives* (Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Society, 2010), 18.

⁴³ MacArthur, *What the Bible Says about Parenting*, 42-43.

⁴⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History & in Your Home* (Shepherdsville, KY: The Center for Biblical Spirituality, 2006), 56.

top priority.”⁴⁵

Parents have a tremendous honor to open the Bible every day and teach their children God’s timeless truths. Seminary training is not required for spiritual leadership in the home. Voddie Baucham Jr. writes,

So many parents think they don’t have enough Bible knowledge to teach their children. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you can read, you can teach your children God’s Word . . . Don’t be afraid. God has given you everything you need to do this. You don’t have to be a seminary-trained theologian to read the Bible and talk about what it means. Besides, God would not have given you the responsibility unless He knew you could handle it.⁴⁶

Parents can have tremendous impact on their teenagers by opening the Scriptures with them, reading what God has revealed, and applying it to their life. Chip Ingram writes, “The only way children can embrace biblical wisdom is to have it applied to their lives. A parent who doesn’t know Scripture can’t give a child that necessary tool.”⁴⁷ Parents who diligently and faithfully teach the gospel to their children fulfill the biblical mandate of teaching the gospel to the next generation.

Intentional communication of Scripture from parents to their teen is a mark of good parenting. Jim Burns and Mark Devries explain, “Teaching our children to be faithful to God is the cornerstone of good parenting . . . the most effective place to communicate the truth of God’s love and obedience is in the home.”⁴⁸ When parents

⁴⁵ Walt Mueller, *Youth Culture 101* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2007), 417-418.

⁴⁶ Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 95.

⁴⁷ Chip Ingram, *Effective Parenting in a Defective World: How to Raise Kids Who Stand Out from the Crowd* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006), 72.

⁴⁸ Burns and Devries, *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry*, 60.

teach the Scriptures at home, they are leading their teenagers to Jesus, who can change their hearts and lives. Paul David Tripp contends, “All that we do with our teenagers, from the casual encounters to the crisis moments, must be shaped by a basic commitment to heart change.”⁴⁹ The home is the starting point where learning can be maximized, hearts can be changed, and teenagers can fulfill their spiritual potential. Tedd Tripp comments, “You shepherd your child on God’s behalf . . . it is a pervasive task. Training and shepherding are going on whenever you are with your children. Whether waking, walking, talking or resting, you must be involved in helping your child to understand life, himself, and his needs from a biblical perspective.”⁵⁰

However, there are some parents who shirk their responsibility of discipling their teenagers and look to others to do the work for them. God has not called those outside of the family to be the primary spiritual leaders in the life of a teenager. Baucham Jr. states, “God has designed your family – not the youth group, not the children’s ministry, not the Christian school, but your family – as the principal discipling agent in your children’s lives. The most important job you have as a parent is to train and disciple your children.”⁵¹ Parents, fathers in particular, are called upon by God to teach their children to love God and obey his commands. Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof reiterate this as they write,

Teachers, pastors, and coaches will never have as much potential to influence a

⁴⁹ Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1997), 113.

⁵⁰ Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), 32.

⁵¹ Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 120.

child's character, self-esteem, perspectives, or faith as a parent does. That teacher, pastor, or coach will have influence that is temporary. It will come and go during different stages of your child's life. Your influence as a parent will be permanent.⁵²

Mothers and fathers carry the responsibility, the opportunity, and the honor of teaching their teenagers the Bible. Christian researcher George Barna states,

Responsibility for raising spiritual champions, according to the Bible, belongs to parents. The spiritual nurture of children is supposed to be done in the home. Organizations and people from outside the home might support those efforts, but the responsibility is squarely laid at the feet of the family.⁵³

Unfortunately, many Christian parents have abdicated their responsibility and have neglected or forgotten the biblical mandate for parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their teenagers.

Christ-followers must keep in mind that teaching the gospel to teenagers is not always in a formal context, but also in an informal setting. Michael D. Anthony states,

Although there is a place for parents to formalize teaching and training, the natural flow of their lives offers the most fertile soil for knowing God personally. Every single opportunity, every single hour that we are given in a day is an opportunity for our children to discover who God is, and Scripture commissions us to be wise with the time we have been entrusted.⁵⁴

Parents who redeem teachable moments throughout the day with their teenagers are indeed, discipling. Although discipleship can take place in a classroom, a kitchen table, or a church, discipleship can also take place throughout the rhythm and pattern of everyday life. Regardless of where it takes place, the greatest responsibility parents have

⁵² Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof, *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity: Connect Your Family to a Wider Community* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010), 27.

⁵³ George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting* (Wheaton, IL: Barna Books/Tyndale House, 2007), 11-12.

⁵⁴ Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministries* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 184.

is to teach their children the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Parents Are to Love Their Spouses

Christ-followers now live in a culture that is too familiar with divorce and rejects the biblical view of marriage. Parents can point their teenagers, and a watching world, to Christ by faithfully loving one another. Wright states,

We must understand a healthy marriage is the foundation of healthy parenting that enables God's glory to be seen by our children and others. Christian parents should understand the privilege they have to model God's love and grace in how they protect and value Christian marriage.⁵⁵

When husbands and wives love each other, they show their children God's design for marriage and put the gospel on display. Ultimately, this gives God glory.

Marriages and families that put Christ at the center of all things also display the authority structure within the triune God himself. The authority structure within the trinity reveals that God the Son and God the Holy Spirit submit to God the Father. Likewise, wives and children are to mirror the authority structure within the God-head by submitting to the leadership within the home. The wife submits to her husband and children submit to their parents. Bruce Ware explains,

Married men and fathers must realize and embrace the truth that God has invested in them a special responsibility for the spiritual leadership that they should develop in relation both to their wives and children. In a real and vitally important sense, husbands and fathers bear responsibility for the Christian nature of their households – a responsibility that differs from that of their wives and from other members of the household. The husband of the household is granted a privilege and a duty, before the Lord, to direct the discipleship and development that takes place with their wives and with their children.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Wright, *A Parent Privilege*, 68.

⁵⁶ Bruce Ware, "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: The Trinity as Theological Foundation for Family Ministry," in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family*

Submission and authority in marriage pleases God and models how the Bible structured the husband and wife relationship. William Farley states, “In a God-centered family, everyone serves God by submitting to the authority over them. The husband focuses on pleasing God, not his wife. The wife focuses on pleasing God by submitting to her husbands’ authority rather than pleasing her children.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, when parents love each other and hold fast to Christ as the center of their relationship, they lay a solid foundation for the entire home. MacArthur affirms,

The archetypical family portrayed in Scripture involves both parents doing their part in submission to God, driven to work together by their mutual commitment to each other, with a deep, Christ-centered love as the glue that holds it all together . . . in the biblical model, the marriage is therefore the focus and the foundation of the home.⁵⁸

Discipleship of teenagers takes place when husbands love their wives and wives love their husbands. Speaking of husbands leading and loving their wives, Stuart Scott comments, “[the husband] must put his wife before himself and serve her, even when it means a personal sacrifice on his part. Christ sacrificially loved us to the point of death. Our goal is to model our love after that of Christ. We must be willing to lay our lives down for our wife daily.”⁵⁹ God commands husbands to lead their families faithfully by sacrificing their desires for their wives and children.

Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 68.

⁵⁷ William P. Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 35.

⁵⁸ MacArthur, *What The Bible Says about Parenting*, 160.

⁵⁹ Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2002), 82.

Addressing the importance of husbands and wives prioritizing their love for one another, family psychologist John Rosemond contends,

A good husband is a good father, but it doesn't necessarily work the other way around – a good father is not always a good husband. Likewise, a good wife is always the best mother she is capable of being, but again, it doesn't necessarily work the other way around. The marriage came first; keep it first, and it will be much more likely to last.⁶⁰

To practically apply this type of leadership, Darrin Patrick writes, “It’s important to have friends, but your wife must be your best friend. It’s good to have a career, but your wife must be more central to you than your career. And there is nothing wrong with having a hobby, but your wife must be more important to you than your hobby.”⁶¹ When parents love one another within the covenant relationship as husband and wife, teenagers watch and learn the gospel and discipleship takes place.

Parents Are to Love Their Teenagers

Effective parents are intentional about loving their children in such a way that they earn the right to be heard through a loving relationship. The greater the relationship parents have with teenagers, the greater influence they will have. Chip Ingram notes, “The tighter the relationship between you and your child, the more easily beliefs and values are transferred into their hearts and minds.”⁶² Teenagers are much more receptive to information from authority figures when it is communicated through the venue of

⁶⁰ John Rosemond, *The Well-Behaved Child: Discipline that Really Works!* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 189.

⁶¹ Darrin Patrick, *The Dude’s Guide to Manhood: Finding True Manliness in a World of Counterfeits* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2014), 94.

⁶² Ingram, *Effective Parenting in a Defective World*, 27.

relationships. Joiner states, “If you want to pass on a legacy to the next generation, it has to be transferred relationally.”⁶³

Parents can maximize the discipleship process when they have a close relationship with their teenagers. Relationships communicate, “I value you, you are important to me, and you are a gift from the Lord.” Wright states, “Good parents love their kids. Godly parents understand that they are an incredible blessing from God.”⁶⁴ Teenagers feel valued and are more open to spiritual truth when parents receive them as the blessings they are from the Lord.

Parents can use their homes to their advantage when building a relationship with their child, because it is in the home that their teenagers can experience the unconditional love of God. Baucham Jr. affirms, “Our homes must be rife with the aroma of love. Those who visit us should notice immediately that they have left the world of self-serving, egocentric narcissism and have entered a safe harbor where people value and esteem others above themselves.”⁶⁵ God calls parents, fathers in particular, to lead their teenagers in love. Parents who love their teenagers faithfully model the love God has for his children. Sungwon Kim states, “The relationship between God and his loved ones models the relationship parents should have with their children God’s role as a parent is similar to the authoritative parenting style in that he exhibits a high degree of

⁶³ Joiner, *Think Orange*, 58.

⁶⁴ Wright, *A Parent Privilege*, 69.

⁶⁵ Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 53.

both love/support and discipline/control.”⁶⁶

Parents Are to Pray Fervently

The fourth way parents can teach their teenagers the gospel is through prayer.

Prayer is essential for parents to practice regularly, for both the salvation and sanctification of their children. Bruce A. Ray explains,

We need to pray for our children Pray that the Lord would use discipline as a means, accompanying that act of human responsibility with grace unto salvation. Pray that your children may be born again, quickened unto life by the Spirit of all grace. Ask God to grant them repentance and faith.⁶⁷

When parents pray diligently they unleash the power of God on the lives of their children.

John MacArthur comments, “Bathe your efforts in prayer for your children’s salvation, always bearing in mind that God does His work where you cannot – in the child’s heart.”⁶⁸ Prayer is the vehicle parents can utilize to plead with God to do what only he can do, which is to turn a child’s heart toward himself.

Prayer is also a tool parents use to teach their children the truth about God and the gospel. Ed Moll and Tim Chester contends, “Teaching our children to pray is not about imparting a procedure, but teaching them the character of God and His gospel. We’re teaching them how to relate to God.”⁶⁹ In order to disciple teenagers, parents

⁶⁶ Sungwon Kim, “Parenting Styles and Children’s Spiritual Development,” in *Nurturing Children’s Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices*, ed. Holly Catterton Allen (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 245.

⁶⁷ Bruce A. Ray, *Withhold Not Correction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1978), 67.

⁶⁸ MacArthur, *What the Bible Says about Parenting*, 50.

⁶⁹ Ed Moll and Tim Chester, *Gospel-Centered Family: Becoming the Parents God Wants You to Be* (Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2011), 74.

must be diligent to pray with their teenagers and for their teenagers.

Section 3: Churches Equipping Parents to Disciple Their Teenagers

The Bible commands parents be the primary disciplers of their children. One role the church plays in the discipleship process of teenagers is that of equipping parents to effectively teach their children to love and follow Jesus. Section 3 of chapter 3 outlines how churches are to equip parents to disciple their teenagers under the subheadings: Churches, Equipping, and Parents. In each of these categories one will discover the theoretical, philosophical, and practical issues of churches equipping parents to disciple their teenagers.

Churches

God's design for the church is to be a community of families who are committed followers of Jesus Christ.

The church as community of families. When the church relates with one another as a community, families are further encouraged and equipped to disciple their teenagers. Anthony notes,

God also designed us to live within the faith community in order to experience him in ways that can only happen in close proximity to one another. The faith community creates an environment to equip and disciple parents and children, to celebrate God's faithfulness, and to bring richness of worship through tradition and rituals.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Anthony, *Equipping Parents to Be the Spiritual Leaders in the Home*, 195.

The church is to function as a family of families that live together in unity. Henry Fredrick Cope affirms, “In a word, let the church be to the family that larger home where families live together their life of fellowship and service in the spirit and purpose of religion and where there is a natural place for everyone.”⁷¹

Churches and families were designed by God to lock arms one another and partner together to cultivate the gospel in children and teenagers. David Keehn states,

God’s original design . . . has been to work through parents and the family. Right from the beginning God wanted children to be raised in a spiritual community. We saw this first in His teaching of the law and then later in the worship found at the tabernacle. It culminated in a community of believers in the local church where Christian parents worked together to raise godly children to become young adults.⁷²

The relationships built between churches and families can help cultivate a unique culture of a rich faith in the hearts of the next generation. Michelle Anthony writes,

The faith community creates an environment to equip and disciple parents and children, to celebrate God’s faithfulness, and to bring a richness of worship through tradition and rituals. All of these things ultimately offer children a strong sense of identity, security, and belonging.⁷³

The church as a friend to families. Unfortunately, not all churches and families live in community with one another. Timothy Paul Jones states, “Eventually, families become so busy doing church that no time remains for them to be the church in

⁷¹ Henry Fredrick Cope, *Religious Education in the Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1915), 167.

⁷² David Keehn, “Youth Ministry from a Family Perspective,” in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 224.

⁷³ Michelle D. Anthony, “Equipping Parents to Be the Spiritual Leaders in the Home,” in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 194.

their homes and communities. If your church is planning for parents to disciple children, your ministry may need to do less so that parents have time to do more.”⁷⁴ If a church becomes program-driven in its philosophy and methodology of ministry, it can become a hindrance to parents having time to teach their children the gospel. In his book, *Back to the Heart of Youth Work*, Dewey M. Bertolini explains, “The local church exists as a support to the family, never as a replacement. Youth workers enjoy a privileged position – we can offer our assistance in enabling the parents to become the best possible.”⁷⁵

Churches, at times, can communicate, intentionally or unintentionally, that parents are not necessary in the discipleship process of their teenagers. Jones comments, “The problem is, many churches have provided parents with the impression that when it comes to shaping their children’s souls, the primary teachers ought to be paid professionals at church.”⁷⁶ God’s purpose has never been for parents to let a student pastor, or anyone else, be the primary spiritual influencer in the life of their child.

Wesley Black reiterates this:

It is almost in the nature of a youth minister to assume a parental role, to be their students’ mothers and fathers in absentia. Yet this is wrong, both biblically and socially. Youth leaders can provide needed adult role models and some measure of nurture, but they can never fulfill the role of parenting that is so often missing in today’s families. They can, however, be a friend to families and offer help and encouragement to the parents of teens.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 105.

⁷⁵ Dewey M. Bertolini, *Back to the Heart of Youth Work: Igniting a Passion for God and Others* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 103.

⁷⁶ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 153.

⁷⁷ Black, *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church*, 53-54.

Parents are essential to the long-term spiritual development of their teenagers. The church's ministries and efforts are to support and undergird the work of mothers and fathers in their efforts to disciple their teenagers. Jim Burns and Mike DeVries note,

Youth workers can no longer afford to compartmentalize their ministry to work only with the students. The family plays too much of an important role in the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical development of students to just ignore it. If we are to be successful with our students over the long term, we need to be able to impact and minister to the family as a whole.⁷⁸

The church coming alongside families. God's design for the church has never been for it to replace parents in the discipling of their children. Instead, the church should come alongside parents in their teaching of the gospel. Steve Wright states, "Nowhere in Scripture does it teach that it is the church's responsibility to be the exclusive disciplers."⁷⁹ Robert Clark, Joanne Brubaker, and Roy Zuck affirm, "The task of the church is to make the whole ethos of the home evangelical in spirit and practice. . . .The home is responsible for training children, but the church is responsible for equipping parents in how to train their children."⁸⁰ There is beauty within the church when families connect together as a redeemed community and work together to equip parents to disciple their teenagers.

Church leaders are not to replace parents as the primary disciple-makers of children, but rather aid and assist mothers and fathers in their efforts to point their

⁷⁸ Jim Burns and Mike DeVries, *The Youth Builder: Reach Young People, Strengthen Families and Change Lives Forever* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2001), 73.

⁷⁹ Wright, *ReThink*, 143.

⁸⁰ Robert Clark, Joanne Brubaker, and Roy Zuck, *Childhood Education in the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 33.

children to Christ. Travis Agnew states,

In children's and youth ministries, do not replace parents – supplement parents. Aid and assist your church's most qualified evangelists and disciple-makers to do what they are uniquely qualified to do – raise up the next generation for Christ! Don't allow anything on the church calendar that doesn't aid and assist the obedience of the Great Commission within your church member's homes.⁸¹

There are times when children's and youth ministers philosophically and practically emphasize the centrality of the church in the discipleship process and invite parents to partner with their own agenda for discipling the next generation. Instead, parents should be encouraged and equipped by the local church to fulfill their God-given responsibility to disciple their children. Agnew further writes, "Parents should not aid and assist the student pastor. The student pastor should aid and assist parents to evangelize and disciple their own children."⁸²

Equipping

As stated above, God designed churches to partner with parents and to equip them to disciple their teenagers.

The church partnering. When churches and parents lock arms and work together, there is a greater impact in the discipleship of children. Commenting on his assessment of the National Study of Youth and Religion, Christian Smith writes,

The best way to get most youth more involved in and serious about their faith communities is to get their parents more involved in and serious about their faith communities . . . overall youth ministry would probably best be pursued in larger context of family ministry, that parents should be viewed as indispensable partners

⁸¹ Travis Agnew, *Don't Drop Your Kids Off at Church: Bring Them Home to It* (Charleston, SC: Tag Publishing, 2011), 181.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 175.

in the religious formation of youth.⁸³

Families and churches were designed by God to work together, not separately. Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May write, “A partnership between the home and the church is necessary for the effective nurture and formation of the people of God – children and parents alike.”⁸⁴ A partnership between parents and the local church can lead to a powerful influence on the spiritual formation of teenagers. Burns and Devries rightly assert, “Parents are looking for partners, not replacement parents.”⁸⁵

The church expecting and equipping. Timothy Paul Jones calls upon churches to not only expect parents to disciple their teenagers, but to equip them to fulfill their calling. Jones notes,

As a whole, churches are not consistently encouraging or equipping parents to engage intentionally in their children’s spiritual growth It isn’t even that parents don’t desire to disciple their children. In most cases, the problem is that churches are neither expecting nor equipping parents to disciple their children.⁸⁶

The church must call for parents to engage in the spiritual formation of their teenagers and equip them to do so. Michelle Anthony states, “Because Scripture makes it clear that God intends the family to be the primary place where faith is nurtured in children, it is fitting that the role of the church becomes one of equipping parents for the

⁸³ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 267.

⁸⁴ Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey: Guidance for Those Who Teach and Nurture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 124.

⁸⁵ Burns and Devries, *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry*, 55.

⁸⁶ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 107, 108.

is responsibility.”⁸⁷

The church championing. In addition to partnering with parents, expecting parents to lead, and equipping parents to lead, the church must champion parents through the process. Dewey Bertolini firmly states, “The local church exists as a support to the family, never as a replacement.”⁸⁸ Church leaders and volunteers need to be the cheerleaders and supporters of mothers and fathers as they train up their children in the way they should go. Wesley Black states, “Youth workers who [help parents fulfill their biblical responsibilities] provide parents and guardians with the tools and encouragement to carry out the proper functions of home in the spiritual life of teenagers.”⁸⁹

Parents

The first step in equipping parents to disciple their teenagers is to get them to engage in the process.

Parents engaging. The challenge for most parents is to consistently engage in leading their teenagers to a deep and meaningful relationship with Christ. Jones explains,

Most parents are not consistently engaged in any intentional processes of discipleship with their children. Parents value their children as gifts from God and seek to change their children’s less desirable behaviors but they are making few intentional investments in their children’s lives in light of redemption and eternity.⁹⁰

There is nothing more important in the life of a teenager than for their parents to actively

⁸⁷ Anthony, *Equipping Parents to Be the Spiritual Leaders in the Home*, 183.

⁸⁸ Bertolini, *Back to the Heart of Youth Work*, 103.

⁸⁹ Black, *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church*, 53.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

engage them in the sanctification process. Anthony writes, “Deep down I think most parents realize that there is a critical part of faith that requires us to *act* or *respond* if we are really going to be transformed.”⁹¹

Parents teaching. Once parents are engaged and desire to invest in their teenager’s spiritual growth, they must begin to teach their child the Bible. Jones states, “For parents to become primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives, they must become Bible teachers in their homes . . . every Christian parent should become a significant and consistent conveyor of God’s word in his or her children’s lives.”⁹²

It is through the parent’s intentional and consistent teaching of the Bible that teenagers may become fully devoted followers of Christ. Jones further contends, “Parents are the primary teachers in their children’s lives, even if they don’t know it. Some parents are better teachers than others, but every parent is a teacher when it comes to the children with whom he or she shares a home.”⁹³

By God’s design parents are always teaching. Even the decision to not intentionally teach your child anything is, in fact, teaching them something. Anthony affirms,

Although there is a place for parents to formalize teaching and training, the natural flow of their lives offers the most fertile soil for knowing God personally. Every single opportunity, every single hour that we are given in a day is an opportunity for our children to discover who God is, and Scripture commissions us to be wise with the time we have been entrusted.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Anthony, *Equipping Parents to Be the Spiritual Leaders in the Home*, 186.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 155.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁹⁴ Anthony, *Equipping Parents to Be the Spiritual Leaders in the Home*, 184.

Christian parents carry the responsibility of leading their teenagers to Christ by faithfully and diligently teaching them the Bible.

Conclusion

Discipleship of teenagers begins in the home. Though many Christian parents realize they play a role in their child's spiritual development, many do not know how to effectively disciple their children. In this chapter, we learned the importance of teaching parents how to practically disciple their teenagers with competence and confidence, and to encourage churches to equip parents to disciple their teenagers. There is nothing more important, when it comes to raising the next generation to know and follow Christ, than to equip parents to fulfill their God-given responsibility to lead and teach their children the gospel.

As explained in chapter 4, parents of teenagers from eight families at Westwood Baptist Church in Alabaster, Alabama, participated in a six-week class through which they learned the biblical mandate to disciple their teenagers and discovered how to lead a "faith talk."

CHAPTER 4
DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter explains the procedure for executing the ministry project. This project was conducted at Westwood Baptist Church in Alabaster, Alabama. The project covered a fifteen-week period, beginning in September 2014 and concluding in December 2014. The purpose of the project was to equip parents at Westwood to disciple their teenagers for life after high school.

One of the greatest weaknesses of Westwood has been the failure to adequately equip parents to disciple their teenagers. Though the church has a rich history of mission, vision, and passion for the Great Commission, the church must be more effective in training parents how to pass the faith on to the next generation. Westwood's failure to adequately equip parents has led to a poor retention rate of high school graduates transitioning to the college ministry; a failure to assimilate these students into the church as a whole; and heartbreakingly, seeing some of these students walk away from the Christian faith altogether.

Phases of the Project

The aim of this project was to equip parents by teaching them the biblical mandate to disciple their children and training them to lead a "faith talk" with their teenagers. The first phase of the project involved a parental survey, which corresponded

to goal 1. This survey was given to 42 parents at Westwood who have a college-age child between the ages of 18 to 24 years old.

The second phase of the project involved the writing and approval of curriculum to be used in a “Parents of Teenagers” class. This corresponded to goal 2, which was to develop a biblically-based curriculum to equip parents to disciple their teenagers. The curriculum was designed to inform parents of the biblical mandate to disciple their children and to provide parents with tools to lead their teenagers to follow Christ after high school graduation.

The third and final phase of the project involved teaching the “Parents of Teenagers” class. This phase matched with goal 3, which was to equip parents to implement a discipleship strategy in their home by teaching a “Parents of Teenagers” class. The class was made up of 8 Westwood families who have teenagers currently in the student ministry. Through the curriculum, parents were informed of the biblical mandate to disciple their children, given tools to lead their teenagers spiritually, and encouraged to implement a discipleship strategy in their homes.

Phase 1

The first phase of the project involved a survey of 42 parents at Westwood who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old. The purpose of this survey was to discover the parent’s perception of the current spiritual status of their college-age child, the discipleship strategies they implemented at home when their college-age child was a teenager, and the role Westwood played in equipping them to disciple their child when they were a teenager.

The Survey of Parents with College-age Children

The survey was limited to Westwood families who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old. The purpose of this goal was to discover: (a) what parents did to invest in the spiritual formation of their children when they were teenagers, (b) how Westwood equipped them to disciple their teenagers, and (c) the current spiritual condition of their college-age child (as defined within the survey instrument). This goal was measured by a survey given to parents who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old.

Week 1

During the first week of the project a survey was implemented. This survey consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions and 2 short-answer essay questions. The questions were based upon the spiritual practices of the parents and Westwood when their children were teenagers (see appendix 1). The multiple-choice questions specifically addressed the consistency of the family's spiritual disciplines, the consistency of the parent's spiritual disciplines, the parent's consistency in church attendance, the parent's commitment level to Christ, the perceived current spiritual condition of their college-age child, and Westwood's role in equipping them to disciple their teenagers. The two short-answer essay questions asked, (1) "If you could go back in time, and have another chance to disciple your child as a teenager, what would you do differently?" and (2) "If you could go back in time, how could Westwood Baptist Church have better equipped you to disciple your teenager?"

Identifying and inviting parent participation in the survey. A search on the church's database identified families who are current members at Westwood who had a child between the ages of 18 to 24 years old. The database identified 53 parents who met the specifications and provided family contact information. Each of those 53 parents were contacted via email and invited to participate in the survey (see appendix 2). Parents were given two potential dates (September 14, 2014, or September 21, 2014) to complete the ten-minute survey on a Sunday morning between 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. The 2 hour window afforded parents the opportunity to complete the survey either before or after their attendance in a small group or in between one of the three Sunday morning worship services at Westwood. The email communicated to the parents that the survey would be anonymous, and if they were unable to complete the survey on one of the two given dates, arrangements could be made to accommodate their schedule for completion at another time.

Weeks 2 to 3

The second and third weeks of the project consisted of gathering the parents of 18 to 24 year olds and having them complete the survey.

The execution and completion of the survey. Each participant was given a survey, a pen, and a private classroom with a table and chair. To encourage honest responses, participants were told to refrain from putting their name on the survey, be honest in their responses, give the answer that was most true for them and their teenagers, and take their time to complete the survey. A box was placed in the room and the participants were directed to place their completed surveys in the box. Having the

participants place their surveys in the box reassured parents that no one would know who completed the survey and their responses were, indeed, anonymous. Of the 53 parents of 18 to 24 year olds invited to participate in phase 1 of the project, 42 parents responded and completed the survey.

Week 4

The fourth week of the project consisted of gathering, documenting, and analyzing the results of the completed surveys. The surveys were gathered and labeled individually by number, per the number of participants (e.g., 1-42). Next, all 20 multiple-choice questions and their responses for each participant were entered into a computer for analysis. Then, the answers for each of the 20 questions were totaled and averaged for a quantitative analysis. Finally, the participants' answers to the short-answer questions were entered into a computer for analysis. These responses were categorized by question and reviewed for a qualitative analysis.

The survey responses and analysis. Once all of the survey results were gathered and organized, the results were examined for patterns, averages, and variances. The multiple-choice section of the parent survey identified three areas of weakness: a lack of consistency in family Bible reading while their child was a teenager, a lack in teenage service within the church, and a lack of consistency in the college-age child's attendance to the college ministry at Westwood.

I was surprised to discover that many parents have a favorable opinion of their college-age child's commitment to Christ. When asked if their child currently "lives and displays a growing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ," 88 percent of those surveyed

states “True” or “Somewhat True.” This is a slight increase compared to the parents’ responses when they were asked if their child “lived and displayed a growing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ” in their teen years, as only 86 percent declared “True” or “Somewhat True.”

One of the more revealing components of the survey was the short-answer section. After a review of the answers, a pattern was identified in the 27 parents who responded to the question, “If you could go back in time, and have another chance to disciple your child as a teenager, what would you do differently?,” 17 indicated they would read the Bible more as a family, 13 stated they would pray more as a family, 7 affirmed they would do more family devotions, and 2 respondents indicated they would have participated in family mission trips.

Of the 28 parents who responded to the question, “If you could go back in time, how could Westwood have better equipped you to disciple your teenager?,” 16 stated that Westwood could have better equipped them by offering a training course on how to teach the Bible to their teenagers. This survey further confirmed the importance of developing a curriculum to equip parents to disciple their teenagers and better prepare them for life after high school.

The goal of phase 1 was accomplished through gathering, compiling, and analyzing the 42 parent surveys. The surveys provided a clearer perception of the college students’ spiritual maturity, a greater understanding of the discipleship strategies used at home when their child was a teenager, and a deeper knowledge of the role Westwood played in their child’s spiritual formation through the teen years.

Phase 2

The second phase of the project consisted of developing a biblically-based curriculum for a “Parents of Teenagers” class and having that curriculum evaluated and approved by Westwood’s Executive Staff.

Week 5

Week 5 consisted of developing a biblically-based curriculum that would equip parents to disciple their teenagers. The curriculum was designed for the “Parents of Teenagers” class. The aim of the curriculum was to equip parents by teaching them the biblical mandate to disciple their children and training them how to lead a “faith talk” with their teenagers.

An outline was developed for each session of the six-week long “Parents of Teenagers” class. Each meeting date was assigned a specific biblical text to be taught and discussed. Seven specific Bible passages mandating parental leadership in the spiritual development of their teenager were covered. These passages included Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Psalm 78:1-8; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:20; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15-17 (see appendix 3). The curriculum exegeted, examined, and applied each of the seven Scripture texts for the parenting class to study together. Utilizing the research outlined in chapter 2, each passage of Scripture was organized into the curriculum for the six-week “Parents of Teenagers” class.

Hook, book, look, took. Each lesson of the curriculum was formatted into a teaching outline that could be multiplied to most small group contexts. The curriculum format chosen was the “Hook, Book, Look, Took” method, developed by Lawrence

Richards and Gary Bredfeldt.¹ This method is a simple plan that seeks to *Hook* the learners attention (e.g., a compelling story that leads to the main idea), teach the *Book* (the meaning and context of the Scripture passage), help the learner *Look* for implications for their life in the Bible, and give the learner a challenge or task to do outside of class, the *Took*. This method gives the teacher a strategy to communicate the Bible in a way that maintains the learner’s attention and maximizes the potential impact of the text.

Role-play “faith talk.” The curriculum included a hands-on component. Each father in the parenting class was given an opportunity to lead a five-minute “faith talk.” After each father gave his “faith talk,” a five-minute individual debriefing was given on the effectiveness of the teaching. Each father’s “faith talk” was graded on three competencies: biblical accuracy, practical application, and engagement of the learner. The role-play was deemed successful if the participant demonstrated a competency in leading a “faith talk” by scoring an 80 percent or higher on the “Role-Play Rubric” (see appendix 4). The participant’s grade was deemed most effective with a score of 10 and least effective with a score of 1. While the teaching of the biblical texts would increase the parents’ competence on the biblical mandate to disciple their teenagers; the role-play component would help increase the father’s confidence in leading his teenagers in a “faith talk.”

Executive staff approval of curriculum. The second goal was measured by a curriculum rubric that was given to Westwood’s Executive Staff (see appendix 5) to help them evaluate the curriculum. For the second goal to be successful, the curriculum

¹ Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 151-60.

needed to be approved by the Executive Staff, consisting of Senior Pastor Matt Brooks, Executive Pastor Rick Swing, and Small Groups Pastor Topper Reid. The Executive Staff was informed that the purpose of the curriculum was to teach parents the Scripture's mandate to disciple their teenagers and to equip parents with tools to teach their teenagers to follow Christ now and in the future.

Week 6

During the sixth week of the project the Executive Team reviewed the curriculum for biblical foundation, theological accuracy, and practical application to parents of teenagers at Westwood. It was at this point that the Executive Team discussed the proposed curriculum and verified its accuracy and utility. The Executive Team suggested a clarification of the role of curriculum in the discipleship process. One team member responded, "Curriculum is helpful in the discipleship process, but curriculum is not the primary means God uses in discipleship. Don't allow the curriculum to be the only point of emphasis with these families." The second goal of the project was accomplished when the Executive Staff approved the curriculum for the "Parents of Teenagers" class.

Weeks 7 and 8

The seventh week of the project included recruiting and enlisting parents of teenagers in the six-week "Parents of Teenagers" class. An email was sent to 10 highly committed families at Westwood with teenagers in the student ministry. This email invited them to participate in the "Parenting of Teenagers" class (see appendix 6). Of the 10 families invited to participate in the training course, 8 agreed.

The eighth week of the project was dedicated to logistics and preparation for the

six-week “Parents of Teenagers” class. Administrative tasks included: printing pre-project surveys, reserving classroom space, reviewing curriculum, purchasing refreshments, and contacting class participants concerning class arrangements.

Phase 3

The third and final phase of the project involved teaching the developed curriculum in a “Parents of Teenagers” class, which consisted of 8 Westwood families. This met the third goal to equip parents to implement a discipleship strategy with their teenagers by teaching a “Parents of Teenagers” class.

Teaching the Parenting Seminar

The aim of the “Parents of Teenagers” class was to equip parents by teaching them the biblical mandate to disciple their children and training them how to lead a “faith talk” with their teenagers. Each week the class participants gathered in a classroom at Westwood with tables and chairs set up in a ‘U’ shape, with the instructor teaching in the middle of the room. Refreshments were provided throughout the six-week “Parents of Teenagers” class.

Weeks 9 to 14

Week 9 consisted of gathering selected families together to begin the six-week “Parents of Teenagers” class. The first session began by thanking parents for participating in the “Parents of Teenagers” class and asking each parent to introduce themselves to the group. Once all of the introductions were made, the class participants reviewed the class syllabus (see appendix 7), which included the purpose for the class, a summary of what the class entailed, a class schedule, a list of Scripture passages to be

covered, and an explanation of the role-play “faith talks” the fathers would be leading. After the syllabus was reviewed, a role-play sign-up sheet was distributed to the class to enable fathers to sign up for a specific date within the next five weeks of the “Parents of Teenagers” class to lead a “faith talk.”

Next, the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” (see appendix 8) was distributed face down while instructions were given regarding the survey. The “Agreement to Participate” section of the survey was read to the class. The participants were then instructed to take their time on the survey, to do their best, and to circle the most accurate answer for each question. Each parent was asked to write a “personal code word” that would enable them to take the survey anonymously. Each participant was reminded that the code word they used would need to match the same code word they would use for the post-survey to be taken at the conclusion of the six-week “Parents of Teenagers” class. After each participant completed the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” the surveys were collected for analysis at a later date.

Training session 1. Training session 1 began with a teaching on Genesis 18:19. This session emphasized the importance of parents leading and teaching their children to obey the Lord. Just as God commanded Abraham to lead his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord, parents are to lead their teenagers to obey God. After the Scripture teaching, the class concluded with a ten-minute group discussion of how the Scripture applied to their lives as parents of teenagers.

Training session 2. Training session 2 began in week 10 with the first two fathers on the sign-up sheet leading a “faith talk” in a three-person small group while the

rest of the “Parents of Teenagers” class participants listened. As each father took his turn, the other two members of the small role-play group acted the part of teenagers. The “Role-Play Rubric” (see appendix 4) was used to evaluate the effectiveness of each father’s “faith talk.”

The “Parents of Teenagers” class then studied Deuteronomy 6:1-9. This text revealed the importance of parents teaching their teenagers God’s law throughout each day with diligence and repetition. Parents were admonished to allow God’s word to season their daily conversations with their teenagers because Deuteronomy 6 commands them to teach God’s law to the next generation when they “sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (Deut 6:7).”

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is often referred to as the Shema, which orthodox Jews would pray at least twice a day. This session emphasized the importance of parents teaching God’s law to their children so that they might learn to love God with all of their heart, soul, and strength. Parents were encouraged to persistently and consistently teach God’s word throughout the day to their teenagers so that by God’s grace, it may lead to a greater love for and obedience to God. The class concluded with group discussion on how the text applied to parents of teenagers.

Training session 3. Training session 3 began in week 11 with the third and fourth fathers on the sign-up sheet leading a “faith talk” in a three-person small group. The rest of the class listened while each “faith talk” was evaluated using the role-play rubric. As each father took his turn, the other two members of the small role-play group acted the part of teenagers. The “Role-Play Rubric” (see appendix 4) was used to evaluate the effectiveness of each father’s “faith talk.” After the fathers completed their

five-minute “faith talk,” a brief overview was given of the previous teachings on Genesis 18:19 and Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

The class then began a study of Psalm 78:1-8. In this Psalm, Asaph articulates a strategy for how families can experience multigenerational faithfulness to God through the father teaching God’s word to his children. There was an emphasis on the importance of patriarchal leadership in family discipleship. Psalm 78 uses masculine language to describe those who would tell the next generation what God has done. For example, verses 3 and 5 state, “our fathers have told us” and “he commanded our fathers to teach their children.” This text uses patriarchal language to describe those who are to teach God’s commands to the children within a home. Without fathers teaching their children what God has done, children would forget his works and, in turn, they would forget him.

The “Parents of Teenagers” class discovered that throughout the text Asaph used terms such as “I will open my mouth,” “I will utter,” “we will not hide [God’s law],” and “but [we will] tell the coming generation (Ps 78:2, 4).” These texts reveal a desire to intentionally communicate God’s story to the next generation. The class discussed the importance of parents being intentional when teaching their teenagers to follow Christ. In the group discussion the parents defined intentional as, “living on purpose.” Practically lived out, being intentional means that parents execute a plan for how they will lead their teenagers.

The “Parents of Teenagers” class then participated in a brief exercise, asking each participant to write down the characteristics they wanted their teenagers to have on their wedding day. After three minutes of writing, I explained that the exercise had two purposes: to show parents that the finish line is not high school graduation, but their

child's wedding day and to encourage parents to dream about what they want their teenagers to become. It was communicated that parents, fathers in particular, must have an intentional plan to get their teenagers ready for their wedding day and judgment day. The parents in the training session appreciated this exercise because it reminded them that time is short and they need to intentionally plan how to prepare their teenagers for life after high school.

Training session 3 concluded with an explanation that teenagers do not develop a biblical worldview by accident. Parents, fathers especially, are to be intentional in their teaching and leading of their teenagers to know, love, and follow Jesus for the rest of their lives. Parents were encouraged to clarify the characteristics they desired for their teenagers to have on their wedding day when they got home and to put together a plan for how they would cultivate and demonstrate those characteristics so that they might one day be realized in the life of their teenagers.

Training session 4. Training session 4 began in week twelve with the fifth and sixth fathers on the sign-up sheet leading a five-minute "faith talk." As each father took his turn, the other two members of the small role-play group acted the part of teenagers. The "Role-Play Rubric" (see appendix 4) was used to evaluate the effectiveness of each father's "faith talk." After the fathers completed their five-minute "faith talk" the class was given an overview of the teachings from the previous three weeks. This overview included the biblical texts Genesis 18:19, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, and Psalm 78:1-8.

The class then began to study two New Testament passages regarding patriarchal leadership in the home: Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21. The Ephesian and Colossian letters admonishes fathers, "Do not provoke your children" (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). Paul

added to that phrase in his letter to the Ephesians that fathers are not to provoke their children “to anger.” In these two texts, Paul writes to two different churches about how they are to raise their children to know and love the Lord. Fathers who provoke, belittle, nag, humiliate, or criticize their children, disobey the provocation commands in Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21.

The class was reminded that the authority that God has given fathers to lead their families and disciple their children are responsibilities that they are required to steward faithfully (1 Tim 3:4-5). God will hold fathers accountable for the leadership of their families (2 Cor 5:10; Heb 4:13). In Ephesians 6:4 Paul added to the provocation command “but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” I explained that it is through the godly example and teaching of fathers that children are developed into life-long followers of Jesus Christ.

The class concluded with a discussion about the application of the text to parents of teenagers. The group discussion resulted in a list which consisted of twenty-four ways parents provoke their teenagers. Parents, fathers in particular, were challenged to humble themselves and to ask their teenagers if they have ever discouraged or embittered them. If they had provoked their teenagers, they were to repent, seek forgiveness and grace to move forward, and then to share how they would show their teenager what it means to follow Christ.

Training session 5. Training session 5 in week thirteen began with the seventh and eighth fathers on the sign-up sheet leading a “faith talk.” As each father took his turn, the other two members of the small role-play group acted the part of teenagers. The “Role-Play Rubric” (see appendix 4) was used to evaluate the effectiveness of each

father's "faith talk." After the fathers completed their "faith talk," the class was given an overview of the previous teachings on Genesis 18:19, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:1.

The class then began to study Paul's second letter to Timothy and the impact Timothy's mother and grandmother had on his spiritual formation. Paul states, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well" (2 Tim 1:5). It was through the influence of Timothy's mother and grandmother, that he had developed an authentic faith in Christ. Though Paul had a tremendous impact on Timothy's faith, he reminded the young pastor that his faith was developed and cultivated through the influence Timothy's mother and grandmother.

Paul affirmed throughout his New Testament letters what the Old Testament writers emphasized: spiritual leadership in the home begins with fathers. However, the Bible states that Timothy's father was Greek and did not teach him the Scriptures when he was young (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim 3:14-15). The spiritual leadership of Timothy's home came from his mother and grandmother. Through their reading and teaching of the Scriptures, Timothy developed a sincere faith.

The "Parents of Teenagers" class learned that although God's intent is for fathers to be the primary disciple-makers of their teenagers, mothers and grandmothers can still have tremendous impact on the spiritual formation of their children and grandchildren. This was evidenced in the life of Timothy. The implication of this truth is that women can still have influence on their children and grandchildren by reading and teaching them the Bible, whether or not a father is present. Training session 5 concluded with group

discussion on the importance of studying the Bible as a family and how the church can better equip and engage single mothers.

Training session 6. Training session 6 in week 14 began with me thanking the participants for faithfully attending and participating in the six-week “Parents of Teenagers” class. I then wrote a series of numbers on a marker board. These numbers represented the number of weeks until high school graduation for the teenager of each parent in the class. Once these numbers were explained to the participants of the “Parents of Teenagers” class, it brought about a variety of emotions. The parents expressed feelings of shock, fear, and panic as they stared at the numbers. The class was reassured that the purpose of this exercise was not to worry them, but to remind them of the urgency of leading and teaching their teenagers while they still had the time. The class continued with an overview of the previous five weeks and the truths that had been taught. A summary was given of each Scripture covered, implications that could be drawn from the texts, and applications the class had discovered from each of the previous training sessions.

Finally, the “Post-Project Family Discipleship Survey” (see appendix 9) was distributed facedown while instructions were given regarding the survey. The “Agreement to Participate” section on the survey was read to the class participants. The participants were instructed to take their time on the survey, to do their best, and to circle the most accurate answer for each question. Each participant was asked to write the same “personal code word” that they used in the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey.” After each participant completed the “Post-Project Family Discipleship Survey,” the surveys were collected for analysis at a later date.

Week 15

Week 15 involved gathering the results of the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” and the “Post-Project Family Discipleship Survey.” A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) and the “Post-project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9). The p-value would be considered high if the result was greater than 0.05, thus accepting the null hypothesis. The t-test for dependent samples in this project measured the difference in means between the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) taken before the “Parents of Teenagers” class and the “Post-project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) taken at the conclusion of the “Parents of Teenagers” class.

The data sets for the “Pre-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) and the “Post-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) were entered into two columns on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The set of data in both columns that had been collected were compared through the t-test function on the spreadsheet. The p-value representing the result of the t-test was 0.00117496. The third goal was deemed successful because there was a positive, statistically significant relationship between the “Pre-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) scores and the “Post-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) scores.

Conclusion

God’s mission from Genesis to Revelation is to bring glory to himself by redeeming mankind through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. God’s desire is for this ‘good news’ to be proclaimed from generation to

generation in every people group on the earth. His design for the passing on of his gospel message to future generations is in the hands of the church.

Historically, Westwood has not done a good job training parents how to disciple their teenagers. Westwood's unintended negligence of leaders partnering with parents in the discipleship process of teenagers has played a part in the church's poor retention rates of high school graduates transitioning to the college ministry, a failure to assimilate these students into the church as a whole, and even some students abandoning the faith.

The purpose of this fifteen-week project was to equip parents to disciple their teenagers for life after high school at Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster, Alabama. This chapter explained how this was accomplished through the execution of this project. One of the most important ways the Christian faith can be passed on to the next generation is through parents intentionally teaching and training their children and grandchildren in the Scriptures.

CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

The number one responsibility parents have is to invest in their children so that they might know, love, and follow Jesus Christ. God has called parents to leverage their influence in the life of their teenagers by pointing them to Jesus. On the Day of Judgment, nothing is more important than for a child, a teenager, or an adult to have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.¹ Parents are to diligently prepare their children for that Day.

Ideally, the church should come alongside parents and equip them to disciple their children. However, historically, Westwood Baptist Church has done an insufficient job equipping parents to disciple their teenagers. The aim of this project was to equip parents by teaching them the biblical mandate to disciple their children and training them how to lead a “faith talk” with their teenagers. As parents fulfill the biblical mandate of discipling their teenagers with confidence and competence, a greater impact will be had on generations to come.

Evaluation of the Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to equip parents to disciple their teenagers for life after high school at Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster, Alabama. My intent was

¹ Matt 24:41-46; Luke 12:5, 13:3, 5; 2 Cor 4:3; 2 Thess 2:10; Rev 20:13-15.

to teach and equip parents to be more effective in raising their teenagers to follow Jesus after high school.

In the past, Westwood's student ministry has not made a significant effort to be intentional to teach, equip, and train parents to disciple their teenagers and point them toward Christ. Westwood's student ministry resources have been primarily geared toward developing and discipling middle school and high school students. Thus, there has been a tremendous need for an intentional plan to develop, train, and equip parents to prepare their teenagers for life after high school.

A six-week "Parents of Teenagers" class to equip parents with the biblical mandates to lead and teach their teenagers to follow Christ was achieved through this project. Additionally, parents were encouraged, challenged, and given resources rich with Scripture to faithfully lead their teenagers as mandated by God.

Evaluation of the Goals of the Project

Three goals defined the effectiveness of the project, each building on the other, in order to achieve the overall purpose of the project.

Goal 1

The first goal was to survey 42 parents who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old. The purpose of this goal was to discover what parents did to invest in the spiritual formation of their teenager; how Westwood equipped them to disciple their teenager; and to discern the current spiritual condition of their college-age child. This goal was measured by the "Survey of Parents Whose Children Are Between the Ages of 18 to 24 Years of Age" (appendix 1) given to parents who have college-age

children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old. The purpose of this survey was to discover the parent's perception of the current spiritual status of their college-age child, the discipleship strategies they implemented at home when their college-age child was a teenager, and the role Westwood played in equipping them to disciple their child when they were a teenager.

This survey gave me a better understanding of the spiritual condition of Westwood families and how the church had equipped them while their child was in the student ministry. The survey results also helped give historical context of what Westwood leadership and parents had done to disciple teenagers as well as the perceived current spiritual condition of the children post high school. This first goal was deemed successful when the 42 surveys were completed and analyzed. The surveys provided insight on the current spiritual status of the college-age child, the discipleship strategies used at home during the teenage years, and the role Westwood played in their child's spiritual formation through the teenage years.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a biblically-based curriculum to equip parents to disciple their teenagers. This curriculum instructed parents on the Bible's command to disciple their teenagers and taught parents how to disciple their teenagers utilizing a "faith talk." The curriculum was also informed by the responses of the completed surveys of the parents of students who have college-age children between the ages of 18 to 24 years old.

The curriculum was validated by an expert panel of church leaders comprised of Westwood's Executive Staff. This panel used "The Executive Staff Curriculum Rubric"

(appendix 5) to review the curriculum for biblical foundation, theological accuracy, and practical application to parents of teenagers at Westwood. The approved curriculum was used to teach the “Parents of Teenagers” class comprised of eight families. This goal was deemed successful when the Executive Staff evaluated and approved the curriculum to be used to equip parents to disciple their teenagers.

Goal 3

The third goal was to equip parents to implement a discipleship strategy with their teenagers by teaching a “Parents of Teenagers” class. The “Parents of Teenagers” class equipped the parents by teaching them the biblical mandate to disciple their children and trained them to lead a “faith talk” with their teenagers. The curriculum used in the “Parents of Teenagers” class was approved by Westwood’s Executive Staff.

This goal was measured by the “Pre-project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) and was given to parents before the class began to test their knowledge of the Bible’s teaching on family discipleship and their confidence in leading a “faith talk” with their teenagers. The “Post-Project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) was distributed at the conclusion of the “Parents of Teenagers” class to measure each participant’s growth in biblical knowledge and confidence to lead a “faith talk.”

A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine whether there was a positive statistically significant relationship between the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) and the “Post-project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9). Mendenhall and Beaver define t-test “to reject or accept the null hypothesis...based on

information contained in a sample drawn from the population of interest.”¹ The p-value would be considered high if the result was greater than 0.05, thus accepting the null hypothesis. Therefore, the t-test in this project measured the difference in means between the “Pre-Project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) taken before the “Parents of Teenagers” class and the “Post-project Family Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) taken at the conclusion of the “Parents of Teenagers” class.

The data sets for the “Pre-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) and the “Post-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) were entered into two columns in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The set of data in both columns that had been collected were compared through the t-test function on the spreadsheet. The p-value representing the result of the t-test was 0.00117496. The third goal was deemed successful because there was a positive, statistically significant relationship between the “Pre-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 8) scores and the “Post-Project Discipleship Survey” (appendix 9) scores.

Strengths of the Project

This project demonstrated four specific strengths: it informed parents of the biblical mandate to disciple their teenagers, it encouraged patriarchal leadership, it revealed a longing for parental community, and it discovered potential future church leaders.

Informed Parents of Biblical Mandate

The first strength of the project was that it informed parents of the biblical

¹ William Mendenhall and Robert Beaver, *Introduction to Probability and Statistics*, 9th ed. (Belmont, CA: Duxbury Press, 1994), 309.

mandate to disciple their children. Every component of this project was directed from, and informed by, Scripture, including the goals, strategy, surveys, curriculum, terminology, methodology, and theology. From beginning to end, the Bible was the primary source through which I constructed this project.

Furthermore, the project challenged parents to examine the Scriptures for wisdom in how to raise their teenagers to follow Christ. Parents learned their biblical responsibility to teach the Scriptures to their teenagers and to live out the gospel with their lives. Through the “Parents of Teenagers” class, parents discovered God’s specific commands for parental leadership within the home and how they should apply the Scriptures to their own lives, thus being an example of Christ-likeness to their teenagers.

Encouraged Patriarchal Leadership

The second strength of the project was that the project encouraged patriarchal leadership in the home. Each week men would express nervousness and exhaustion in their preparation for their “faith talk” with the class. Still, the men reveled in leading a gospel-centered conversation with other class participants. I delighted to see fathers gain confidence in leading “faith talks” as they practiced in front of the “Parents of Teenagers” class. Although the women learned how to leverage their influence and be more deliberate in teaching their teenagers the Scriptures, it was the men who seemed to thrive under the weight of responsibility of teaching and leading a “faith talk.” The “Survey of Parents Whose Students are Between Ages 18 to 24,” the curriculum development, and the parenting class as a whole were intentionally designed to challenge fathers of teenagers to be more faithful and effective in leading their families toward Christ.

Revealed a Longing for Parental Community

The third strength of the project was how natural community developed among the parents. One of the by-products of this parenting class was the cultivation of meaningful relationships among the parents. Westwood is a large church with several services and many parents rarely get the opportunity to connect with others who are in a similar life stage. I observed a longing fulfilled as parents would share stories and engage with one another after each session was over to seek counsel and pray together.

Before the class, a few women shared with me that they were hesitant to participate in the “Parents of Teenagers” class out of concern for not knowing other women in the class. However, by the end of the final session, several families stayed in the classroom talking, listening, laughing, and engaging in meaningful conversation. Finding other mothers and fathers who are trying to raise their teenagers to love Jesus created solidarity within the group and, in turn, created a natural community among the parents of teenagers.

Discovered Potential Future Church Leaders and Teachers

A fourth strength of this project was the discovery of potential church leaders and teachers. The role play portion of the class gave me the opportunity to hear men teach and lead, and to offer constructive criticism to help these men grow as teachers of the Word. Some of these men possess tremendous kingdom potential and could faithfully and effectively lead in various teaching roles throughout the church. I was able to identify fathers who could rightly handle the Scriptures and who are able to communicate the Bible to others in a clear and understandable manner. The implementation of the

project and the gifting that was identified in the “Parents of Teenagers” class sessions, now enables me to invite certain men to serve in some key leadership positions at Westwood Baptist Church.

Weaknesses of the Project

There were three areas of weakness of the project: class size and demographic, inconsistent attendance, and time constraints of the class.

Class Size and Demographic

One weakness of the project was the small class size. Having only 16 adults (8 mothers and fathers) participate in the class made the sampling size small and minimized potential impact. Furthermore, the class was made up of primarily white, middle-class American families with both a mother and father in the home. Westwood is more ethnically diverse than the class revealed. The church also has a significant number of single mothers and fathers who were not included in the “Parents of Teenagers” class. Having a larger sample of people, including more ethnic and familial diversity within the class would have provided a more accurate sampling of Westwood.

Inconsistent Attendance

A second weakness of the project was the inconsistent attendance of a few of the participants. I found it difficult to keep some families faithfully attending because Westwood does not have a culture of consistent on-campus attendance other than Sunday mornings. Many families at Westwood attend one or two hours per Sunday, including a worship service, serving in some capacity, and/or attending small group. Even for the highly committed families asked to participate, it was challenging for a few of them to

commit and be reliable in their attendance for six weeks. Though sickness or providential life circumstances impact all families, it was a challenge having inconsistent attendance from a few of the class participants.

Time Constraint of Class

A third and final weakness of the project was the brevity of the class time-frame. I budgeted one hour over the six-week class for the execution of two five-minute role-play “faith talks,” the teaching of the Scripture text, the application of the Scripture text with group discussion, and a concluding encouragement. It was difficult to fit all of these components into a one-hour time frame, especially since all eight fathers took longer than the five-minute allotment for their “faith talks.” The need to fit all of the pertinent content within the limited class time constrained potential community and relationship-building that was organically happening within the “Parents of Teenagers” class.

Need for Further Equipping

The third goal was to equip parents to implement a discipleship strategy with their teenagers by teaching a “Parents of Teenagers” class. In the “Parents of Teenagers” class I equipped parents by teaching them the biblical mandate to disciple their teenagers and training them to lead a “faith talk.” However, parents at Westwood are in need of further equipping to become more faithful and effective in discipling their teenager. Although the project accomplished its intended purpose, equipping parents cannot be fully accomplished in a six-week class.

What I Would Do Differently

There are four areas of this project I would do differently: change the class frequency and time, give greater clarity in the surveys, provide class notes for parents, and give specific application points.

Class Frequency and Time

One change I would make would be to strategically plan class meeting dates to foster greater consistency. The “Parents of Teenagers” class rhythm of gathering together was interrupted by the Thanksgiving holiday after Training session 4. Taking one week off from the “Parents of Teenagers” class disrupted the rhythm of class meetings and led to additional inconsistency in attendance with some participants. Meeting for six weeks without outside interruption could lead to more consistent attendance and greater potential impact on parents of teenagers.

With that in mind, the logical conclusion would be to modify both the frequency and duration of the sessions. For instance, it would probably be advantageous to cut the meeting frequency from six weeks to four weeks and extend the time frame from sixty minutes to ninety minutes. A four-week, 90-minute structure would accommodate the need for the same six total hours of classroom minutes as the six-week sixty-minute model. In addition, those who typically do not come back to the church campus on Sunday evenings might find it easier to make a four-week commitment, rather than six. Finally, longer classes would allow more time for conversations among parents of teenagers and foster relationship building within the group.

Clarity of Surveys

A second change I would make would involve the “Survey of Parents Whose Students are Between Ages 18 to 24” and the “Pre- and Post-Project Family Discipleship Survey.” These two surveys could have provided greater clarity and specificity in their content. The survey questions were at times ambiguous and could be interpreted to mean a variety of things which were different than what I intended. For example, one participant asked me, “How does this [‘Survey of Parents Whose Students are Between Ages 18 to 24’] apply to parents who have more than one teenager?” I would have worded the surveys differently in hopes of obtaining more accurate results.

Another component of the surveys that I would change involves the inclusion of the participant’s demographic information. For example, the survey could include the participant’s age, the number of teenagers in the home, the ages of the teenagers living at home, and the number of years, if any, the teenager has been a believer. Asking more specific questions regarding the survey participant would better inform me of potential reasons certain answers were given.

Provide Parents Notes

A third change I would make is to provide class notes to parents in the “Parents of Teenagers” class. As I taught the curriculum, several parents asked for clarity on certain Scriptures or inquired about the research that was presented. By giving the parents a note sheet, the material presented in class could be more effectively used to disciple teenagers. Furthermore, giving participants notes from the six-week class would better equip parents to take home what they learned and apply it in their homes.

Clearer Application Points

A fourth change I would make is to provide specific action points from each lesson. Though parents greatly appreciate the biblical content and research, offering them creative and practical steps to take would enable them to apply what they learned in each session. Giving parents detailed steps of action to implement at home would better equip them to disciple their teenagers for life after high school.

Theological Reflections

For the past eighteen months, I have been studying, reading, examining, writing, researching, surveying, and teaching the content found in this ministry project. There has been a significant investment of time and energy into learning how to most effectively equip parents to disciple their teenagers. I have learned many lessons throughout this process. However, this project has produced three particular theological truths to consider: (1) God takes family discipleship seriously, (2) God places heavy responsibility upon fathers, and (3) there is beauty when the church and the family complement one another.

God Takes Family Discipleship Seriously

God designed the family in such a way that parents would be the most influential people in the lives of their children. Fathers and mothers have God-given voices that are uniquely positioned to speak into the lives of their teenagers. God's design is for parents to leverage their influence and capitalize on their voice to have maximum impact in the life of their child.² There is no other relationship structured by God with greater effect.

² Gen 18:19; Deut 6:1-9; Ps 78:1-8; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:21; 2 Tim 1:5, 3:14-17.

Whether their child is a baby, a toddler, a teenager, or an adult, God intends for parents to train the next generation to love and follow him. God takes family discipleship seriously because he gets great glory through multigenerational faithfulness within a home.

God Places Heavy Responsibility Upon Fathers

Fathers have a God-given responsibility to lead, love, provide for, and protect their families. Masculine headship within a family is a reflection of how God relates within himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One sees faithful fatherhood perfectly personified within God himself as there is unity, harmony, and equality in the God-head, although each person has a distinct role. The same is true for fathers within the home. Fathers carry a heavy responsibility to lead their families in the same way God the Father relates to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Bruce Ware writes, “Lavish, generous, extravagant care for his children – this also marks the true heart and action of God, or Father Fathers can learn much about being human fathers simply by paying close attention to how God, our heavenly Father, fathers us.”³ God places heavy responsibility upon fathers to lead their homes well because they are a figurehead and reflection of God himself. Though this responsibility can be overwhelming, and even intimidating for many men, God has called fathers to be leaders.

There is Beauty When the Church and the Family Complement Each Other

God has granted parents the opportunity to leverage their God-given influence

³ Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, & Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 61-62.

over their teenager's lives. He has designed parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their teenagers. It is critical to note that God has not left parents alone in this process of raising their children to be a disciples of Christ. "A family ministry should develop the process that drives how both the church and the home combine their efforts to influence the next generation. If we really believe that nothing is more important than someone's relationship with God, it makes sense to combine the influences of the home and church."⁴ God has ordained the church to partner with parents and to equip them how to teach and train their teenagers to follow Christ. Beauty shines forth when parents and churches lock arms and work together as a team to make disciples of the next generation.

Personal Reflections

Throughout the project I have been reminded of the power, sufficiency, practicality, and efficacy of the Scriptures. I have seen first-hand how the Bible teaches, convicts, guides, and encourages me to be more faithful in my leadership as a father and pastor. The Bible gives specific instruction that is helpful and useful for the faithful reader to apply to life. From the time I came to Christ at the age of 18, I have affirmed the Bible as God's perfectly inspired and inerrant Word. However, I was reminded through this project how tremendously beneficial the Bible is for all of life. My love for God and the Bible has grown tremendously throughout the process of this project.

This project also admonished me to be faithful and consistent in leading my own family well. The Holy Spirit used the repetitive study of the above Scripture passages

⁴ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 83.

over eighteen months of preparation to remind me of my responsibility to faithfully teach and lead my wife and children toward Christ. All fathers are called to lead and I, must lead well.

This project further revealed the importance of investing time and energy into parents and families, as they are vital to a faithful and fruitful ministry in the local church. Paul told the Ephesian church that God gave leaders within the church, “to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). A part of my job description as a pastor is to equip mothers and fathers to fulfill their God-given, biblically-mandated responsibility to raise their children to follow Christ. For me to devote time and energy into activities apart from equipping the saints for the work of the ministry would be to miss a major component of responsibility God has placed upon me. This project has reminded me that part of investing in teenagers includes investing in their parents.

The biggest truth that God has planted in my heart as a result of this project is that I am always teaching. As a husband, father, and pastor, my life and my words are always under scrutiny to see if they match. Paul tells his young protégé in the ministry, Timothy, to “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4:16). Closely watching my life and my doctrine is vital for the spiritual health of my family, my church, and myself. May my life and my ministry be used by God to bring great glory to Christ Jesus!

Conclusion

Leading and loving teenagers is one of the most challenging responsibilities God

places upon parents. There is no more important task, when it comes to raising the next generation to know and follow Christ, than to equip parents to fulfill their God-given responsibility to lead and teach their teenagers the gospel. God's design for the church has never been for it to replace parents in the discipling of their teenagers, but to work alongside parents in their teaching of the gospel.

Utilizing surveys, curriculum and a parenting class as tools, this project sought to teach parents the biblical mandate to disciple their teenagers and to equip them to implement a discipleship strategy in their home. Parents learned how to lead and teach their teenagers to follow Christ. All of this took place within a local church context that has historically never experienced this type of training or equipping for parents of teenagers. May this only be the beginning of a movement of pastors and parents locking arms and committing themselves to cultivating multigenerational faithfulness in their homes and Westwood Baptist Church.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY OF PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN ARE BETWEEN AGES 18 TO 24 YEARS OLD

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your college-age child's current spiritual status, the discipleship strategies used at home when they were a teenager, and the role that Westwood Baptist Church played in helping you disciple your teenager. This research is being conducted by Kenneth Bruce for the purpose of collecting data for ministry project research. In this research you will answer the following questions to help inform a curriculum that will be taught to parents of teenagers currently in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential* and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completing this questionnaire you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Please read each question completely and circle the answer that is most accurate for you (the parent), your child, or your family.

- 1) When your child was a teenager in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, you read the Bible as a family:

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

- 2) When your child was a teenager in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, your child read the Bible:

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

- 3) When your child was a teenager in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, you prayed as a family:

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

4) When your child was a teenager in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, your child prayed:

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

5) When your child was a teenager in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, you attended worship at church as a family:

4+ times/month 2-3 times/month 1 time/month Never

6) When your child was a teenager in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, you the parent attended a small group Bible study:

4+ times/month 2-3 times/month 1 time/month Never

7) When your child was a teenager in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, your child attended a small group Bible study:

4+ times/month 2-3 times/month 1 time/month Never

8) When your child was a teenager in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, you the parent served in the church:

4+ times/month 2-3 times/month 1 time/month Never

9) When your teenager was in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, your child served in the church:

4+ times/month 2-3 times/month 1 time/month Never

10) As of today, when your college-age student is in town, they attend the college ministry activities at Westwood Baptist Church:

Always Sometimes Rarely Never

11) As of today, when your college-age student is in town, they attend Westwood Baptist Church:

Always Sometimes Rarely Never

12) As of today, your college-age student attends ANY church:

4+ times/month 2-3 times/month 1 time/month Never

13) When your teenager was in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, you the parent **claimed** to be a disciple with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ:

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

14) When your teenager was in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, you the parent **lived and displayed** a personal relationship with Jesus Christ:

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

15) When your child was a teenager in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, your child **claimed** to be a disciple with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ:

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

16) When your child was a teenager in the student ministry at Westwood Baptist Church, your child lived and displayed a growing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ:

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

17) As of today, your college-age student **claims** to be a disciple of Christ, and has a growing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ:

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

18) As of today, your college-age student **lives and displays** a growing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ:

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

19) Westwood Baptist Church played an important role in helping me disciple my teenager:

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

20) Westwood Baptist Church adequately trained me for discipling my teenager:

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

21) If you could go back in time, and have another chance to disciple your child as a teenager, what would you do differently?

22) If you could go back in time, how could Westwood Baptist Church have better equipped you to disciple your teenager?

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE EMAIL TO PARENTS OF 18 TO 24 YEAR OLDS FOR SURVEY PARTICIPATION

Dear Smith Family,

Currently, I am in the process of completing a doctorate from Southern Seminary.

I am working on a project, entitled “*Equipping Parents at Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster, Alabama to Disciple Their Teenagers for Life After High School.*”

Part of this project is the completion of an anonymous survey by parents at Westwood who have a child between the ages of 18 to 24. This is where you come in.

Would you be available to complete this survey Sunday (9/14) or Sunday (9/21)?

The 10-minute survey will take place in the Small Groups Building *Gathering Area*, from 9:30-11:30 a.m.

If you are unable to meet during these dates and times, please let me know and I will accommodate to your schedule.

Thank you for serving Westwood in this process.

In Christ,

Kenneth Bruce
Student Pastor

Kbruce@ewestwood.org



APPENDIX 3

TRAINING SESSION OVERVIEW

Training Session 1

- Intro to class (syllabus) – 10 min.
- Pre-Test – 15 min.
- Teaching of Scripture Text (Genesis 18:19) – 15 min.
- Text Application and Group Discussion – 10 min.
- Introduction of Role-Play – 5 min.
- Concluding Encouragement – 5 min.

Training Session 2

- Teaching of Scripture Text (Deuteronomy 6:1-9) – 15 min.
- Text Application and Group Discussion – 10 min.
- Family 1 – Role-Play “Faith Talk” – 10 min.
 - Debrief Family 1 – 5 min.
- Family 2 – Role-Play “Faith Talk” – 10 min.
 - Debrief Family 2 – 5 min.
- Concluding Encouragement – 5 min.

Training Session 3

- Teaching of Scripture Text (Psalm 78:1-8/Proverbs 1-7) – 15 min.
- Text Application and Group Discussion – 10 min.
- Family 3 – Role-Play “Faith Talk” – 10 min.
 - Debrief Family 3 – 5 min.
- Family 4 – Role-Play “Faith Talk” – 10 min.
 - Debrief Family 4 – 5 min.
- Concluding Encouragement – 5 min.

Training Session 4

- Teaching of Scripture Text (Ephesians 6:4/Colossians 3:20) – 15 min.
- Text Application and Group Discussion – 10 min.
- Family 5 – Role-Play “Faith Talk” – 10 min.
 - Debrief Family 3 – 5 min.
- Family 6 – Role-Play “Faith Talk” – 10 min.
 - Debrief Family 4 – 5 min.
- Concluding Encouragement – 5 min.

Training Session 5

- Teaching of Scripture Text (2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15-17) – 15 min.
- Text Application and Group Discussion – 10 min.
- Family 7 – Role-Play “Faith Talk” – 10 min.
 - Debrief Family 3 – 5 min.
- Family 8 – Role-Play “Faith Talk” – 10 min.
 - Debrief Family 4 – 5 min.
- Concluding Encouragement – 5 min.

Training Session 6

- Summary of Sessions 1-5 – 25 min.
- Post-Test – 15 min.
- Concluding Encouragement – 5 min.

APPENDIX 4

ROLE-PLAY RUBRIC: WESTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

Each male participant in the six-week parenting class will lead a five-minute “faith talk” to other parents in the class, followed by a 5 minute debriefing the effectiveness of the teaching. The parent’s role-play will grade them on three competencies: biblical accuracy, practical application, and engagement of the learner. The role-play will be deemed successful if the participant demonstrates a competency in leading a “faith talk” based upon a grading rubric by scoring above an 80% or higher on the grading rubric. The participant’s grade will be deemed most effective with a score of 10 and least effective with a score of 1.

Biblical Accuracy

- 1) Teacher demonstrates thorough understanding of the biblical text.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- 2) Teacher clearly communicates meaning of the biblical text.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Practical Application

- 3) Teacher applies biblical text to the audience.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- 4) Teacher connects teaching into the life of the hearers.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Learner Engagement

5) Teacher engages and maintains the learner's attention.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6) Teacher leads the learner to participate in "faith talk"

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7) Teacher leads the learner to seek more information on the topic.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

APPENDIX 5

EXECUTIVE STAFF CURRICULUM RUBRIC:
WESTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

For the second goal to be successful, the Executive Staff at Westwood Baptist Church must approve the curriculum for the “Parents of Teenagers” class. Below is the curriculum rubric that each Executive Staff member must grade and approve. The purpose of the curriculum is to inform parents of the Scripture’s teaching on the mandate to disciple their teenager and to equip parents how to teach their teenager to follow Christ. The format to the curriculum instructs parents from the Bible as to why they should disciple their teenager and equips them how to do it. The curriculum is also informed by the responses to the surveys completed by the parents of children who are of college age. The Executive Staff will review the curriculum for biblical foundation, theological accuracy, and practical application to parents of teenagers at Westwood Baptist Church.

- 1) The curriculum uses the Bible to equip parents how to disciple their teenager.

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

- 2) The curriculum teaches parents the biblical mandate why they must disciple their teenager.

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

- 3) The curriculum uses the Bible to teach parents their role in disciplining their teenager.

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

- 4) The curriculum uses an accurate hermeneutic (interpretation) of biblical texts.

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

- 5) The curriculum is theologically accurate in its content.

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

6) The curriculum effectively equips parents how to disciple their teenager.

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

7) The curriculum increases parent's competence on how to lead a family worship experience.

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

8) The curriculum increases parent's confidence to lead a family worship experience.

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

9) The curriculum applies specifically to parents at Westwood Baptist Church.

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

10) The curriculum will benefit parents at Westwood Baptist Church on how to disciple their teenager.

True Somewhat True Somewhat Somewhat False False

APPENDIX 6

SAMPLE EMAIL TO PARENTS OF TEENAGERS FOR TRAINING SESSIONS

Greg and Martha,

Currently, I am in the process of completing a doctorate from Southern Seminary. The project I am working on is entitled “*Equipping Parents at Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster, Alabama to Disciple Their Teenagers for Life After High School.*”

Part of this project is teaching a six-session course “Parents of Teenagers” on how to disciple your teenager.

I am hand-selecting parents of teenagers, who would be willing to participate in these training sessions.

These training sessions will meet on six Sundays: November 2, 9, 16, 23, and December 7, 14, from 4:30-5:25 p.m. at Westwood.

Would y’all be willing to participate in these training sessions?

Thank you for serving Westwood and me in this process.

In Christ,

Kenneth Bruce
Student Pastor

Kbruce@ewestwood.org



APPENDIX 7

PARENT TRAINING SESSION SYLLABUS

Over the course of six weeks, a training seminar will be given at Westwood Baptist Church on Sunday evenings for parents of teenagers. The purpose of these weekly, one-hour gatherings is to equip parents how to implement a discipleship strategy in their home. The teacher will equip the parents by teaching the biblical mandate to disciple their children and how to lead a “faith talk” with their teenagers. The curriculum used in the “Parents of Teenagers” class sessions will be approved by Westwood Baptist Church’s Executive Staff.

A survey will be given to parents before the six-week class starts, to test their knowledge of the Bible’s teaching on family discipleship and the competence of the parents in leading family worship. The same survey will be distributed at the conclusion of the “Parents of Teenagers” class to measure each participant’s increase in knowledge of the Bible’s teaching on family discipleship and competence in leading family worship. This goal will be deemed successful if there is a positive, statistically significant relationship between the pre-survey and the post-survey scores.

Class Time Schedule

4:30-4:45 p.m.	Teaching of Scripture Text
4:45-4:55 p.m.	Text Application & Group Discussion
4:55-5:25 p.m.	Role-Play
5:25-5:25 p.m.	Concluding Encouragement

Biblical Teachings on Family Discipleship Plan (Competence)

November 2 - Week One – Genesis 18:19

November 9 - Week Two – Deuteronomy 6:1-9

November 16 - Week Three – Psalm 78:1-8

November 23 - Week Four – Ephesians 6:4/Colossians 3:21

December 7 - Week Five – 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-17

December 14 - Week Six – Review of 5 Sessions

Parent Participation and Implementation of Discipleship Plan (Confidence)

During the six-week class, fathers will lead a one-time, five-minute “faith talk” to other parents in the class, followed by a debriefing on the effectiveness of the teaching. The father’s role-play will grade them on three competencies: biblical accuracy, practical

application, and engagement of the learner. The role-play will be deemed successful if the participant demonstrates a competency in leading a “faith talk” based upon a grading rubric by scoring above an 80% or higher.

APPENDIX 8

PRE-PROJECT FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY TO BE COMPLETED BY TRAINING SESSION PARENTS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your biblical knowledge of the parent' role of discipling their child. The research is being conducted by Kenneth Bruce for the purpose of collecting data for ministry project research. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and then you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completing this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal "code" word: _____

Date: _____

Please read each question completely and circle the letter that is most accurate.

- 1) God commanded Abraham in Genesis 18:19 to lead his children and household to:
 - a. Keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice
 - b. Study God's word and meditate on it day and night
 - c. Build an ark to protect them from the coming flood
 - d. Live out the commands in the land that God had promised to them
 - e. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength

- 2) Deuteronomy 4:9 warns God's people to be "on guard" and "watch diligently" so that:
 - a. They don't believe false doctrine
 - b. They don't fall into the trap of Satan's schemes
 - c. They don't forget what their eyes have seen
 - d. They can gain a heart of wisdom
 - e. They can worship God rightly

- 3) Deuteronomy 4:9-10 commands God's people to teach their children and grandchildren to:
 - a. Learn to fear the Lord
 - b. Run away from the enemy
 - c. How to fight the enemy
 - d. Build God's temple
 - e. How to prepare the Passover

- 4) Deuteronomy 6:4 refers to the Lord as:
 - a. Creator
 - b. Sustainer
 - c. One
 - d. A Mighty Warrior
 - e. Defender

- 5) Moses commands God's people in Deuteronomy 6:6 to put God's word:
 - a. In their minds
 - b. In their pockets
 - c. In their hearts
 - d. In their worship gatherings
 - e. In their songs

- 6) Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is also referred to:
 - a. The Koinenia
 - b. The Pistos
 - c. The Shema
 - d. The Haslem
 - e. The Anipocritos

- 7) Deuteronomy 6:4-7 is prayed by orthodox Jews at least:
 - a. 5 times per day
 - b. 8 times per day
 - c. 15 times per day
 - d. 2 times per day
 - e. Never

- 8) Deuteronomy 6:7 commands parents to teach their children:
 - a. Periodically
 - b. Diligently
 - c. On Sabbath days
 - d. The Passover
 - e. Covenantally

- 9) Which of the following is NOT included in Deuteronomy 6:7 which instructs parents about the time to talk of God's commands?
- When you sit in your house
 - When you walk by the way
 - When you lie down
 - When you enter the temple
 - When you rise up
- 10) Joshua was resolved to lead his family when he declared in Joshua 24:15:
- "I will offer my son as a sacrifice to the Lord"
 - "Leading worship begins with me, then to all the fathers of the land"
 - "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"
 - "I have not found so great a faith even in Israel"
 - "This town ain't big enough for the two of us"
- 11) Who does Asaph teach is responsible for teaching children in Psalm 78?
- Fathers
 - Mothers
 - Families
 - Churches/Synagogues
 - Grandmothers
- 12) Which of the following is NOT included in Psalm 78:7, which lists the benefits of passing the faith on to the next generation?
- They will not forget the works of God
 - They keep his commandments
 - They should set their hope in God
 - They receive eternal life
- 13) Solomon encourages his son in Proverbs 1-7 to:
- Get wisdom and understanding
 - Work to earn God's favor
 - Appreciate what God has made
 - Remember what God has done
- 14) In Ephesians 6:1 Paul tells children to:
- Follow Jesus
 - Put your parents first
 - Obey your parents in the Lord
 - Be filled with the Spirit
 - Go to church with your family

- 15) What promise does God make to children who honor their parents in Ephesians 6:3?
- That you may be strong and the word of God abides in you
 - That it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land
 - That your sins may be forgiven
 - That you may overcome the temptation and schemes of the devil
 - That you may go confidently in the way of the Lord
- 16) In Ephesians 6:4 Paul cautions fathers not to:
- Lead your children away from God
 - Get drunk with wine in front of your children
 - Provoke your children to anger
 - Walk according to the flesh
- 17) Colossians 3:21 commands fathers not to _____ their children:
- Provoke
 - Insult
 - Slander
 - Attack
 - Overlook
- 18) What is the result of the father's actions in Colossians 3:21?
- Children become offended
 - Children become abusive
 - Children become selfish
 - Children become prideful
 - Children become discouraged
- 19) Who are the two women who invested in Timothy according to 2 Timothy 1:5?
- Euodia and Syntyche
 - Priscilla and Aquilla
 - Tryphaena and Tryphosa
 - Lois and Eunice
 - Patrobas and Julia
- 20) What did Timothy's mother and grandmother teach him from infancy?
- The traditions of God
 - The fear of the Lord
 - The holy Scriptures
 - The sacrifices of the Temple
 - The prayers of the Saints

- 21) What does the Bible do, according to 2 Timothy 3:15?
- Teaches you right and wrong
 - Makes you wise for salvation
 - Equips you to live a godly life
 - Encourages your soul
- 22) Which of the following is NOT included in 2 Timothy 3:16 which lists the benefits of the Bible?
- Teaching
 - Reproof
 - Correction
 - Training
 - Encouraging
- 23) Modern research and the Bible agree that the greatest influence in the life of a child is:
- Parents
 - Friends
 - The world
 - Siblings
 - Money
- 24) True or False – The church is responsible for being the primary disciple-makers of teenagers:
- True
 - False
- 25) True or False – Single parents can NOT have an impact on their teens spiritual growth:
- True
 - False
- 26) True or False – Teenagers unintentionally develop a biblical worldview:
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- 27) The term “Gospel” means:
- God is good
 - Good music
 - Happiness
 - The good news
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- 28) The Gospel is best defined as:
- The work of Jesus to teach people what good morality should look like and how they should live to earn favor with God
 - The work of Jesus to save sinners through his finished work on the cross, burial, resurrection, and ascension
 - The work of Jesus to help people in need by performing miracles and so proving his deity
 - The work of man to work hard to earn God's favor by being moral, good, and upright in our lives
- 29) God's intended design is for _____ to be the spiritual leader in the home.
- Children
 - Wives/Mothers
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- 30) The word 'disciple' means:
- One who prays a prayer
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 - At least 1x/week
 - At least 1x/month
 - At least 1x/year
 - Never
- 32) My teenager enjoys participating in spiritual conversations with me:
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 - Somewhat
 - Somewhat False
 - False
- 33) I enjoy initiating spiritual conversations with my teenager:
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 - Somewhat
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- 34) Our family gathers for “faith talks”/family worship/devotions on average:
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- 38) I am executing a strategy to disciple my teenager:
- a. True
 - b. Somewhat True
 - c. Somewhat
 - d. Somewhat False
 - e. False
- 39) I attend worship gatherings at Westwood Baptist Church:
- a. 4x/month
 - b. 3x/month
 - c. 2x/month
 - d. 1x/month
 - e. Never

- 40) I read my Bible:
- a. At least 1x/day
 - b. Every 2 to 3 days
 - c. Once a week
 - d. Once every 2 to 3 weeks
 - e. Once a month
 - f. Never

APPENDIX 9

POST-PROJECT FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY TO BE COMPLETED BY TRAINING SESSION PARENTS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your biblical knowledge of the parent' role of discipling their child. This research is being conducted by Kenneth Bruce for the purpose of collecting data for ministry project research. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and then you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completing this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal "code" word: _____

Date: _____

Please read each question completely and circle the letter that is most accurate.

- 1) God commanded Abraham in Genesis 18:19 to lead his children and household to:
 - a. Keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice
 - b. Study God's word and meditate on it day and night
 - c. Build an ark to protect them from the coming flood
 - d. Live out the commands in the land that God had promised to them
 - e. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength

- 2) Deuteronomy 4:9 warns God's people to be "on guard" and "watch diligently" so that:
 - a. They don't believe false doctrine
 - b. They don't fall into the trap of Satan's schemes
 - c. They don't forget what their eyes have seen
 - d. They can gain a heart of wisdom
 - e. They can worship God rightly

- 3) Deuteronomy 4:9-10 commands God's people to teach their children and grandchildren to:
 - a. Learn to fear the Lord
 - b. Run away from the enemy
 - c. How to fight the enemy
 - d. Build God's temple
 - e. How to prepare the Passover

- 4) Deuteronomy 6:4 refers to the Lord as:
 - a. Creator
 - b. Sustainer
 - c. One
 - d. A Mighty Warrior
 - e. Defender

- 5) Moses commands God's people in Deuteronomy 6:6 to put God's word:
 - a. In their minds
 - b. In their pockets
 - c. In their hearts
 - d. In their worship gatherings
 - e. In their songs

- 6) Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is also referred to:
 - a. The Koinenia
 - b. The Pistos
 - c. The Shema
 - d. The Haslem
 - e. The Anipocritos

- 7) Deuteronomy 6:4-7 is prayed by orthodox Jews at least:
 - a. 5 times per day
 - b. 8 times per day
 - c. 15 times per day
 - d. 2 times per day
 - e. Never

- 8) Deuteronomy 6:7 commands parents to teach their children:
 - a. Periodically
 - b. Diligently
 - c. On Sabbath days
 - d. The Passover
 - e. Covenantally

- 9) Which of the following is NOT included in Deuteronomy 6:7 which instructs parents about the time to talk of God's commands?
- When you sit in your house
 - When you walk by the way
 - When you lie down
 - When you enter the temple
 - When you rise up
- 10) Joshua was resolved to lead his family when he declared in Joshua 24:15:
- "I will offer my son as a sacrifice to the Lord"
 - "Leading worship begins with me, then to all the fathers of the land"
 - "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"
 - "I have not found so great a faith even in Israel"
 - "This town ain't big enough for the two of us"
- 11) Who does Asaph teach is responsible for teaching children in Psalm 78?
- Fathers
 - Mothers
 - Families
 - Churches/Synagogues
 - Grandmothers
- 12) Which of the following is NOT included in Psalm 78:7, which lists the benefits of passing the faith on to the next generation?
- They will not forget the works of God
 - They keep his commandments
 - They should set their hope in God
 - They receive eternal life
- 13) Solomon encourages his son in Proverbs 1-7 to:
- Get wisdom and understanding
 - Work to earn God's favor
 - Appreciate what God has made
 - Remember what God has done
- 14) In Ephesians 6:1 Paul tells children to:
- Follow Jesus
 - Put your parents first
 - Obey your parents in the Lord
 - Be filled with the Spirit
 - Go to church with your family

- 15) What promise does God make to children who honor their parents in Ephesians 6:3?
- That you may be strong and the word of God abides in you
 - That it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land
 - That your sins may be forgiven
 - That you may overcome the temptation and schemes of the devil
 - That you may go confidently in the way of the Lord
- 16) In Ephesians 6:4 Paul cautions fathers not to:
- Lead your children away from God
 - Get drunk with wine in front of your children
 - Provoke your children to anger
 - Walk according to the flesh
- 17) Colossians 3:21 commands fathers not to _____ their children:
- Provoke
 - Insult
 - Slander
 - Attack
 - Overlook
- 18) What is the result of the father's actions in Colossians 3:21?
- Children become offended
 - Children become abusive
 - Children become selfish
 - Children become prideful
 - Children become discouraged
- 19) Who are the two women who invested in Timothy according to 2 Timothy 1:5?
- Euodia and Syntyche
 - Priscilla and Aquilla
 - Tryphaena and Tryphosa
 - Lois and Eunice
 - Patrobas and Julia
- 20) What did Timothy's mother and grandmother teach him from infancy?
- The traditions of God
 - The fear of the Lord
 - The holy Scriptures
 - The sacrifices of the Temple
 - The prayers of the Saints

- 21) What does the Bible do, according to 2 Timothy 3:15?
- Teaches you right and wrong
 - Makes you wise for salvation
 - Equips you to live a godly life
 - Encourages your soul
- 22) Which of the following is NOT included in 2 Timothy 3:16 which lists the benefits of the Bible?
- Teaching
 - Reproof
 - Correction
 - Training
 - Encouraging
- 23) Modern research and the Bible agree that the greatest influence in the life of a child is:
- Parents
 - Friends
 - The world
 - Siblings
 - Money
- 24) True or False – The church is responsible for being the primary disciple-makers of teenagers:
- True
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- 25) True or False – Single parents can NOT have an impact on their teens spiritual growth:
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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING PARENTS AT WESTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH, ALABASTER, ALABAMA TO DISCIPLE THEIR TEENAGERS FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Kenneth Preston Bruce, D.Ed.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Wesley L. Feltner

This project sought to equip parents of teenagers at Westwood Baptist Church to disciple their teenagers. Chapter 1 introduces Westwood and the project strategy to equip parents. Chapter 2 explores the biblical and theological foundations for parents as the primary disciple-makers of their teenagers. Chapter 3 considers the theoretical, philosophical, and practical issues for parent's discipling their teenagers. Furthermore the chapter addresses how parents can disciple with competence and confidence, and how churches are to equip parents to disciple their teenagers. Chapter 4 discusses the details of the project and how three phases were executed at Westwood. Chapter 5 evaluates the results project and offers personal reflection on the project.

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