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EQUIPPING PARENTS TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN
AT CHAMPION FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH

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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING PARENTS TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

AT CHAMPION FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH

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I dedicate this project to my wife, Kendra, for her love and support throughout the seminars and the process of the project. Thanks also to our kids, Aiden, Bryson, and Corinne for their willingness to put up with the “test” devotionals along the way.

And to the awesome body of believers at Champion Forest,
may we tell the best story over and over.

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PREFACE

I began this degree as my heart sensed a need in my own family and church family. In my years of ministry, I have worked with students and their families for twenty-six years and currently serve married couples and families. Some of those years ministering to students were spent in frustration because I knew there were certain things I could not fix. Gradually, I began to see the obvious connection with parents and spiritual formation.

The faculty and staff at Southern have whetted my appetite for spiritual formation in parents so that all believing parents disciple their children. The passion with which professors addressed their respective seminars made me more passionate for Jesus and the gospel in the family setting. Special thanks to Dr. Danny Bowen for his insight and support throughout the writing of this project and his enthusiasm for the outcome.

The body of believers at Champion Forest, specifically the parents and families, continues to be a blessing and encouragement. Thank you to all who participated in the process and now continue to practice these disciplines in your homes.

Lastly, thanks to my incredible family who continues to show grace each time they put up with my short comings. I love our experiences in the family room, whether we are on task or not. And thanks to my wife, Kendra, who is an awesome help-mate and has helped shape my heart for our family and many others.

David Upchurch

Houston, Texas

December 2016

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip parents of Champion Forest Baptist Church to use their personal, spiritual stories in family devotional settings to disciple their children.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to assess parental knowledge of the biblical mandate for parents to be the primary disciple makers of their children and to evaluate their current disciple making practices. This goal was measured through the use of The Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey.¹ The survey was administered to a minimum of 40 parents. The survey sought to discover family practices, knowledge of biblical principles, and the parent's leadership in these areas. This goal was successfully met when the results of the survey instrument were analyzed and an understanding of current parent's knowledge and practices were realized.

The second goal was to create an eight week course to equip parents to tell their spiritual stories using Scriptures and their personal events in family devotional settings. The course taught the biblical foundation which highlighted the role of disciple-

¹Appendix 1.

making for parents in the home. The sessions that followed focused on equipping parents to tell their personal testimony, their marriage story (if married), their decision making processes, and their responses to tough circumstances. The goal of effective curriculum was measured by a panel of staff and lay leaders of the church using a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the material.² The goal was successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria meet or exceed the sufficient level.

The third goal was to equip a minimum of 20 family units to lead family devotionals utilizing biblical principles and stories of their lives. The goal was successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-project surveys. Interviews were also conducted with the children of these parents to measure their knowledge of their family's spiritual practices, their parents' salvation story, marriage story, and any decision-making practices discussed in the home.

The fourth goal was a commitment plan for each individual family to conduct family devotions for eight weeks during and following the course. After writing their personal stories, each of the parents was to plan a devotional time with their children to tell their story along with biblical support and principles. This goal was measured by a commitment card filled out by each parent and included a date of completion for each element.³ This goal was considered successful when 75 percent of the parents conducted their devotionals and returned the form indicating completion.

²Appendix 2.

Church Context

The Champion Forest Baptist Church campus is located near Spring, Texas in the Northwest area of Houston approximately twenty-five miles north from downtown. The ministry to the majority of this area would be considered suburban and middle to upper middle-class. A variety of demographic diversity in the family units makes up potential opportunities within the church's geographical context.

Champion Forest has been a fast growing church in a fast growing area. The body of believers known as Champion Forest Baptist Church began meeting on September 20, 1970, with six people. Today CFBC includes a total membership of approximately 11,500 with about 8,500 of those as resident members. Worship attendance averages close to 6,000 people and current Life Group (Sunday School) attendance is approximately 4,600 in age graded classes on Sunday mornings. The membership is served by a staff of more than forty individuals grouped into twelve major ministry department areas. In addition, the body of Champion Forest now includes a growing Hispanic Ministry with full and part-time staff members.⁴

Champion Forest has specific ministries for each age group beginning with Preschool Ministry, Kids Ministry, Student Ministry, and Adult Ministry. With each specific ministry there is a tendency to develop specialized ministry events to address issues and topics. At any time one of the above ministries might plan ongoing, age-graded programs, specific discipleship classes, and/or one-time events to address the

³Appendix 4.

⁴Much of the information in this section is from Champion Forest Baptist Church, "Our History" accessed June 6, 2013. <http://www.championforest.org/about/history/>.

topics of discipleship, marriage, or the family. These ministry attempts have been numerically successful. However more consistent spiritual growth and ongoing discipleship should become a focus. A specific, ongoing ministry of equipping families could be a powerful tool in the lives of those inside the walls of Champion Forest Baptist and those yet to be.

The present mission statement of Champion Forest Baptist Church is as follows: “Champion Forest Baptist Church . . . Helping people make sense out of life through Christ-centered living.” In order to achieve this mission, the church practices a strategy called “Know, Grow, and Go.” More specifically, members are encouraged to “Know” Christ through authentic worship. The second word of the strategic process is “Grow.” People were created for relationships, and “Grow” communicates part of a strategy to use small groups. On Sunday mornings there are Life Groups for every age group and life stage so that individuals and couples can grow deeper in their knowledge of Christ as part of this faith community and grow deeper in connection with each other. “Go” refers to individual members using their gifts and abilities to serve the church, community, state, and world in the name of Christ. These Sunday morning environments would be good places to start and continue parent equipping strategies such as this project.

The Know, Grow and Go of the church’s strategy can also translate into family ministry. Each family is encouraged to attend worship services regularly and to be involved in a Life Group as a leader or a learner. Likewise, families are exhorted to go on mission as a part of their typical day in the community and on trips throughout the year. In each of these environments parents can take advantage of family ministry

opportunities. There are regular sermon series on the importance of family and the purposes of parenting. Life Groups at Champion Forest attempt to cover issues related to family. And, there are mission opportunities for the family to serve together missionally.

Currently, I am the Associate Pastor to Median Adults and oversee Life Groups at a new campus. The bulk of those responsibilities are related to Sunday morning Life Groups for married adults at the new campus and ages 41-54 on the main campus. However, the group for this project was broader than 41-54 so that the course addresses a group of parents more likely to disciple a broader range of children's ages.

Rationale

The current culture seems confused as it tries to squeeze the “modern family” into a myriad of different shapes and selfish purposes. This cultural pressure creates a greater need for a strong family ministry within the church in order to impact its community now more than ever. To develop a strong family, the gospel must be the foundation. Every family needs to tell its most important, gospel centered story similar to the exhortation found in Psalm 78: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old—we will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.” Therefore, parents must disciple and tell their spiritual stories to their children in a variety of formats and contexts so that the Christian faith is passed on to grandchildren's grandchildren.

Reading current statistics on church attendance and the average knowledge of basic Christian doctrine concerns many pastors and leaders. More than 30 million Americans align themselves with systems of faith and forms of spirituality that are

inconsistent with biblical teaching.⁵ Many ministers and pastors preach and teach scriptural principles on Sundays but what happens during the week and what kind of spiritual depth is being cultivated personally remains a question. Pastors are in a tough position to change a current ministry segmented context and apply a new model of family ministry.⁶ Yet, it remains clear that the church can emphasize and partner with parents as they commit to being the primary disciple maker in the lives of their children.

One of the ways parents create a sense of identity and family is through the use of stories, specifically their own personal life story and experiences. Within these stories parents also teach and this teaching becomes a vehicle for doctrine. In the Old Testament readers find a rich, oral tradition for the purpose of teaching doctrine and practical living. Stories about the lives of teenagers like Joseph, Esther, and Daniel were likely told to children of all ages to serve as examples of a righteous life. Therefore, the goal for a parent is for each child to do what is right because he or she loves God. For parents their story can be the beginning point for family devotional content. Parents know their own stories best so this project began there instead of creating elaborate plans for devotional lessons. Parents started with God's word interpreting the stories about their life as they pass on the faith and Christian distinctives to the next generation.

Many parents know that they are to be the primary disciple makers of their own children but they may not know how or when to begin the process. A survey in 2003 found that 85 percent of parents believe it is their responsibility to disciple their children

⁵George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003), 55.

⁶Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 193.

however, more than 2 out of 3 “abdicate that responsibility to their church.”⁷ The project can address this discipleship issue by helping parents tell their life story in a way that communicates some basic theological truths. Every Christian should be able to communicate a personal salvation testimony so that it communicates basic truths about God, mankind, Jesus, and the cross. Through teaching and training on these doctrines, parents become able to clearly articulate their testimony and tell their salvation story to their children. The impact of that story told at different times and stages in the child’s life form an understanding of salvation and affirm the beliefs of the parents as well.

Other memorable moments that make up a parent’s life stories were developed. In order to teach other basic doctrines parents were encouraged to pick from specific situations of their life and tell about the lessons they learned. A couple’s marriage story can communicate a gospel-centered definition of marriage and family and also clarify dating principles and purity standards. The equipping lessons helped each parent focus on defining moments in the parent’s dating and marriage and then use those stories to address practical topics. Life stories about big decisions and “hard” situations can teach about God’s will, blessings, forgiveness and the truth of Scripture. Other stories may tie in key relationships the parents have experienced. The focus on memorable life moments and ways to tell those stories so that God’s story shines in the facts and demonstrate basic doctrines.

⁷George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, 77-8.

Overall, parents should be able to tell the best story ever told by telling the story they know best. Therefore, it is imperative that this project be implemented at Champion Forest in order to disciple the next generation.

Definitions, Limitations and Delimitations

The purpose of this project is to equip parents to tell their stories in a way that communicates God's story to their children. The oral tradition of the Old Testament contains examples of stories that were passed down with a purpose, to teach the next generation how to relate to God and why to live in obedience.⁸ A parent's salvation testimony, marriage story, and ongoing life stories were the focus of the stories told in the home.

Story. The *story* is a key teaching method and often a vehicle of spiritual truths in the Bible. The best stories are personal and relatable in nature. Moreover, children love stories and the story of Scripture is important to a child's spiritual formation.⁹ Parents were guided through some exercises and teaching principles to write personal stories about their salvation, dating and marriage, decision making, and responding to life's circumstances.

Personal testimony. *Personal testimony* is a phrase that can be misunderstood. Specifically, a parent's salvation testimony was used as the primary spiritual story. Few parents actually tell this story or are comfortable telling it, therefore some aspects of

⁸Jeffrey E. Feinberg, "Making Stories Come Alive," in *Nurturing Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 147.

⁹Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, "THE Story and the Spiritual Formation of Children in the Church and Home" in *Nurturing Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 366.

storytelling and teaching are important. The testimony was broken down into several components. Each parent was instructed to begin with God's design and plan. Then, recognition of how personal sin caused separation and brokenness was addressed. Next, grace was communicated in how God made a way through Christ, the cross, and resurrection. Lastly, the parents placing their faith in Christ for forgiveness and salvation completed the testimony themes.

Marriage story. The *marriage story*, for this project, is the story of how the husband and wife met, dated and married. If a parent is unmarried or remarried there are still some principles to be taught from the perspective of a person's dating history.

Life story. The parent's ongoing *life story* are moments that the parents saw God at work, such as how they prayed over decisions, chose a vocation, and perhaps a consequence or result that taught a life lesson.

The first limitation of this project was the duration of the teaching sessions. The series covered the above topics in eight consecutive Wednesday nights. Second, the project was limited to family units with children living at home between the ages of five and eighteen. Last, the length of the project limited the amount of spiritual growth that can be measured. Spiritual growth occurs rapidly at some seasons and slowly at others. The length of time in this intervention occurred over a shorter time span of eight to twelve weeks.

The delimitations of this project are found in the life stories of the parents. After a parent's salvation testimony and marriage story, the parents are free to choose other stories on which to build a family devotional for spiritual practices. These stories can be from any stage of life that they chose. Another delimitation is that these stories

were edited for time and topics. Each parent must concisely tell the stories in a way that fits into the family schedule. Generally, a ten to fifteen-minute family devotional is an average length of time for new family practices. By choosing these personal stories to tell a parent is free to choose one in which the right value or conviction is demonstrated.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project consisted of pre-project questionnaires and post-project questionnaires of both the adult participants and child and adolescent participants.¹⁰ These questionnaires measured the current family practices and teaching of key Christian doctrines. An evaluation rubric was used to examine the material written and taught in the eight week teaching series. At the end of the course personal interviews of children whose parents were participating in the course were conducted to measure their understanding of the gospel and family practices. The first goal of this project was to assess parent's knowledge of the biblical instruction for parents and their current practices of disciple making. This goal was considered met when at least 40 parents complete these surveys.

The second goal was to create an eight week course to equip parents tell their life's spiritual stories using biblical verses and personal events in family devotional settings. The initial lesson taught the biblical foundation for parents to spiritually train their children. Then, the following sessions equipped parents to tell their salvation testimony, their marriage story (if married), their decision making processes, and their

¹⁰The research instruments used in this project will be utilized in compliance with and under the approval of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in this ministry project.

response to tough circumstances. The content was evaluated by a panel of staff and lay leaders in the church using a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope and applicability of the material.¹¹ The goal was successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria meet or exceed the sufficient level.

The third goal was to equip up to 20 family units to lead family devotionals utilizing biblical principles and stories of their lives. These sessions equipped parents to lead their families spiritually. Each parent was challenged to write and speak the gospel through a personal testimony. The same process was used to teach about the importance of each parent's dating and marriage story and other times in personal history when the parent sense God at work. The goal was successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-project surveys. A *t*-test is the best way to compare any differences in scores related to practices or knowledge among the same participants.¹² Interviews were also conducted with the children of these parents to measure their pre- and post-project knowledge and recognition of their parent's life stories. The use of "A Baptist Catechism," adapted by John Piper, was suggested and recommended as a reference for some simple answers to theological issues or questions encountered during the preparation and practice of the individual family devotionals.¹³

¹¹Appendix 5.

¹²Neil, J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*. 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008).

¹³John Piper, A Baptist Catechism, accessed on January 2016, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-baptist-catechism>.

The fourth goal was a commitment plan for each individual family to commit to conducting family devotions for 8 weeks following the course. After writing a personal story each parent was to schedule a devotional time with the family to teach and tell the story and principles. This goal was measured by a commitment card filled out by each parent and included a date of completion for each element.¹⁴ This goal was considered successful when 75 percent of the parents conducted their devotionals and return the form indicating completion.

At the conclusion of the project the parents were challenged to continue meeting once a week to disciple their children through the family devotional time. After the course, a survey was sent to those families who participated asking them about their family practices. This survey evaluated the success of the second goal of equipping parents to lead consistent family devotional

¹⁴Appendix 5

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR DISCIPLE-MAKING
PARENTS

Parenting advice comes from many different sources. In the midst of both loud and subtle counsel, many parents attempt to find a trusted and reliable source. For generations Christians have looked to the Old and New Testament to provide help, wisdom, and a gospel-centered approach to parenting. God's word provides the best foundation for parents and instructs them to be the primary disciple-makers in the home. Scripture also describes a variety of formal and informal methods to be used in a variety of settings.

Several passages highlight the parenting role and emphasize the priority of parenting and disciple-making with their children. For this project, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:1-4, and 2 Timothy 1:5, 6 and 3:14 are examined. In these passages, the practical activities of the parenting role are discussed in broad ideals. However, the expectation of the parent is clearly defined. Parents are to disciple and train their own children in the Christian faith, in a Christian worldview, and in God-honoring decision-making.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Early in the history of the nation of Israel, God used Moses to communicate the Law and covenant that would define the relationship of God with his people. In the

book of Deuteronomy, the nation received the covenant a second time as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. Moses communicated with each tribe and family about the expectations for those in relationship with Yahweh. In chapter 6 of Deuteronomy, Moses gave a charge to the nation. He singled out parents regarding their relationship to God and their responsibility to their children:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.¹

Love and Covenant

Deuteronomy 6 stresses the centrality of the covenant with Yahweh and the importance of the law. In the first few verses, the author reminds the nation of Israel about their relationship with God and motivation of the heart. Next, the text turns towards the home and the teaching of these important concepts and commands to children. The love relationship between God and his people creates the backdrop for the entirety of instruction heard throughout the book of Deuteronomy.

The words of Moses, in verses 4 and 5, are intended to grab the attention of his hearers with a portion of this chapter known as the Shema. This passage is similar to a legal summons, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”² These verses echo

¹All Scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are from the English Standard Version.

²A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 176.

the first two commandments clarify the identity of the sovereign of this covenant. Moses reminds the nation that they are Yahweh's and that He is their God. The emphasis communicated exclusivity and unity with their unique Deity.³ The idea, that Yahweh is personal and one, is unique to this covenant. In time, the immature, unsettled nation would face tempting Canaanite practices challenging their loyalty to Yahweh.⁴ Reciting these verses, daily, was a first step towards faithfulness.⁵ Plus, the repetition of these phrases served as a teaching tool for children as they heard their parents repeat the Shema throughout the day.

Verse 4 emphasizes that God is "our God." Yahweh is personally involved in the daily life of the people of the nation of Israel. As Moses spoke these words, the parents in the audience would understand their unique role in the family. Then it became the parent's duty to pass on the requirements of the covenant to their children.⁶

The love relationship of God and his people distinguished the covenant in Deuteronomy. Brueggemann stated that this was a "peculiar contribution" of Deuteronomy concerning this type of ancient covenant relationship.⁷ Cairns agreed that love is specific to the legal code as found in Deuteronomy.⁸ These words of love are

³Anthony Phillips, *Deuteronomy*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary: New English Bible (Cambridge, GB: Cambridge Press, 1973), 55.

⁴Gerhard Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1966), 63.

⁵Ian Cairns, *Word and Presence: A Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 84.

⁶Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 151.

⁷Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 83.

⁸Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 12.

basic to the covenant as they are to the family. “You shall love. . .” is the first command in these verses and directs parents to love Yahweh. Parents are to love God before anything or anyone else and are commanded to teach their children the same. The love Moses calls for encompasses all facets of life. The phrase “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” communicates this all-encompassing command.⁹ These specific Hebrew words communicated purpose and single-mindedness, as well.¹⁰ Using this phrase, Moses introduced the biblical purpose for covenant people. One of the steps for parents to participate in loving God is to lead the disciple-making process by committing themselves to God.

Teach Them Diligently

Parents are to love God with all of their being and they are to teach these words to their children with the same comprehensiveness. McConville noted that teaching children was an ongoing practice more important than the dedication of the firstborn found in the book of Exodus.¹¹ Parents are commanded to teach “diligently.” In the next few verses, the transmission of the relationship between God and His people focuses on the family and the role of parents. “And these words,” in verse 6, reflected back on the commands previously mentioned and the requirements of his covenant. “These words,” could also include all of the Law which played a significant role

⁹Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 91.

¹⁰Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 84.

¹¹Dedication of Hebrew babies was to be done in strict accordance to the Law. However, as the child grew and matured, education in the Law and covenant became more important. J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 139.

throughout the book of Deuteronomy.¹² Also unique to this covenant is the setting for the commands. The words of the law and covenant are to be “on your heart”, in other words, internalized. The personal, inner nature of the heart communicates how believing parents need to cultivate a personal relationship with God and be able to express this to their children. The heart was also considered a place of understanding and Craigie noted how this internal writing is connected to relational understanding not legalism.¹³

In verse 7, the phrase “you shall teach them diligently to your children” is the second command for parents. This verse asserts that the Hebrew parent must teach using a process of repetition.¹⁴ Mayes noted that the phrase “teach them diligently” is related to sharpening a knife or tool.¹⁵ The blade would be rubbed against a sharpening stone to put a cutting edge on it. Requiring multiple strokes through the process, the blade was gradually sharpened to the desired edge. Teaching these commands is a similarly repetitive process. Parents must teach the commands and covenant of God over and over in many different circumstances. Repeating a command throughout the day or using it when applicable would support the word of God beginning to take root. The Hebrew word for “talk” in this verse is different from the command to teach.¹⁶ The use of this word implies a less formal instruction and more conversational in style. Parents must take

¹²Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962), 75.

¹³Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 170.

¹⁴Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 78.

¹⁵Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 177.

¹⁶Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 324.

advantage of both formal and informal types of instruction to obey this command in their homes.

Whenever and Wherever

The classroom for faith can be simply determined by the location of the family. The pairs of words, in verse 7, address the family setting and communicate completeness.¹⁷ Parents are to use teachable moments in the house or on the road; in a market or in a field; at bedtime or in the morning. Parents must be ready to teach or talk about the commands at any time. Ultimately, this Deuteronomic decree seeks to establish ongoing education concerning spiritual matters wherever the family journeys. “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.”¹⁸

The third command, in these verses, addresses the visibility of God’s word. In verses 8 and 9, there is a movement from personal, inner commitment to public exhibition. There is movement from the heart to the head, from the door of a house to the city gate.¹⁹ The Israelite’s daily life was to include God’s word in and on private and public venues. The repetition of seeing God’s word each time a child entered a door or gate helped reinforce the parent’s lessons. The phrases “bind them . . . on your hand . . . and . . . between your eyes” demonstrate a type of obvious, visible reminder. Much like

¹⁷The word pairs (teach and talk, sit and walk, house and way, lie down and rise) are a Hebrew grammatical construction known as a merism. These pairs used in this way are intended to communicate a totality of setting and timing. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 78.

¹⁸Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

¹⁹Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 91.

people might tie a string on a finger to remember something, some Hebrews would wear bands around their wrists and head with biblical inscriptions on them. “Between your eyes” would place God’s word prominently in a focal point and in the center of the head. There is evidence of headbands with frontlets containing a box with a written phrase of scripture in them.²⁰ However, some scholars do not believe this had to be a literal binding of the law on the body since in verse 6 there are to be words on the heart, also.²¹ The goal, however, is the same, internalization of God’s commands exemplifying the priority of his unique relationship.

The text uniquely underscores the parent’s responsibility to teach children about the law and how to love Yahweh. Craigie believed the result of this parental love for God and teaching distinguished each family unit, the home, and even the community through obedience to these commands.²² To fulfill this responsibility, parents need to communicate their personal love for God and talk about God and their spiritual life in all of their daily settings.

Psalm 78:1-8

Parents are instructed to teach and talk about God and his commands with their children as a method of disciple-making. Another method for parents to use as they instruct their children is storytelling about a family’s history with God. In Psalm 78, parents are urged to be disciple-makers by telling the stories of God. These stories about

²⁰McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

²¹Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 177.

²²Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 171.

God's deeds in the history of his people and were vitally important to the future of the nation. Throughout this psalm, the author holds himself, and other parents, responsible to declare the works and wonders of God so that their children will know God:

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Tell the Stories of God

The psalmist purposed to warn the nation about the necessity of remembering and worshiping Yahweh.²³ This psalm is categorized as a wisdom psalm and, according to Bellinger, the content of Psalm 78 emphasizes the Torah.²⁴ As a part of Hebrew wisdom literature this psalm has a certain structure. Phrases are called strophes, or stanzas, and each one builds upon the next.²⁵ For example, the author makes a statement in verse 1, “give ear,” and then the following phrase, “incline your ear,” which adds emphasis. This repetitive structure is found throughout the introductory verses to demonstrate the valuable nature of communicating the stories of God.

²³Dirk J. Human, *Psalms and Mythology*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 124.

²⁴W. H. Bellinger, *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 129.

²⁵Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 564.

The psalmist demands the attention of his audience in verse 1 because he considers his topic vitally important to the future. In verse 2, he continues in the style of wisdom by using parables and old sayings. The Hebrew word *mashal* is translated, parable, which is a type of story using comparisons to communicate important content.²⁶ Parables are used in Hebrew literature as a part of the wisdom tradition.²⁷ The psalmist wants his audience to engage the mind as they remember stories they had heard from their fathers. These narrative accounts are more than simple history, they are also a method of teaching the law and covenant.²⁸ VanGemeren echoed this as he described how history, viewed from God's perspective, should be passed on by fathers who tell their children about their personal history with God.²⁹

Parents play an important role as the primary storytellers and instructors in their homes. The psalmist reminds his hearers about their father's stories and their intended effect. The writer encourages each household to become the best environment for the stories of God's law, salvation, and wonders. The psalmist includes the hearer's children as the audience of the stories of God, in verse 4. Kidner commented about verse 4, that there is no room for parent neutrality if impact of the future generation is important.³⁰ The author intends and hopes that telling these stories become like a

²⁶John Goldingay, *Psalms*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 485.

²⁷Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr. *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 341.

²⁸Eddie Cloer, *Psalms 51-89*, Truth for Today Commentary (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2006), 487.

²⁹Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 506.

generational chain with one generation teaching another and those descendants teaching the next. Goldingay noted, “Israel knew that wisdom more often lies in what has been passed down through the generation than in the latest theory or research finding.”³¹

For the Next Generation

In verse 5, parents were reminded to teach God’s statutes, laws, and commands to their children. This was a part of the covenant that fathers were to pass on to the next generation.³² Part of the purpose of the covenant helped maintain the bond between Israel and God. That relationship between the nation and Yahweh was also intended to supersede any other relationship.³³ One aspect of teaching the law and testimony describes God’s activity in the history of Israel and ways people relate to God. Theodore of Mopsuestia believed that one reason God’s law was given to the Jews was so that Jewish parents would tell their children about God.³⁴ Teaching children about God and his commands was an expectation for the nation of Israel.³⁵

The importance of the stories of God and his law concerned the nation and the family. For the ancient Hebrew family, the stories about the earliest ancestors were told

³⁰Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 16 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 311.

³¹Goldingay, *Psalms*, 485.

³²Terrien, *The Psalms*, 565.

³³Cloer, *Psalms 51-89*, 487.

²⁹Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on Psalms 1-81*, trans. Robert C. Hill, *Writings from the Greco-Roman World*, vol. 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 1035.

³⁵VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 506.

to remember God and influence the future.³⁶ These stories of life-changing, history changing events describe God's faithfulness to his people. The typical household in Israel housed multiple generations, fathers, sons, and likely grandchildren.³⁷ It is probable that the entire family would gather together and repetitiously tell these stories and rehearse the law. This would be very similar to the storytelling example of the Passover in Exodus 12. In Exodus 12:26, the children ask about the meaning of the Passover feast. The father then described those miraculous events which told of God's protection. These historical memories of God made the family setting an integral part of handing down the law and those stories.³⁸

These Stories Lead to Salvation

The psalmist emphasized to his hearers the goal of telling these testimonies to their children. That goal for Israelite children was to remember the works of God and as a result to place individual hope in God. Verses 7 and 8 contain a contrast between the faithful and rebellious. One option was to forget and the other option was to remember.³⁹ If parents were faithful to tell the next generation about God, then each child's hope in God continues the cycle of faithfulness. If parents failed to transmit the stories of God, then their children were likely to repeat the stubborn and rebellious attitude of previous

³⁶Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 340.

³⁷Goldingay, *Psalms*, 486.

³⁸Cloer, *Psalms*, 486.

³⁹Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962), 539.

generations towards God. For these Jewish families' salvation was found in faithfulness to the covenant and a unwavering hope in their God.

The author urged parents to fulfill the role of disciple-makers by telling the stories of God throughout the nation's history. He demonstrated how the point of telling Israel's story of redemptive history builds faith in the next generation. Then, trust in God is accomplished by remembering God's deeds and keeping his commands.⁴⁰ The psalmist expected parents to communicate how God involved himself in their lives. Then, a child could see the testimony of a parent and lives could be impacted. When parents obediently talk of God's involvement in life and tell his stories, their children, and even their children's children, are impacted by the recollection of the provision and protection of God.

Ephesians 6:1-4

Teaching God's commands and telling his stories describe some of the content of a parent's disciple-making process in the home. The role of the Christian parent is further delineated as the apostle Paul gave useful advice to children and parents. These New Testament parents were now acquainted with the gospel of Jesus Christ and called to be unique disciple-makers within the family. Paul addressed family relationships in chapters 5 and 6. In the first four verses of chapter 6 he instructed children and fathers to be different from the surrounding culture in their familial relationships for the sake of the gospel. While both parents teach, Paul prioritizes the role of the father in the family's teaching and discipleship.

⁴⁰VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 506.

The letter to the Ephesians is a well-known epistle of Paul and contains theological truths and practical strategies for a Christ-centered life. Paul follows his typical development of theology in the first few chapters. Practical application of those same truths follows.⁴¹ Included in chapters 5 and 6 is what some have called a “household code” which addressed roles and practices within the home.⁴² At the end of chapter 5 Paul wrote to husbands and wives regarding marriage relationships. Next, in Ephesians 6:1-4 Paul utilized four verses to accomplish his aim for Christian children and parents:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

In verse 1, Paul built on the topic of submission from chapter 5 and exhorted children to obey their parents. The Greek word for obey literally means to “hear under.”⁴³ In the family, the child’s role is to learn “under,” or from, the parents. Contentious parent/child relationships may characterize some unbelieving families but it is to be different in the Christian home. In order to be in right relationship to the Lord, children are commanded to submit and learn. Verse 2 contains a reference to the Law and verse 3 states a promise for those children who are obedient. These practical words of Paul lead

⁴¹John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 437.

⁴²William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 144.

⁴³Peter S. Williamson and Mary Healy, *Ephesians*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 180.

children to deepen their relationship with the Lord through consistent obedience to their parents.

Fathers, Be Different, Disciple

In verse 4, Paul wrote to fathers about the specific task of teaching children in the home. Paul articulated this duty as a parental obligation to educate children but clearly singles out the role of the father.⁴⁴ As a result, fathers are warned to be careful in their parenting because potentially negative reactions from their children. As Paul appealed to Christian children, he also appeals to Christian fathers to be different. The typical father of that ancient period had significant power over his children, including the power of life and death.⁴⁵ Fathers of that period's culture were known to be irritable and impulsive which often resulted in drastic consequences.⁴⁶ As a result, Paul cautioned Christian fathers about their potential, negative impact. According to these verses, the father's role in a biblically healthy family was one of responsibility more than power or privilege.⁴⁷ He emphasized the Christian ideal by urging fathers to take a personal interest in each child's discipleship. The apostle again contrasted the surrounding culture by tasking believing fathers with the creation of a spiritual culture in the home.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Pheme Perkins, *Ephesians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 137.

⁴⁵Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 568.

⁴⁶Eadie, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, 444.

⁴⁷Andreas J. Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 86.

⁴⁸Eadie, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, 444.

The apostle described the type of instruction and training for fathers to follow. Fathers are to “bring them [their children] up . . . in the Lord.” The Greek word *ektrepho* means “to nourish” or “to rear,” which is a reference to both the child’s physical and psychological training.⁴⁹ Paul called Christian fathers to be different than the cultural standard by being personally and intimately involved in the process. Christian fathers must consider their children’s developmental needs. The word for “nourishing” can include physical and mental needs as well as spiritual needs.⁵⁰ Each parent, and specifically Christian fathers, should be intimately involved in raising their child so that they learn and mature as they grow.

Discipline and Instruct

Paul exhorted fathers to “discipline” and “instruct” as they bring up their children. These two Greek words represent much more than educational content. Discipline and instruction referred to the “whole process of education.”⁵¹ These words provide a level of methodology for parents to follow. The Greek word *paideia* includes instruction through action which involves academic, moral, and philosophical areas.⁵² It is often translated “discipline” however, it encompasses more than correction. This concept is less about punishment and more related to education concerning moral and

⁴⁹Glenn H. Graham, *An Exegetical Summary of Ephesians* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1997), 525.

⁵⁰Eadie, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, 444.

⁵¹Williamson and Healy, *Ephesians*, 182.

⁵²Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 569.

spiritual subjects.⁵³ Paul wanted parents to model the Christian life and verbally teach about godly consequences in the family. As a child matures, the parent provides discipline through ongoing training that improves the child's character and behavior.

Another part of the disciple-making process for fathers involved training their children to think biblically. The Greek word *nouthesia* means to provide counsel for conduct. This word is often translated "admonition" or "training." It literally means "to put in the mind."⁵⁴ As teachers, fathers are to educate their children in the child's thinking process and decision making steps. This instruction takes into account considering the consequences of an action.⁵⁵ Another implication of the definition of *nouthesia* includes positive encouragement.⁵⁶ Parents, as disciple-makers, are to cheer on the wise choices their children make as they mature. When parents practice thoughtful training and positive reinforcement their children are able to experience the benefits of being in relationship with the Lord.

The apostle Paul gave children and parents a way to be loyal to the Lord in the family. Through obedient children and nourishing parents, led by the father, the Christian home can accomplish the goal of being in and of the Lord. Fathers, in particular must strike a balance between discipline and nurture.⁵⁷ Faithful discipline and instruction, taught and modeled by fathers, leads children towards a lifelong relationship with Jesus.

⁵³Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 569.

⁵⁴Eadie, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, 444.

⁵⁵Graham, *Summary of Ephesians*, 526.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 528.

⁵⁷Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 108.

Parenting this way may be different from the surrounding culture but it represents the Christian standard to the child and to others.

2 Timothy 1:3-5; 3:14-15

In this pastoral letter to Timothy, Paul again asserted how important parents are to the faith process of children. In Ephesians, Paul articulated the importance of a father; however, in this letter there is no mention of Timothy's father. Instead, in 2 Timothy 1 and 3, Paul wrote about the impact of Timothy's mother and grandmother during Timothy's spiritual training. Even in less than ideal family situations, parents are still responsible to disciple their own children.

These verses describe more pieces of the disciple-making process for children and emphasize the generational impact of parents and grandparents.⁵⁸ Parents must model their faith at home and use the Bible to teach. Paul encouraged and exhorted Timothy by reminding him of the importance of a lineage of faith:

I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. 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.

The Impact of Parents

Paul wrote in verse 3 about the impact of his own ancestors and their life of worship and faith. This emphasis on spiritual heritage was important to Paul and he noted how integral it was for Timothy, too.⁵⁹ Paul commented that he serves God, as did his

⁵⁸Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, The Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 573.

forbears, calling to mind their influence going back many generations. This generational influence held special significance to Paul because of his own ancestors' faith and service. Collins noted this importance of a faith lineage, "In ancient Israel the family was the principal instrument for passing traditional lore and custom from one generation to the next."⁶⁰ In Jewish thought, ancestors were considered models of faith and thus were respected.⁶¹ The stories of those men and women shaped the history of Israel and were an example of a lifestyle of faith. Quinn and Wacker noted how the use of the word "ancestors" would have caused Timothy to remember his faith and worship lessons in his home.⁶²

Paul remembered Timothy's introduction to the faith through his grandmother and mother, in verse 5. While the verse here does not represent specific disciple-making actions, Paul recognized the impact of a parent's faith. Timothy's father is not mentioned in this account nor is his role in Timothy's faith evident. This fact stands out in light of the Ephesians 6 passage where fathers are singled out to play an integral role. Commentators reference the first mention of Timothy's parents in Acts 16. While Timothy's parents remain nameless in this passage, the description reveals his mother as a Jewish woman and his father as a Greek man. In 2 Timothy, Lois and Eunice are

⁵⁹George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 369.

⁶⁰Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 193.

⁶¹W. Hulitt Gloer, *Reading Paul's Letters to Individuals* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishers, 2008), 210.

⁶²Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 573.

specifically mentioned, leading some scholars to think it is possible that Timothy's father died prior to the letter.⁶³ The use of their names could mean that Lois and Eunice are now responsible for Timothy and his discipleship due to his father's absence. Mounce concurred based on the implication of the past tense verb, "was," describing Timothy's father found in Acts 16:1.⁶⁴ The absence of Timothy's father did not excuse his mother and grandmother from their responsibility for his spiritual training. In fact, it further demonstrated that every Christian parent is to actively pass on their faith, modeling, and teaching their children.

From reading verse 5, Lois and Eunice modeled genuine faith for Timothy and others to notice. Paul commended Timothy's faith, highlighting it as a result of their maternal example. The word "faith" incorporates knowledge, conduct and faithfulness.⁶⁵ Paul affirmed Timothy's faith which impacted his life and ministry in Ephesus. Paul declared Timothy's faith to be sincere or genuine using the Greek word, *anhypokritos*. This negative prefix *an* added to the Greek word for hypocrite, describes the quality of faith as not hypocritical.⁶⁶ Timothy's genuine faith was the direct result of his mother's and grandmother's sincere faith at home. The model of faith Timothy observed in his mother and grandmother led him to faith. Now, Timothy's faith was visible and an important part of who he was as he continued his lineage and ministry. Gloer noted, one

⁶³Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 582.

⁶⁴William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2000), 472.

⁶⁵Collins, *1&2 Timothy*, 192.

⁶⁶John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 8.

of the chief functions of a learner is to carry on the work and faith of a teacher.⁶⁷ Timothy carried on the faith of his mother as he led his church.

Paul further described the unique faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother. He defined how the women's faith "dwelt" in them. The word for dwelt in the Greek language, literally means their faith "was at home."⁶⁸ This phrase captures the importance of parents being the spiritual leaders in their home and for their children. With the two words, "sincere" and "dwell," Paul demonstrated how the faith of parents should be genuine and peaceful, not hypocritical or frenetic. There is also a daily aspect to a faith that dwells in the home. Therefore, Paul called to mind that same faith had made a permanent home in Timothy's life.

Start Early

Later in chapter 3, Paul continued the conversation about Timothy's discipleship in his home. He specifically pointed out Timothy's childhood as a time filled with learning about faith in Jesus and the Scriptures, 3:14-15:

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.

Paul specifically used two Greek words to describe Timothy's childhood education, "learned" and "firmly believed." These words described Timothy's spiritual instruction from an early age. The Greek word for learned found in this verse is

⁶⁷W. Hulitt Gloer, *1&2 Timothy-Titus*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2010), 222.

⁶⁸Gloer, *Reading Paul's Letters*, 211.

emathes and includes learning by observation and increasing in knowledge.⁶⁹ This type of learning would be typical and practical for children. This word is also related to the word for “disciple,” which connects the idea of parents disciplining children.⁷⁰ “Learned” and “believed” imply more than rote knowledge of facts. Another key word found in this verse is the Greek word for “whom.” It is plural in its form; therefore, Paul referenced Timothy’s mother and grandmother.⁷¹ Timothy understood what a life of faith was like from the lives of these key individuals. Timothy also learned from his lessons and observations and made a personal faith decision.

In verse 15, Paul mentioned the sacred writings Timothy learned in childhood. Paul wrote “. . . 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.” Jewish parents were to begin educating their children when they were very young. Practically, parents can and should begin spiritual teaching as early as possible. Paul’s phrase concerning Timothy’s education in verse 15 literally means “from infancy.”⁷² Jewish parents were expected to systematically teach their Jewish heritage and the Law.⁷³ Paul

⁶⁹Quinn and Wacker, *Letters to Timothy*, 747.

⁷⁰MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 134.

⁷¹Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 563.

⁷²Patrick Fairburn, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Geneva Commentary Series (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 376.

⁷³A rabbinic adage mentions successive ages of children for educational purposes, 5, 10, 13, 15, highlighting progressive learning for grasping the tenets of Judaism as the child matures. The goal for all children was to learn the Law. Another point to remember is that boys were recognized to be a part of the covenant when they had learned the Law. Collins, *1&2 Timothy and Titus*, 262.

referenced Timothy's early start and how that education built the foundation for Timothy's faith and wisdom.

Use the Scriptures

The sacred writings Paul mentioned in verse fifteen were a vital part of Jewish parents teaching their children. Scholars believe that what Paul references were primarily the Jewish Scriptures including the Torah, Mishnah, and other documents related to the law and covenant.⁷⁴ Based on Timothy's discipleship, parents should start the process as early as infancy by using the Scripture. Paul declared that the learning of these sacred writings leads to salvation. The study of Scripture is an early form of curriculum which, as Paul notes, leads to wisdom and salvation.⁷⁵ Therefore, a parent's teaching of the Bible becomes key to a child's faith.

Paul described three ideas that shaped Timothy's genuine faith: the impact of Scripture, the powerful example of a parent's faith, and the parent's purposeful discipleship. Timothy needed to recognize this foundation in Christ Jesus and continue to act on his knowledge of Scripture as He leads.

Conclusion

These four texts explore how deeply parents impact a child's life by modeling a life of faith and teaching the Scriptures. A child's faith is influenced most directly by faithful mothers and fathers who wholeheartedly serve God and model the gospel. This

⁷⁴Jouette Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, Abingdon New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 167.

⁷⁵Gloer, *Reading Paul's Letters*, 258.

foundation is key to knowing and loving God throughout the child's life. Deuteronomy 6 commands parents to teach and talk about the commands of God everywhere the family travels. The biblical stories of God supplement the commands of God and demonstrate His power working through the personal stories of His people. The psalmist in Psalm 78 emphasized telling the stories of God's activity in history to children. These stories leave indelible marks on children and endure throughout multiple generations.

Christian parents build on the Old Testament foundation and embody a Christ-centered uniqueness. Paul defined the behavior and character for this family in Ephesians 6. Gospel-centered Christian parents must stand out from the surrounding culture as they discipline and teach in the home. Moreover, fathers are singled out to lead the family and personally involve themselves in the teaching and training of children. When circumstances within the family are not ideal, parents are still called upon to be the primary disciple-makers of their home. Timothy's mother and grandmother modeled a genuine faith for him as they taught the Scriptures. The impact of these spiritual practices within the family results in a child learning about God and his word from an early age and are the beginning of a genuine faith shining bright in the midst of a dark world.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR USING STORIES TO TEACH

The family unit and its members play a role and influence culture in a myriad of ways over a long period of time. As long as the family has been in existence it has resisted change and it has also been the setting of change.¹ In this chapter, the powerful influence of parents and ways they impact children in the home is discussed. Mark DeVries wrote that mom and dad wield “incomparable power” and influence on faith and character development.² This project prioritizes stories and different narratives from a parent’s life and the role of stories in religious socialization and transmission. Stories have been important to education as well as religion. Yust recognized the power of narrative for educating children and noted a continued use of literacy programs, free newspapers for schools, books in waiting rooms, and time set aside during the day to read.³ In the next section the ancient family’s use of stories is discussed. Today, these stories continue to communicate and teach the origin of the family, the cultural values within each unit, and identify the ingredients of the institution of family.

¹Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), introduction, xiv.

²Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2004), 60.

³Karen Marie Yust, *Real Kids, Real Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 41.

Studies indicate that parents profoundly influence faith development in children.⁴ The following section demonstrates how archaeology has discovered clues from early homes and literature which shed light on religious household practices in the ancient biblical era. The discovery of these artifacts and floorplans leads archaeologists to some insightful conclusions. Piecing together some of these clues, experts describe a multi-functional and spiritual family unit.

The power of story and testimony was used often in the ancient family. Families used stories to define and teach on topics that included legal ideas and religious concepts.⁵ Other key subjects addressed in stories were family formation, the meaning of symbols or special landmarks, and the activity of God helped educate children within the family and faith community.

Lastly, some research concerning the writing of stories and how to be more effective in story-telling and is examined. The components of a good story are important to capture the imagination of a child and to communicate life lessons.

The modern family must recapture some of these same influence of these earliest forbears. By prioritizing stories about God, family, and religious practices using personal stories, parents help their children learn gospel-centered beliefs and practices. “Postmodern culture is driving a storytelling revival” for a number of reasons.⁶ Today,

⁴DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 60.

⁵Leo G. Perdue, “The Israelite and Early Jewish Family: Summary and Conclusions,” in *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 173.

⁶Avery T. Willis and Mark Snowden, *Truth That Sticks: How to Communicate Velcro Truth in a Teflon World* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 18.

parents can develop and tell their own stories in family devotionals in order to communicate these important truths to their own children.

The Ancient Family

Early families in the biblical era demonstrated the importance of religion in their daily lives and within their household. Archaeology and early records shed light on several of their religious practices in the home. Numerous archaeological finds have discovered a general floorplan of biblical era homes which led scholars to draw some conclusions about religion in the ancient family. A family's individual house was generally situated in a compound of other houses of related kin.⁷ This family compound would include the homes for the extended family of grandparents, uncles, and cousins along with the house of nuclear parents and children. Due to their proximity, these families shared much in common especially religious beliefs and practices. Teaching spiritual lessons could have occurred at any moment, in the midst of any task by any adult person of the family. One basic discovery of most ancient Near Eastern homes is a floorplan that featured four rooms and most often included a shrine or special place for worship.⁸ This "sacred space" created a recognizable place in the home and served as a daily reminder of familial and national beliefs and practices. The space has been described as a niche, shelf, or table and established a place to display cultic symbols and

⁷Beth Alpert Nakhai, "Household as Sacred Space," in *Family and Household Religion* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 54.

⁸Nakhai, "Household as Sacred Space," 57.

idols of the family gods.⁹ This space was also a gathering place for the family to pray, worship, or eat.

This ancient family practiced several spiritual disciplines at meals and special feasts for the early family. Participating in these feasts were an important religious function for the family to share with their god.¹⁰ Many of these feasts were observed by the whole community or nation, such as the Feast of the Passover or Feast of Weeks.¹¹ Daily meals involved simple prayers of thanks or more involved practices including stories about the family and their faith. Through these meals, religious education and worship practices were taught in the home. The discovery of this spiritual space and the significance of these meals causes scholars to believe that the practice of religion represented one of the central activities of most homes. In fact, Carol Myers wrote, “The most important locus of cultic activity for most ancient Near Eastern people was the household.”¹² The home became the setting for parents to gather the family for important teaching about their personal family religion. Due to distances to and from places of worship, like the Jewish Temple, it would have been unrealistic for most Jewish worshipers to visit daily or weekly. Thus, the household became the established place for the daily practice of religion.

⁹Timothy P. Harrison, “Family Religion from a Northern Levantine Perspective,” in *Family and Household Religion* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 184.

¹⁰Carol Myers, “Religious Dimensions of Household Life,” in *Family and Household Religion* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 238.

¹¹Tremper Longman III, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 584.

¹²Myers, “Religious Dimensions of Household Life,” 227.

The practice of the ancient family's religion was comprised of certain features that defined individual roles and practices in and around the home. The typical household worshiped an "ancestral deity" that had been passed down from the earliest family.¹³ Consequently, ancient worship practices were varied among different clans or tribes. Archaeologists believe that these were practices would have included worship traditions and story-telling. Each of these practices was led by a male figure and involved the extended family. The oldest living male or oldest son was responsible for many duties within the family that included basic education, work, and worship.¹⁴ This male also occupied a central role during a feast and told stories of faith. Prayers of praise and blessing would have been basic features of these significant meals. If the feast commemorated an event, then there was a story associated with that meal. The females of the family were very involved in daily preparations and were required to possess a variety of knowledge about the religious traditions.¹⁵ Through the examples of their mothers and fathers around these important customs, children learned about daily spiritual disciplines and faith traditions.

In this ancient period much of the religious knowledge and important practices were passed down orally. The subjects of these stories involved the history of the nation, the beginning of the family, the stories about a god gifting the family land, and the stories that taught lessons of morality and faith.¹⁶ The family spent time during feasts and other

¹³Perdue, "The Israelite and Early Jewish Family: Summary and Conclusions," 203.

¹⁴Harrison, "Family Religion from a Northern Levantine Perspective," 184.

¹⁵Nakhai, "Household as Sacred Space," 55.

¹⁶Perdue, "The Israelite and Early Jewish Family: Summary and Conclusions," 206.

meals telling and retelling many of these stories. Seasonal feasts and important meals included the extended family who would gather together to participate in these stories of community and belonging.¹⁷ Remembering and hearing these stories fulfilled important functions in the family. These stories helped the family endure over many generations and establish strong connections within the larger family. Zevit agreed that Israelite relationships within the family and extended family helped define appropriate practices and behaviors.¹⁸ These stories also provided a connection to preceding generations. For Israel, telling and hearing these formative stories and national history were “identity forming.”¹⁹

The early Jewish family participated in some similar religious practices like those of the nations around them. Schmitt believes that the typical practice and rituals of western Asia were comparable to those found in Israel and Judah.²⁰ Prayer and worship in the Jewish home, as described in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, featured loving God and the display of God’s word. Prayers of blessing and for protection would have also been common. The family, especially fathers, told stories about historical events and God’s acts through them as Psalm 78 mentions. These practices were common for families throughout the region.

¹⁷Myers, “Religious Dimensions of Household Life,” 240.

¹⁸Ziony Zevit, “The Textual and Social Embeddedness of Israelite Family Religion,” in *Family and Household Religion* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 290.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Rudiger Schmitt, “A Typology of Iron Age Cult Practices,” in *Family and Household Religion* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 269.

There were stories told around the family table especially during feasts and would have reflected God's activity in the nation's and family's history. Perdue believed those stories would have included the "formative family myth" [story] about how God chose the family leader and provided protection and blessing. In return, the household worshiped God, who had established and blessed the family.²¹ Other stories told of God's power and protection of a significant family member or land. Moses described the family setting where the parents would have described the plagues and Passover in, Exodus 7-12. Another instance in the Old Testament, Joshua reminded the nation to use the story about miraculously crossing the Jordan River to tell of God's works in Joshua 4. In Judges 6, Gideon's family had told some of the stories of God. In verse 13, Gideon asked the angel of the Lord, ". . . where are all of his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us?"

These early biblical families and their religious traditions also helped with socialization and kin relationships.²² The roles within the family were delineated in these stories and laws. Husbands and wives were given roles, business practices and values were communicated and inter-family relationships were outlined. In some instances, special care was prescribed for those older or younger in age for a purpose of continuing and providing for the future. The family household helped Israel form lasting bonds and affirmed a way of life that was distinct.²³ Honor for the family elders kept each clan's history intact and on the mind of younger generations. Brown believes that there is a

²¹Perdue, "The Israelite and Early Jewish Family: Summary and Conclusions," 203.

²²Ibid., 207.

²³Zevit, "The Textual and Social Embeddedness of Israelite Family Religion," 290.

relational paradigm of honor and obedience that becomes a pattern for biblical families.²⁴ Jewish families placed value on family and consequently on young lives for the family's sake. A child's faith and education became a priority.

The New Testament Family

The world's early families created religious space in their homes, told important stories about their family and god, and practiced sacred duties around the home. As the families multiplied in number and occupied different geography, many of the same practices continued even though nearly a half century had passed. For the early Christian family, the New Testament sometimes describes the result of parental practices like the Apostle Paul describing Timothy's childhood. In other books, Paul or another writer, promotes a faith behavior for parents and children which is intended to become distinctively Christian such as the spiritual training Paul mentions in Ephesians 6.

The study of the New Testament family leads scholars to attempt to define the family and religious practices of that era. These scholars use the literature of that period, books of the Bible and archaeology to investigate the family their religious practices. Christians were surrounded by a variety of cultures during the beginning of their history. One of the primary influencers at that period in Italy, Greece and Asia Minor was the Hellenistic culture. The Hellenistic influences are noted in the area of religion, too. Bradley notes that the Greek house religion "centered around the hearth" and the provision of food.²⁵ The hearth was generally the place where food was prepared and was

²⁴Jeff Pollard and Scott T. Brown, ed., *A Theology of Family* (Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2016), 277.

²⁵John M. G. Barclay, "The Family as the Bearer of Religion," in *Constructing Early Christian*

used often throughout the day. Food and mealtimes were important to the Christian family existence and to worship traditions. A daily supply of food was not a given for many members of the family. Therefore, food to eat was often considered the provision of god. Simple prayers preceded some meals. An early Christian writer recorded a practice he had noticed of pagans offering daily prayers to gods, thanking them for food and protection.²⁶ These daily prayers and religious practices created a dutiful religious culture in practice. Christian families redeemed these mealtime practices with Christian meaning. Moreover, scholars believe that mealtimes became the center of family life for Christians.²⁷ Christian parents gave a new spiritual meaning to the dining table and made that table the setting for key discipleship practices.

Family values and education about the Greek culture had been reinforced by the popular philosophy of that period. Osiek notes that Plato and Aristotle believed that the health of the country reflected the health of the family.²⁸ As these cultural leaders emphasized family, others within the culture, and outside the culture, followed. Consequently, family discipline and training of children was of significant importance to these families.

The early Christian family was similarly influenced by several internal factors during the formative years of the early church. Often the contrasting cultures between the

Families, ed. Halvor Moxnes (New York: Routledge, 1997), 67.

²⁶Barclay, "The Family as the Bearer of Religion," 68.

²⁷Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 210.

²⁸Carolyn Osiek, *What Are They Saying about the Social Setting of the New Testament?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 74.

Jews and the Gentiles made it confusing. However, the Jewish individuals who became Christians believed God had worked through Abraham, as Paul noted in Romans 4 and Galatians 3.²⁹ This broader connection to an ancestor was helpful for the adjustment to a Christ-centered lifestyle. The Jewish Christian also had a familiarity with the Old Testament that Jesus and the New Testament writers used regularly in their teaching. With such a strong foundation in these biblical writings and a sense of connectedness to kin, Jewish Christian families were able to reorient their family practices.

For early Gentile Christian families, their context for connecting religion and home was both different and yet similar. While they might not have the family history and similar stories, most Gentiles were often religious. As noted above, religious practice in most homes included some form of daily prayer and mealtime prayers. Once Gentiles trusted Christ, their love for Jesus impacted their faith practices like prayer.

More specific to the Christian family was the practice of discipling children in the home. Paul and other Christian writers began to write about the education of children by their parents as a form of evangelism and discipleship.³⁰ These writers encouraged spiritual education to affirm the gospel and to prioritize Christian virtues. As the parents grew in their faith, they passed on their knowledge and faith to their whole family. Two early sources, Clement, an early church father, and the *Didache*, an early treatise of Christian teachings, included teaching children “the fear of God” as a necessary duty.³¹ In

²⁹Halvor Moxnes, “What Is Family?” in *Constructing Early Christian Families*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (New York: Routledge, 1997), 28.

³⁰Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 165.

³¹*Ibid.*, 163.

fact, Barclay notes that embedding Christian traditions into the family was a goal for the early church.³² As a result, everyday behaviors and activities took on a distinctly Christian viewpoint. Work, education, marriage, family, and hospitality had a distinct Christian influence within the early church's families.

The Family and Faith Transmission

In Vern Bengtson's Longitudinal Study of Generations, he and his team tracked multiple generations and faith transmission. The team's discoveries are not the commonly perceived assumptions of decline rather there was significant parent-child similarities in the categories of "religious affiliation, participation, religious intensity, Biblical beliefs, and civic religiosity."³³ The discoveries dispute perceived declines and suggest some stability in "intergenerational transmission." Bengtson believes that there is "considerable religious continuity between parents and children generations."³⁴

Other similar studies point to parents as the primary influencers in the family.³⁵ Parents are the first bonds created between a newborn in a family. These bonds influence a child's life into adulthood. "Children who feel close to their mothers and fathers have higher rates of intergenerational similarity."³⁶ These bonds can be sensed in a number of ways and one style of parenting helps the transmission of faith. Parents who interact in a "warm, affirming, and respectful manner are more likely to pass on their religious

³²Barclay, "The Family as the Bearer of Religion," 76.

³³Vern Bengtson, *Families and Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 66.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 60.

³⁶Bengtson, *Families and Faith*, 76.

tradition, beliefs, and practices.”³⁷ Likewise, unconditional support and consistent faith modeling remain important, too.³⁸

Religious transmission and socialization is one goal of religious parents therefore, these factors are important to study and communicate to all parents. Christian Smith has noted several important concepts for parents: be better informed by facts, hold realistic expectations, express hope, demonstrate unconditional love, and challenge their children.³⁹ Parenting is a job that requires divine help. Despite of the daunting task of parenting there are practices and resources available. The church leadership and community can be a part of the equipping equation for parents to utilize. And, in the project the use of personal testimony and other stories of God’s activity is highlighted. Yust wrote that one of the roles of parents is to influence spiritual practices and this can be accomplished through the use of “. . . testimony.”⁴⁰

Using Stories to Teach

Many parents and families are knowledgeable about spiritual disciplines, like worship, prayer, and Bible reading, but most do not use their stories as a part of their family disciple-making strategy. Stories are an important part of a family’s history and as mentioned above they are important in faith development, too.

Stories teach. Stories can be great entertainment but stories can also be used to teach a variety of topics. Both fiction and non-fiction stories yield lessons about anything

³⁷Bengtson, *Families and Faith*, 80.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 186.

³⁹Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition* (New York: Oxford Press, 2011), 7.

⁴⁰Yust, *Real Kids, Real Faith*, 10.

the author wants to communicate. Fictional stories like Aesop's Fables and nursery rhymes have been told for many years because they are entertaining and contain a moral to the story. Many types of stories become a vehicle to communicate important lessons and truths about life. English professor, Jonathan Gottschall, writes "If you want a message to burrow into the human mind, work it into a story."⁴¹

Stories serve as a common method for education proving especially effective when used as literary devices because a majority of the world's population can understand them. Stories are an important tool for those who cannot read or those who do not prefer to read. One statistic estimates that there are "4.35 billion people in the world that can't, won't, or don't use literate means to communicate."⁴² Children make up a group within the category of oral learners because of their age and learning development. The home, children, and culture are impacted by modern storytelling in a myriad of formats like TV, internet, neighbors, and friends. In the midst of these influences, two of a parent's roles are to protect and guide their children through life's situations. To fulfill these assignments, parents and teachers must help children make sense of these messages.⁴³

Children and teenagers alike enjoy stories from many different sources: books, media, each other, and adults around them. Listening to stories helps develop cognitive

⁴¹Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (New York: Mariner, 2012), 118.

⁴²Dennis Johnson and Joe Musser, *Tell Me A Story* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2012), 99.

⁴³Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, "THE Story and the Spiritual Formation of Children in the Church and in the Home" in *Nurturing Children's Spirituality* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 367.

skills, causality, problem solving, and sympathies.⁴⁴ The Eyres believe one of the best ways kids learn... is through storytelling.⁴⁵ However, some stories need interpreting because of confusing or negative messages. The vocabulary of an adult story may not be recognizable by someone younger. The sensitive nature of some stories require discernment on the part of the storyteller and the listener. Moreover, the sensitive nature of a topic may lead the storyteller to tell the story vaguely. Sometimes even spiritual language becomes hard to define. When using stories to teach parents may need to help a child through confusing or negative messages.

The use of storytelling has become a unique tool in the area of educational learning theory.⁴⁶ People at every stage of development learn through the use of stories, games, narratives, and case studies. Parents of preschoolers discover some of the best methods are games, storytelling, and positive reinforcement.⁴⁷ Those kinds of activities make learning fun for the children and keep their interest, maximizing the story's ability to teach. Allen and Oschwald believe that this attention from adults, along with their love, and the time spent telling stories, help children grow and understand their family

⁴⁴Kieran Egan, *Teaching as Storytelling* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 85.

⁴⁵Richard M. Eyre and Linda Eyre, *Teaching Your Children Values* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 31. The Eyres are popular speakers and authors on the topics of parenting and family. *Teaching Your Children Values* was the first parenting book to reach no. 1 on the New York Times bestseller list since Benjamin Spock's, *Baby and Child Care*.

⁴⁶F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin, *Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988), preface.

⁴⁷Eyre and Eyre, *Teaching Your Children Values*, 35.

and faith.⁴⁸ Variety in stories is helpful as is hearing the same story from different adults. These techniques help communicate a consistent message.

As children grow into adolescence, storytelling remains an important tool for teaching. At this stage of development, the Eyres write that case studies and dialogues are important.⁴⁹ Case studies tell a story about life issues; then the readers attempt to solve a problem or find a compromise. Dialogue is another form that is used to talk about a story after it has been told. Discussion can include the characters, the conflict, resolution, and a story's interpretation. When using dialogue as a teaching tool with stories, asking questions is important. Questions about the story include asking about the setting, characters, events, feelings of the characters, or feelings of the readers.⁵⁰ These questions can be asked about Bible stories, too. Joel R. Beeke encouraged questions and dialogue about the word of God.⁵¹

Stories perform a unique role in establishing identity and building connections within a community or family. Before the printing press, one way a people groups' historical identity was passed down orally through multiple generations.⁵² In a modern society, stories continue describe people and their identity. Schank described this in the

⁴⁸Holly Catterton Allen and Heidi Schultz Oschwald, "God Across the Generations," in *Nurturing Children's Spirituality* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 273.

⁴⁹Eyre and Eyre, *Teaching Your Children Values*, 36.

⁵⁰Jill Stamm, *Bright from the Start* (New York: Gotham Books, 2007), 250.

⁵¹Joel R. Beeke, "Implementing Family Worship," in *A Theology of the Family* (Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2016), 98.

⁵²Jeffrey Feinberg, "Making Stories Come Alive," in *Nurturing Children's Spirituality* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 147.

following progression, “The storytelling process relies very heavily upon evaluation rules that tend to reflect very strongly one’s view of the world, oneself, and the events that have occurred in one’s life.”⁵³ These parts of storytelling define and identify the storytellers. Through the telling of a story the teller articulates and hears identity described. Then, the hearers confirm or deny the tellers identity through dialogue. Connelly and Clandinin wrote, “Narrative is the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future.”⁵⁴ Each storyteller interacts with her own story in a way that creates direction and can help with future decisions.

Another purpose of storytelling impacts the hearers and their identity. The audience who hears the story being told incorporates some information and knowledge from the story into their own story. Often the audience compares their life story with the teller’s story. Bateson wrote about the effect on children identities, “The ways in which we interpret our own life stories have a great effect on the way our children come to define their own identities.”⁵⁵ When parents share their stories they impact their children. Through a parent’s interpretation of their life a child acquires a skill for identifying themselves.

Stories build relational bonds between people. Several authors note this idea. Spaulding wrote about how stories help to share things in common and to stay connected

⁵³Roger C. Schank, *Tell Me a Story* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 137.

⁵⁴Connelly and Clandinin, *Teachers as Curriculum Planners*, 24.

⁵⁵Mary Catherine Bateson, “Composing a Life,” in *Sacred Stories: A Celebration of the Power of Story to Transform and Heal*, ed. Charles and Anne Simpkinson (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 49.

to others.⁵⁶ Stories help communicate the commonalities between people. David Sloan Wilson, a professor of biology and anthropology, noticed that stories bind people together and define them.⁵⁷ This bonding happens when connections are made as the storyteller tells a compelling tale and the audience feels a nearness. “If we all share the same stories, we feel a part of a common group.”⁵⁸ A powerful bond is also built when parents sit down with their children and tell about a personal issue that they have experienced. Parents need to understand, “The ways in which we interpret our own life stories have a great effect on the way our children come to define their own identities.”⁵⁹ Stories are an important tool not just in learning about oneself but also in the formation of relationships. James Carse, a professor at New York University, wrote about what stories can do, “Stories give insight into a person, describe a vision for future and help decision making, stories told in community bring the community together.”⁶⁰

The Bible contains many powerful stories about how God is at work in human history. These stories play a defining role in the national identity throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament chronicles the spread of the gospel. The Bible’s

⁵⁶Amy E. Spaulding, *The Art of Storytelling: Telling Truths Through Telling Stories* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 17.

⁵⁷Gottschall, *Storytelling Animal*, 121.

⁵⁸Schank, *Tell Me a Story*, 194.

⁵⁹Trevor Dennis, *Lo and Behold! The Power of Old Testament Storytelling* (London: Courier International, 1991), 49.

⁶⁰James P. Carse, “Exploring Your Personal Myth,” in *Sacred Stories: A Celebration of the Power of Stories to Transform and Heal*, ed. Charles and Anne Simpkinson (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993), 228-29. James Carse is Professor Emeritus of history and religious literature at New York University.

earliest form was spoken in stories for thousands of years before it was written down.⁶¹ These stories connected families to a vast history of knowledge and faith. Walter Brueggeman is biblical scholar who considered the Bible to be a book of stories that connected God's activity to life.⁶² As a part of a bigger narrative, these biblical stories teach about God, the formation of moral character, and the principles for living a life of faith. This religious instruction also provides connection to a bigger community and metanarrative.⁶³ Feinberg described how the stories of Abraham, the Passover, King David, and more, teach values, heritage, and religious traditions.⁶⁴ Preachers, teachers, and parents also make use of the Bible for the power of the stories and as a way to pass on values and customs. Stonehouse and May agree, "Spiritual formation is enhanced when time is allowed...to listen to people of any age described how they have met God."⁶⁵ People of faith have a story about their relationship with God. The stories can describe their introduction to faith and other events in their personal history. The biblical stories often include a failure of faith or disobedience that communicates with unique impact to most audiences. Telling such stories helps the community and family understand the commitment and provides a way for forgiveness and reconciliation in

⁶¹Avery T. Willis and Mark Snowden, *Truth that Sticks: How to Communicate Velcro Truth in a Teflon World* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 38.

⁶²Yust, *Real Kids, Real Faith*, 41.

⁶³Susan M. Shaw, *Storytelling in Religious Education* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1999), 5.

⁶⁴Feinberg, "Making Stories Come Alive," 146-63.

⁶⁵Stonehouse and May, *Listening Children on the Spiritual Journey*, 69.

relationship. Meeting the God of the Bible in scriptural and personal stories provides a solid foundation for children.

Stories also have a role in healing processes, when used in this manner they are called, narrative therapies. This type of therapy illustrates another dimension of the power of stories to produce healing and reorient the thought process. Narrative therapy is defined as a postmodern approach to therapy which includes those impacted by the story directly and allow them to explore solutions.⁶⁶ Telling a story is a way for the patient to step back from their situation. Then, through the story the person looks at the circumstances from a different viewpoint and is often able to see a solution. The stories can also provide structure and potential new meaning for the patient to use.⁶⁷ The family can be a place of healing and often members of a family need healing that can be accomplished through storying. Schank agreed that narrative therapy helps to initiate change.⁶⁸ Parents and children may need some type of emotional healing at some point and this distinctive aspect of storytelling has critical benefits.

Storytelling Basics

Since storytelling wields so much influence on both the tellers and hearers the storyteller can learn some techniques to improve the storytelling. Each piece of a story

⁶⁶Craig Smith, "Comparing Traditional Therapies with Narrative Approaches," in *Narrative Therapies with Children and Adolescents*, ed. Craig Smith and David Nylund (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997), 1.

⁶⁷Peggy Sax, "Narrative Therapy and Family Support: Strengthening the Mother's Voice in Working Families with Infants and Toddlers," in *Narrative Therapies with Children and Adolescents*, ed. Craig Smith and David Nylund (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997), 112.

⁶⁸Schank, *Tell Me a Story*, 136.

can use some development and everyone can improve at their storytelling. Telling a personal, spiritual story also has some critical points to consider. Overall, planning out the story aids the whole storytelling process from beginning to end. In order to begin writing, the writer must think through the purpose of their story. The writer also needs to think about their audience and how the subject is to be taught on an appropriate level. Working on a few of these elements multiplies the impact of the story and with a spiritual process in mind, these stories may change eternity.

Some of the basic pieces of the story are characters, events, and descriptions of the setting.⁶⁹ The development of these ideas helps listeners be drawn into the story. Details of the setting help the story be memorable, too.⁷⁰ John Truby, a movie screenwriter, encouraged writers to create depth by developing certain parts of a story: a character, a desire, the action, some factual knowledge, a specific decision, and the results.⁷¹ The way a story ends is important, too. Often at the end of the story there is a need for resolution to a problem or conflict. Many hearers have a need for a “satisfactory end” as Egan calls it.⁷² The conclusion of the story is the final part which the audience hears and how they feel affects the overall impact of the story. When parents tell their stories they are usually the main characters. A little more depth in describing the setting

⁶⁹Egan, *Teaching as Storytelling*, 90.

⁷⁰Willis, *Truth that Sticks*, 48-50.

⁷¹John Truby, *The Anatomy of Story* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2007), 8.

⁷²Egan, *Teaching as Storytelling*, 94.

or emotions can help the story's impact. These parts of the story help children remember the story, too.⁷³

Some other techniques help authors create characters, remember details, and develop plots when writing stories. Some storytellers make use of other personal disciplines: journaling biography, picturing [creating mental pictures of self, setting, and audience], letter writing, and interviews.⁷⁴ When Avery Willis was writing the details of his stories he borrowed an acrostic from the book *Made to Stick* in which the authors wrote "Truth that sticks displays the following qualities: S-simple, U- unexpected, C-concrete, C-credible, E-emotional, S-stories, s."⁷⁵ These elements, and their development, help communicate an author's goal. Storying concepts take time and thought to improve but these essentials support a story that is memorable for the hearers and expresses the message, or lesson, with increasing clarity.

Another approach to make a story more memorable relies on making the content personal. The author who describes personal feelings and emotions helps hearers identify with the teller and the situation.⁷⁶ As a result, the lesson or the purpose of the story becomes more impactful. The personal relationship with the storyteller influences the stories effect, especially between parents and their children.⁷⁷ For Christian parents, their personal salvation testimony is a powerful tool in the lives of their children. Eugene

⁷³Stonehouse and May, *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey*, 159.

⁷⁴Connelly and Clandinin, *Teachers as Curriculum Planners*, 34-52.

⁷⁵Willis, *Truth that Sticks*, 39.

⁷⁶Willis, *Truth that Sticks*, 26.

⁷⁷George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, 86.

Roehlkepartain agreed, “Hearing the parents’ faith stories is one of the most important influences on the faith of children and teenagers.”⁷⁸ This point is also emphasized by Stonehouse and May, “Children love to hear stories themselves and about their parents lives, the stories help each other discover meaning.”⁷⁹ These personal stories of spiritual topics help both parents and children. Moreover, a parent’s personal salvation stories become a powerful tool for discipling their children. Other stories and experiences parents tell will be similarly impactful.

A person’s life stories are always set in the context of a bigger story. Connelly and Clandinin talk about narrative as a larger story made up of smaller stories.⁸⁰ When parents tell their stories within their bigger life story their children begin to realize their own personal identity and purpose. This kind of interpretation becomes a filter for anyone hearing someone’s personal story and it helps children cope with their life situations.⁸¹ These personal stories can also be ways to talk about God. Shaw wrote about how these spiritual stories aid in the implementation of Christian beliefs and religious meaning.⁸² These stories as discussed above may relate to the beginning of their family. The dating and marriage story are prime examples of a personal story with a spiritual lesson. Praying about a future mate and talking about dating standards create purpose and meaning for

⁷⁸Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 174.

⁷⁹Stonehouse and May, “THE Story and the Spiritual Formation of Children,” 367.

⁸⁰Connelly and Clandinin, *Teachers as Curriculum Planners*, 24.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 27.

⁸²Shaw, *Storytelling in Religious Education*, 81-82.

both parents and their children. As a result of these stories and more, parents create opportunities for discipleship within the home.

The personal salvation testimony is a story that may be difficult to tell because of the personal and emotional nature involved. Nonetheless, a parent's salvation story may be central to impacting their own child's spiritual life. Evangelistic authors appeal to Christians, and Christian parents, to keep their testimony short and simple. Bill Hybels, pastor and author of, *Just Walk Across the Room*, advocates for a 3 minute or less testimony.⁸³ Hybels once instructed his church to write their testimonies in 100 words or less. Bobby Welch and Doug Williams share a similar thought about telling a basic, personal salvation testimony. These church leaders urge learners to plan their testimony around "significant highlights."⁸⁴ These are "pre-conversion experience," "conversion experience," and the "benefits of conversion."⁸⁵ Parents, like storytellers, need to work on and rehearse their personal testimony. This testimony should be clear and free of over-spiritualized language for their children to understand. These simple guidelines for storytelling and presenting a testimony can help them guide their children to faith.

Conclusion

Researching ancient families and modern families leads to the discovery of significant, spiritually similar practices within the home. These ancient families literally carved out time and space in their home for worship and religious teaching. Religion was

⁸³Bill Hybels, *Just Walk Across the Room* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 120.

⁸⁴Bobby Welch and Doug Williams, *Faith Evangelism Journal 1* (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2013), 34.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 34-5.

a priority for them and that priority was demonstrated through the family's use of space and time. Modern families must reconnect with this priority. Each family should designate a time or place to begin the discipline of talking about spiritual topics and be ready for unplanned, spontaneous circumstances that lend themselves to a spiritual conversation. It is essential that parents establish this habit with an initial commitment to the same time and space. These spiritual practices can become a part of a family's habits.⁸⁶ Ultimately, this regular practice can lead a family to become more gospel-centered. D. Martin Lloyd Jones remarked that in the history of the church, child training is one of the sparks of "revival and re-awakening."⁸⁷

The contemporary family must regain the practice of shared mealtimes. These times of togetherness are critical to a child's emotional and spiritual growth. As discussed above, mealtimes provided a place for the family to connect and for key spiritual teaching to be accomplished. However, profitable mealtimes are a spiritual discipline. One or two meals a week would be a starting point for a family who does not presently eat together. A family's spiritual practices must include purposeful educational experiences and clear teaching at home and when these occur around the dining table the benefits are often eternal.

Throughout the Old and New Testament eras, stories communicated a vast array of important topics. Most of these stories were told repetitively in household setting in the presence of many family members. Most likely, the introduction to religion or to a

⁸⁶Edward W. Hooker, "Children to be Educated for Christ," in *A Theology of the Family* (Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2016), 313.

⁸⁷D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, "Nurture and Admonition," in *A Theology of the Family* (Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2016), 283.

god happened through the telling of a story for most children. Before they could read or understand technical religious jargon, Jewish children were taught about God and his word through these national and personal stories. Later as the church grew, the gospel often took root in the home first. Today, parents must practice telling their own stories especially those that demonstrate God at work. These personal stories impact their children and describe who and what God is doing in their world.

One of the key stories told in the early household was the story of family formation. These stories chronicled the beginning of a tribe or family. The family can benefit from similar formation stories. Parents should tell the story about their salvation experience. These testimonies, as noted above, help children understand their own spiritual journey and provide a real life example of God's personal involvement in their primary role model's life. Moreover, salvation and the gospel is proclaimed every time parents tell their testimony. Other types of modern day family formation stories are that of the beginning of a couples' marriage or the birth of a child. Even if the parent is currently single, there are lessons to be learned and values to be promoted in these personal stories. Culture's stories about dating and marriage lack biblical influence. Christian parents must tell their stories and infuse them with biblical meaning that helps teach gospel-centered values. The birth of a child is significant for both the parents and the life of the child. The gift of life and God's plans can be communicated clearly in this event.

Perspective and worldview are commonly communicated through stories. The modern gospel-centered family can, and must, make use of other personal stories to communicate God's plans and purposes. These types of storytelling help teach and train

children to think biblically and make wise decisions. Parents can recall their stories about circumstances that led to a move or major life change and reference ways God is at work. When parents share on this level they initiate healthy relationships and by participating in the disciple-making process through storytelling they create a powerful bond with their children.

The skill of storytelling should become a powerful tool for teaching and discipling. Parents and mentors must purposefully plan the time and place for this discipleship practice to occur. As parents use their personal faith stories, they lead their children to understand who God is and his plans for his people. These personal stories also communicate the priority of God and fundamental beliefs about life. Thankfully, storytelling can be learned and developed so that each story has a clear meaning and purpose. Parents have a supply of stories stored in their memory about their successes and struggles. Each of these stories tells about God and the personal ways he is involved in life. The preparation is simple; a little training may be needed but proclaiming the gospel at home through stories must become a priority. Trent and Bruner wonder rhetorically, “Was there a time that you sensed God telling you something through an event, friend, sermon or set of circumstances? Tell the story and the result.”⁸⁸ Telling stories has been done for millennia, now the home must be a place to utilize the story of faith and the gospel.

⁸⁸John Trent, Rick Osborne and Kurt Bruner, *Teaching Kids about God* (Wheaton, IL; Tyndale House, 2000).

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DETAILS AND RESULTS

To develop a spiritually strong family, the gospel must be the foundation. In the beginning, God began the story of His work in His creation and that included family. The Scriptures tell this story over and over. As individuals respond to God's grace a personal story begins and waits to be told. Families consist of individuals linked together by bond and blood and as such they are one of the best contexts for personal faith stories to be communicated. The church is a united body of different individual parts with a goal of reflecting God's glory and transforming individual's lives and stories. Family ministry to church and unchurched families must find ways to tell these stories of faith.

Scripture highlights the unique role of parents within the family. Parents are to be educators and disciple-makers. To accomplish this task, the Bible reminds parents of the importance of God's commands and His stories in their history. Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78 are two Old Testament instances declaring the importance of a parent's role. Ephesians 6 and 2 Timothy 1 and 3 give insight into the New Testament family discipleship and the results of an authentic faith lived out at home. These commands and examples in Scripture provide parents with excellent strategies and the ministries of the church can help, too. The church can partner with parents as they commit to being the primary disciple-maker in the lives of their children. In fact, the future of the church hinges on the faith passed on through Christian families.

One of the ways parents create a sense of Christian identity in the family is through the use of their stories about God, and their own personal faith experiences. In the Old Testament, readers find a rich, oral tradition that teaches about God and how to relate to Him. For parents, the testimony can be a beginning point for family devotional practices. Studies show parents often know their biblical responsibility but still do not practice because of time to prepare or unrealistic expectations.¹ Parents know their own stories best so this project began with Scripture and then parent's stories. Parents started with God's commands and then recalled how God has worked in their own life stories.

Many parents know that they are to be the primary disciple-makers of their own children but they may not know how to begin the process. In a 2003 survey found that 85 percent of parents believe it is their responsibility to disciple their children however, more than 2 out of 3 "abdicate that responsibility to their church."² The project addresses this discipleship issue by helping parents personally tell their life story. Every Christian should be able to communicate a salvation testimony so that it communicates basic truths about God, mankind, Jesus, and the cross. Through teaching and training parents are able to clearly articulate their testimony and tell their salvation story to their children. The impact of that story, told at different times and stages in the child's life help their understanding of salvation and secondarily affirm the beliefs of the parents as well.

Other memorable moments that make up personal life stories were developed. In order to teach the Scriptures and other spiritual truths, parents considered specific

¹Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 99.

²George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, 77-8.

situations of their life and talked about the lessons they learned. A couple's marriage story can communicate a gospel-centered definition of marriage and family and also clarify dating principles and purity standards. Life stories about important decisions and difficult situations can teach about God's will, blessings, forgiveness, and the truths of Scripture. Other stories tie in key relationships and circumstances the parents have experienced. Then, family practices are able to focus on these memorable life moments tell them so that God's story shines in these real life moments. As a result, parents should be able to tell the best story ever told, God's story, by telling the stories they know best. Consequently, using their own stories, parents should be more prepared and less apprehensive.

The initial preparation for this course began with a survey that contained the Family Perception and Practices by Timothy Paul Jones and a couple of questions added to it in order to determine if the parents participating in the survey had ever told their personal stories to their children. After several weeks, over 50 surveys were completed. The results were analyzed to determine current practices and areas of improvement in certain perceptions and practices. The questions about a parent's use of their stories also revealed what percentage of parents had used their story in any kind of family settings. The general family practices findings reveal similar results in relation to Jones' ongoing studies. Responsibility, schedules, and practices were the focus of those questions. The individual parents who participated in the survey revealed that (94 percent) believe it is their responsibility to disciple their children.³ However, the practice of on-going disciple

³See Table A6 in Appendix 3.

making appears to be practiced by about 29 percent of parents at Champion Forest. Those families have once a week devotionals or worship times.⁴ Champion Forest parents plan for some family practices in their schedule but they do not seem to be practicing these consistently; 73 percent prioritize family devotionals but 48 percent have practiced them 3 or more times in two months. When asked if parents had told their personal testimony to their children 43 percent indicated that they had shared it with their children.⁵ The statistics reveal further teaching and discipling of these parents is needed as they attempt to disciple their children. This project chose to focus on each parent and help them tell their salvation story in family devotional settings. In that salvation story, the gospel is spoken and heard and that story tells God's story.

Course Development

In the course development phase four leaders, who are parents, were asked to consider the curriculum from their unique perspectives. One was a staff member at Champion Forest with a seminary degree and father of three boys. Another evaluator was a parent of teenagers, a public middle school teacher, and a teacher in the Champion Forest student ministry. The third reviewer was an executive in the oil industry, an adult small group teacher, a deacon, and father to four children. The final reviewer was a mom of three who homeschools her children.

The content was considered biblical, applicable, and transferrable. The exposition of the Bible passages was considered doctrinally sound by each reviewer. The

⁴See Table A13 in Appendix 3.

⁵See Figure A1 in Appendix 4.

central theme of telling parent testimonies was insightful by each parent leader. And, there were some great suggestion to adjust flow of thought within some lessons to create better clarity.

Next, the evaluations suggested some thoughts for application. All of them enjoyed the content and considered the story-telling perspective to be helpful, less stressful, and somewhat easier to prepare. Some clarity was sought for the first session due to the amount of material it contained. The content was edited and broken into two parts and split between session one and session two.

Another comment was made about the course appearing to be focused on younger children at home. However, another reviewer thought the material covered a broad range of children's ages. The parents of teenagers felt like the material was directed towards parents of younger children. A portion of the material is for younger listeners but the marriage story and dating story have obvious correlations to teenagers who are considering dating. Several points were added in the personal testimony section to allow teenagers, who are saved, to lead their family one night. In the study of 2 Timothy 3, the point is made about being acquainted with the Scriptures from infancy. At this point parents need to know it is never too early to start teaching the Scriptures but it is also never too late to start. Lastly, the final two sessions cover the framework of response and worldview. The framework may be better understood by older children and teenagers who can stop and be reflective in the moment and at a later time.

Lastly, the framework was broken into 4 separate different lessons in the original concept.⁶ Several reviewers questioned the method of covering one question a week and so changes were made. The framework and question one was introduced in session 6 and then the remaining three questions in session 7. This little adjustment gave parents a better vision of the framework and the questions that were to be asked and why.

Course Teaching

Week 1

During the first week of class time, the biblical foundation for spiritual family practices was communicated through answering a series of questions. The goal of the teaching in week one was to communicate the scope of the project and the different areas that were to be tested concerning each family's spiritual practices. Then, the content of the teaching time began to address the scriptural foundation for parents being the primary disciple makers of their children. During this session terms were defined and expectations were expressed. Following those point, parental responsibility was highlighted from a biblical and theological perspective.⁷

Week 2

The second week the class finished up with the “who,” “what,” “why,” “when,” and “how” questions of family practices and began to teach one of the key passages for parents found in Deuteronomy 6. There are three commands for parents to follow in verses 4-9: love God, teach and talk about these commands, and display God's

⁶See Figure A4 in Appendix 6.

⁷The teaching outlines are available in Appendix 8.

word in public and private places. The speaker in this passage of Deuteronomy reminds parents to first love God, then teach and talk about him everywhere they go. In conclusion of this class time the Bible was emphasized as the starting point for all family practices just as the early Israelite were to post God's word where they would see it often.

Week 3

The third week, the family practice of telling spiritual stories used the example and stories of Psalm 78. The history of fathers telling stories about God's activity was an ongoing practice throughout the nation of Israel alluded to each Passover, in Joshua's twelve memorial stones, and Gideon mentions hearing his father talk about the stories he has heard from his father in Judges 6. The study of early families, as mentioned above, highlights stories about God at work in family formation and history. The psalmist declared that these stories told of the greatness of God and gave hope to a new generation. This session closed with a challenge for parents to plan to tell their stories in their home.

Week 4

The fourth week the class covered content in Ephesians 6, known as a "Household Code." In this passage fathers are singled out to be different than their cultural counterpart and become the primary spiritual influencer of their children. The Greek phrase, *patria potestas*, was discussed and explained how the fathers of that cultural period literally held the power of life and death over their family. Paul describes Christian fathers in a whole new paradigm. He writes that fathers are to be tender and nurture their children, take time to personally teach them, and cheer them on when they

succeed and when they fail. Paul intends for these Christian fathers to discipline in a Christ honoring way.

Week 5

The fifth week the content for parent practices recalled the faith modeling of a faithful mother and grandmother in, 2 Timothy 1 and 3. This generational transmission of faith and the teaching of Scripture gave Timothy a foundation that led him to salvation and eventually pastor of the Ephesian church. The testimony of Timothy's life encourages parents in less than ideal environments. This single mom lived out faithfulness to her faith in Christ and Timothy's own faith was one of the results of her commitment. In 2 Timothy 3 Paul describes how the curriculum of Timothy's spiritual training began early with scriptural teaching. Parents were encouraged to find a Bible verse or passage that encapsulates their life's purpose and share it with their child.

Week 6

In week six the course turned toward helping children and parents see God at work through their stories and specific situations. The framework illustration and questions are introduced to help think with a Christian worldview and gospel-centered framework.⁸ This lesson focused on natural reactions and responses to good and bad circumstances encountered in life and sought to establish a new response to determine God's will in them. Parents were equipped to equip their children with a biblical response and lead them to adjust their life to God's plans in the world and for the family. This

⁸The framework is Figure A4 found in Appendix 6.

section also gave parents a chance to remind their children of the gospel and the impact on daily life.

Week 7

In week 7, the other 3 questions were provided to finish the framework. The questions focused on individual change, instead of blame, and then initiated accountability and fellowship through the family and church community. There is also a renewed emphasis on personal evaluation in order to be sensitive to God at work. A section of this lesson also focused on spiritual disciplines from 1 Peter 1:3-8. Bible reading, prayer, scripture memorization, kindness, serving, and self-control were emphasized. Lastly, Jesus' example of growth in Luke 2:52 was examined.

Week 8

In week 8, the course came to a conclusion with a focus on the whole frame illustration and wise decision making. Parents were exhorted to be authentic in their own faith and love for God. The reality of the need for grace was also discussed as a parent experiences a sense of failure in conducting these family practices. Missing a teaching opportunity or leading a devotional where children do not seem engaged will happen. Encouragement was expressed to each parent to continue on the journey discipling children. Seek help and advice as needed from a church staff leader and from the fellowship of parents in the church.

At the end of the teaching time the project evaluation and family devotional schedule was addressed. Each parent was prayed for and blessed to go be the parent God redeemed them to be.

Post-Course Assessment

In the weeks following the project's teaching sessions, the parents were encouraged to begin or continue family practices at home. A challenge was issued for each parent to tell their spiritual stories, especially their testimony. After the end of eight weeks only 9 surveys had been received. In those surveyed, 80 percent had told their personal testimony and other stories.⁹ There were some encouraging answers included which indicated that several families were continuing on with their family devotional practices and story-telling.

Towards the end of the course, I interviewed 11 children of families in the course, their ages ranged from 5-13 years old. Their answers confirmed their parents' answers for the most part. Most of the children reported that their families read the Bible or prayed together, 82 percent. Only 36 percent of the children answered positively about hearing their parent's testimony, even though the parents reported 43 percent. In regards to their parent's dating and marriage story, 55 percent had heard this story from their parents, yet parents reported telling that story to their children, 71 percent. Some of the discrepancy may be from the children not knowing exactly what a testimony consists of or what their parents' marriage story means. Another possibility could be that they have forgotten their parents telling them at a previous time.

Overall, it is hard to tell any quantitative results due to low participation with the post-course survey. A couple of reasons why the participation was so low may be due to the summer schedule as the course finished at the end of June. Another possibility is

⁹See Figure A1 in Appendix 4.

that parents struggle with telling their personal testimony to their children or may not feel that they are prepared for any questions their children might ask. The general feedback about the teaching and content was positive at the end of the eight-week course.

Conclusion

This entire project has encouraged me as I minister to parents and families and it has also challenged me as a parent. I have been encouraged to hear parents talk about their hopes for their child's faith. Moreover, I have been challenged to be a better, disciple-making parent. I believe that Christian families must lead the way as disciple-makers and that the church must prioritize families to multiply their ministry. The Scripture teaches parents, in many texts, about their responsibility to disciple. Parents know this but many seem overwhelmed by the task. Parents may attribute this sense to lack of preparation, busyness, or other pressures. The church must partner with parents in the disciple-making process and not hinder the family's progress with the church's busyness.

The goal of this project was to equip parents to disciple their children by using their own personal, spiritual stories. Once again, parents knew their responsibility as disciple makers. Some were practicing family times, some were struggling, and some were totally new to the concept. Most Christian parents want their children to love Jesus and have a personal, love relationship with him. What if the first time a child heard the gospel it was in their home when their parents told their testimony? In the project survey over half, 57 percent, had never told their personal testimony to their children. This story is so basic yet critically important to the parent's spiritual life and eventually to their children. Beginning with this story, parents could communicate the gospel early on in

their child's life with a little preparation and encouragement. Other personal stories also teach important biblical topics and spiritual development. A parent's dating and marriage story, whether currently married or not, can be used and was more likely told than the personal testimony, 71 percent for the marriage story to 43 percent for the testimony.

The stories of Scripture describe God at work. Stories for the ancient family were about family formation and significant events. Stories for the modern family are the same. The family's impact on the next generation of church members should begin with the parent's story. Then, that story leads to God's story told over and over.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The overarching goal of this project was to equip parents to use their stories about God at work in their lives to disciple their children. These stories consist of spiritual transformation, decisions, and responses to God's direction in life and relationships. One of the components of preparing stories that teach is personal evaluation. Evaluation helps people learn and make better choices in the future. Generally, evaluation leads to positive changes as successes and mistakes are revealed. Since learning is usually a part of the process of evaluation it is important to discipleship. This project is made better through feedback and evaluation.

In the next few pages, the different parts of the project will be evaluated to determine what was revealed and learned and what parts should be addressed or could be changed. In the process of the project evaluation, questions will be asked assessing the delivery and clarity of the content as well as the long-term application to families at Champion Forest Baptist Church. The project's purpose and goals will also be evaluated to assess any realized goals. Goals that are not reached will be addressed. Several strengths and weaknesses of the course content and application were revealed and these will be discussed. Teaching methodology will be addressed in the section about content.

Another phase of evaluation consists of looking back at what was taught and learned after teaching through the course. There were several sources of feedback during

the course. Many times a new concept or perspective was realized in a “live” setting. This immediate feedback helped the project at various points along the way. My wife and I would talk on the way home about what concept was clear and helpful and what was not. I would also seek out one or two parents in the group after a class and ask for their input. There were also good questions asked during the teaching time that helped me realize something was not clear. After those sessions I would make notes for a potential future teaching opportunity and to address the following week.

Part of evaluation is asking, “What could be done differently?” Sometimes situations and circumstances would be different if they could have been known and changed. The church schedule or other seasonal options impacted the timing of the eight week teaching time. There were points to teach differently. I would always like more time for interaction and discussion. Identifying these issues helps shape the next time the material and content gets taught.

Finally, there will be some theological and personal reflections about the course and the truths that were learned and discovered. As a minister, my ministry and my family leadership requires examination, also. I hope to lead my family better as a result of teaching and learning from the overall experience. Throughout the course I have been challenged. I have noticed things to change about me and my teaching style as well as my parenting style. Likewise, I hope to lead the church in the ministry to parents and families more effectively. The result of this evaluation will create better content and processes for disciple making parents to impact their families.

The Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project focused on the parents of Champion Forest Baptist Church telling their spiritual stories in their family settings in order to disciple their children. God's word is the primary source and it provides the plan and process for parents. Christian parents must recognize their key role in discipleship within the family. Then, parents must combine their knowledge with a desire to honor God by following this teaching. However, parents often feel unprepared or unskilled to lead a devotional or worship time with their family. This project and its purpose attempted to help parents prepare and move them forward in their discipleship role.

The course was offered to parents of all ages on a Wednesday night along with other programming. Adults have worship and choir rehearsals on most Wednesday nights along with a few special interest support groups. Children have the opportunity to attend age-graded choirs and teenagers have ongoing Wednesday night programming. Invitations and surveys were sent to parents of these groups and 58 surveys were received and over 25 families participated in the 8-week course.

Throughout the length of the project parents were led through Bible passages to understand their role as disciple-makers in the family. Participants also examined several scriptures and stories of God's activity in many families. These stories served an important role in the Bible and the parents began to understand how they can serve a similar role in their lives. Stories are entertaining but there is also a message that accompanies them. Personal stories can also become a teaching tool and apply to family situations any time of the day. The goal of each session encouraged the writing and telling of personal stories where a parent recognized God at work. These personal stories

require little preparation and every Christian parents has a personal testimony they can and need to tell. Telling these stories of God at work, children would hear the gospel and important concepts about dating and marriage and decision making through prayer and wise counsel. Comments after the first couple of sessions, as the story telling idea was presented, helped parents relieve some of their felt pressure about preparation. In some instances, some parents were shocked when it occurred to them that their children had not heard the parent's salvation story.

Overall, I would say the purpose of this project was accomplished. Parents were equipped with a biblical foundation of disciple-making within the family. Then, these parents learned some simple storytelling concepts that they could apply in their home settings and family practices. The parents affirmed their equipping by confirming that their personal salvation story had been told in the weeks following the course.

The Project's Goals

The first goal of this project was to assess each parent's knowledge of the biblical instruction for parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their children and to evaluate their current disciple making practices. Through the use of The Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey it was determined that the respondents prioritized family devotional practices, 73 percent. Their practice of family devotionals in a two-month period referred to in the survey was "3-4 times" 10 percent, "5-6 times" 9 percent, and "7 or more" 29 percent. Added to the end of the survey were four questions about parent's use of their salvation story, their dating and marriage story, a parent's story about discerning God's will, and the use of stories to describe a personal success or failure.

Overall, it was refreshing to note the results of the survey. Many parents responded with biblical knowledge of their responsibility. When asked about the father's unique role in a child's discipleship, almost 94 percent agreed affirming a father's leadership. Church leaders were important to the discipleship process but not primarily responsible according to 94 percent of the parents.

When asked about the use of parent's spiritual stories the responses were varied. When answering about their testimony 43 percent responded that their children had heard them tell it. In response to their dating and marriage story, the number grew to 71 percent told. Good decision making and God's will was talked about in roughly 90 percent of the homes. And finally, when asked about God at work in successes and failures in their life, 79 percent of the parents responded that they had told their children one of those stories.

The knowledge of these parents' practices and knowledge was assessed. This feedback from the survey helped guide the direction of the course and encouraged parents to tell their personal testimony. There may always be a gap in the application of knowledge but many parents will take responsibility as they are disciplined, prepared, and exhorted.

The second goal was to create an eight-week course to equip parents to tell their spiritual salvation story using key Bible passages and their personal stories in family devotional settings. God's story is told throughout Scripture and that theme was emphasized each week as we gathered together. This overarching story, or metanarrative, communicates the gospel. After talking about the metanarrative of Scripture in the introduction of the project, the course focused on verses in Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78,

Ephesians 6, and 2 Timothy 1 and 3 which teach about the home as a center of discipleship, teaching, and storytelling. Each week the Scripture was used as the central text.

The eight lessons were evaluated by four different individuals. One parent is a minister on staff at Champion Forest, one is a public school teacher and teaches in the student ministry, one is an executive at an oil company and an adult life group teacher, and the other teaches in the children's ministry and homeschools her three children. Each of these evaluated the material for biblical faithfulness, scope of material, and applicability. All believed it met or exceeded expectations.

These four parent leaders believed that the content of the material taught throughout the project was faithful to each text. They affirmed that the passage that was taught remained true to the meaning of the text and interpretation and application of those texts. The Deuteronomy, Psalm, and Ephesian passage are well known passages related to parents and children. In those texts, there are specific commands for parents to follow as they disciple their children. The 2 Timothy passage implies what Timothy's mother and grandmother taught and modeled. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul stated that Timothy was taught the Old Testament Scripture from his early childhood. Paul asserted that the teaching of these writings is able to make a child wise for salvation. In the course, I believed this text seemed like a great application for young parents wondering when to start family spiritual practices. I believe that this goal to equip parents through eight biblically faithful lessons was accomplished.

The third goal for this project was to equip a minimum of 20 family units to lead family devotionals utilizing biblical principles and stories of their lives. The total

number of family units involved in the course was 26. There were parents and grandparents included in the classroom. There were husbands and wives as well as single parents, too. The families were varied in size from one child to multiple children and the children's ages spanned from infants to seniors in high school. This variety in family stages was a good gauge for the course material and its application. This goal of 20 family units was also accomplished.

The fourth goal was to get a commitment to an eight-week plan for each individual family to commit to conducting family devotions following the course. When the classroom content concluded, each family was challenged to commit to leading family devotionals over the subsequent eight weeks. In those eight weeks the parents were encouraged to use their testimony and other spiritual stories. Approximately five weeks after the course, I sent a follow up and requested an update. Only eight families have responded. All have been positive and those families have led at least one devotional and nearly 80 percent have told their personal testimony. While leading devotionals and getting parents to tell their personal testimony is a success, the goal was for 75 percent of the families (20) so this goal was not entirely met.

The teaching methodology for this project incorporated a variety of methods for communicating biblical truth and its application. Surveys were the first instrument the learners viewed that introduced them to the topic of family ministry and family practices. The lessons consisted of lecture and discussion covering the biblical passages and included some individuals sharing their stories. Each lesson contained a listening guide and corresponding PowerPoint to aid participants recall and maintain attentiveness.

Between each meeting there was homework so that the parents could practice telling their stories and prepare for the next Scripture passage by reading over it.

In the last three sessions of the course, each family created a frame for viewing many of life's daily situations "through." The frame becomes a visual reminder in the home of how to get a God-centered perspective when things may be going badly and even when life may be great. Each parent was encouraged to put a picture of the family or child in the frame with the four questions written around the sides.

At five weeks after the course, and another reminder at eight weeks, evaluations were sent out and feedback was given. The parents were to assess the course's effectiveness, understandability, and applicability. Each family was also to report on their practice of telling their spiritual stories as a part of their family devotional practices. Although participation in this part of the course was low, the majority of the evaluations I received were positive. A larger percentage of parents had told their personal testimony.

The scope of the material also was assessed as sufficient or exemplary. The material was believed to address the topic of family ministry, biblically. The Bible emphasizes parents as the primary disciple-makers in the home. The course covered various ways for parents to teach and talk about God throughout the day and in specific family settings. The idea of using stories to teach about God is found throughout the Bible. Plus, stories have universal appeal for people of all ages. One of the reasons I chose Psalm 78 is how the psalmist mentions what he was told by his father. Then Psalm 78 records several stories of God's activity. Other books of the Bible tell family stories

and the stories of God at work, too. The story of Joseph, Gideon, Esther, Paul, and Timothy teach about God at work within the family story.

The encouragement of the texts also reinforced the biblical idea of parents leading the family, especially fathers. The New Testament highlights the importance of Christian distinctiveness. This distinction influences the home and future generations. Parents were exhorted to model their own faith and lead in spiritual practices of teaching Scripture, praying, and worship. The parents responded with their knowledge that the children's ministry and student ministry can help but the responsibility remains the parents.

The overall applicability of the material received positive feedback. Each parent understood the broad scope of their stories as teaching tools for their children. Specifically, these parents realized the importance of their testimony in the child's life. Telling all of these stories focused on God at work in the parent's life as they taught the gospel. Many of these parents had previously spoken their dating or marriage story but as a result of the course a new purpose was learned. Lastly, parents appear to struggle with helping their children respond to situations. The framework lessons applied to children of all ages and can be a help for reflecting and being more aware of God at work.

There were some questions about relatability for parents of teenagers due to the large number of families with young elementary aged children. Those parents asked lots of questions and many of the topics that were discussed were related to those ages. However, I believe the dating and marriage stories as well as the framework material of lessons 6 and 7 help teenagers the most.

Strengths of the Project

One of the strengths of this project lies in the simplicity of personal stories. Stories are personal and practical tools. Scripture is the story of a personal God at work in personal lives for His glory. Parents participate in God's story by revealing Him in and through their story. One of the comments I heard often was how helpful and practical the idea of using personal spiritual stories for devotional content. There was a sense of "I can do that." The simplicity of a parent's stories is a characteristic which could minimize excuses about a parent's perceived skill or preparedness. When preparing a testimony or dating story, a different type of preparation, more like a rehearsal is simpler. This practice along with remembering details is less daunting of a task than preparing a Bible study in most parent's minds. The parents also affirmed how practical the storytelling concept was for them. Several parents relayed their enjoyment in remembering their moment of salvation.

Another strength this project offers is the telling of the gospel in homes. When a personal testimony is spoken the gospel is heard. Parents become the disciple-makers as they share their story and the gospel with their children. Parents will be fulfilling the Great Commission in their own homes. Parents will also become more comfortable with their testimony so that they will be able to tell it in any setting. Telling these stories also can strengthen the parent's faith.

Another strength of the project was the reliance upon Scripture. The Bible was the text book and over the eight weeks the class examined the context of the central passages as well as other scriptures that related to the gospel and families. The point was made in the last sessions for each parent to use the Scripture with each devotional and

personal story. Parents were also encouraged to memorize and incorporate a purposeful verse to go with their testimony and other stories.

Another strength included a visual aid for reminding a family about God's plans. The final sessions focused on a Christian worldview and the lessons were taught to help parents begin to teach their children the importance of viewing life with God's perspective. The first question to be asked in any situation was "What is God's goal/purpose?" This question helps parents and children alike stop, think, and then respond with a God-centered approach. The other questions address personal change instead of blaming someone else, fellowship with wise mentors, and then assessing what was learned. The framework is very practical and applies to negative and positive circumstances.

Weaknesses of the Project

One weakness of this project was not having enough time to develop theological depth to the personal stories. As a parent tells their testimony, theological themes such as God, Jesus, grace, and forgiveness arise. In a dating and marriage story, themes such as dating standards and defining love are approached. During the class time those were mentioned but time did not allow for depth.

Children of all ages were a part of the families involved in the project. Parents of teenagers felt that the subjects and practices of the devotionals and stories were for a younger audience. This perception may have been a weakness. The majority of the parents who attended had children who were younger. However, I offered some suggestions that I have used in my own family. Allow the teens to tell their testimony in a devotional setting. Involving teenagers in the planning of the family devotional helps

them grow. Parents can use their dating and marriage story to reinforce dating standards for their teenagers. This topic should help those children who are ready to date adopt some biblical standards of attraction, commitment, and love. Finally, the framework could be a big help for older adolescents as they development a worldview.

Several parents were already practicing family devotionals at home. I believe that because of their current practices they did not seem challenged, which could be a weakness of the simplistic, storytelling approach.

What I Would do Differently

My first thought about changing portions of this project immediately bring to mind the choice of the 2 Timothy passage. My choice of the 2 Timothy 1 and 3 passages came from a desire to use a lesser known parenting reference. I enjoyed the study and context of these verses and they emphasize the role of parents in less than ideal situations. In these verses, there is hope for all kinds of parents and parenting styles. Yet, teaching these chapters as a model for parenting seemed to force a less obvious message about family discipleship. Paul is emphasizing Timothy's role models of his mother's and grandmother's faith. Recalling those memories were to challenge and encourage him to complete the pastoral task before him.

The timing of the project's class time and the church's schedule was something else I would change. Champion Forest Baptist Church is busy doing ministry, all of the time, for every age group. Generally, there is a program scheduled for children, students, and adults every Sunday and most Wednesdays. When I began planning to teach the material there were Kids Ministry options for parents to attend and Student Ministry

programming for teenagers' parents, too. I waited until after Easter to begin which meant that the course would last into summer and even July for returning surveys.

I would also spend more time emphasizing the stories of failure from both the parent's perspective and for the child's benefit. Parents do not like to share stories about times when they were wrong or made a mistake. However, the authenticity and honesty to admit a fault builds trust and makes relationships stronger.

Theological Reflections

Reading and studying the Bible with family ministry in mind led to a greater appreciation of God's plan for the family. God is perfect in his plans for marriages and families. The stories told about early Israelite families seem dysfunctional, to understate the problems, but there remains a purpose and plan each story communicates. There is a beautiful story of God's grace in each and every family in Scripture. This project reminded me of God's story in families and the importance of grace and love.

The gospel is the key component in God's story of revelation and love. Jesus came to glorify his Father and save mankind. When people hear and understand God's story they respond to the gospel. Christian parents can use their story to tell the best story ever told. These personal stories retell the gospel over and over. I believe the gospel can be revealed in marriages, families, personal relationships, and even daily decisions. These relationships and revelations become the setting for more disciple-making stories. I notice the gospel more and more in my life and I look forward to times with my family so that I can tell them about what I have learned.

The Christian disciple's life is a life of distinction and the writers of the church's epistles communicate this theme over and over. This distinctiveness also

characterizes the Christian family. Discipleship calls the family and its members to pursue holiness. Christianity singles out fathers for a unique role in their children's lives. Fathers have a unique power and persuasion that they imprint on their children. All Christian parents are instructed to raise their children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." This type of parenting is God-focused and gospel-centered.

There is an overarching purpose and plan in God's story. The Bible's authors are united in its proclamation of God at work throughout history. The family must communicate this perspective as well. The Christian worldview must be a priority for Christian parents. The disciple-makers in each home help shape the future of the church.

The church is a key component in the discipleship of the family. The relationships within the church must reflect the bonds of family and address many of the same issues within an actual family. When parents gathered for our class time there was fellowship and mentoring happening. The context brought all of the parents together and the goal was to learn. The church must continue to tell the story of God and the homes where Christian families dwell will become an outpost in the community.

Personal Reflections

As I reflect on this project, its impact on my family and my parenting are brought into focus. I want to be a father who models his faith at home. I want to tell stories of God's work in my life. I want to use every available moment, sitting or driving, to talk about God and his commands. However, I also know my shortcomings and need to admit them to my family as well and ask for forgiveness and grace. This focus on family ministry and parenting highlighted my need for the gospel again.

One night recently our family sat down for our family time together, and I asked if anyone remembered my testimony (which I have told on several occasions). Neither my son or my daughter affirmed that they had ever heard it to my shock and dismay. Children forget, and that is one more reason to keep telling my testimony.

There are few joys that can compare to helping someone else understand the gospel or discover how God is at work. I continue to believe that discipleship and the church fellowship go together. As I have taught these sessions and heard people wrestle with God's word and talk about their family experiences it has become the type of ministry I want to partner with parents and families and watch them respond to the gospel.

Conclusion

Throughout this project and doctoral course work, I have been challenged to be a better Christian, student, father, minister, and man. This project directly related to one of my passions, helping, and discipling parents. In one of my first doctoral seminars the thought about the use of a parent's testimony came to mind. Since then I have been eager to teach these concepts and realize the results. Watching parents respond to telling their children their testimony has been amazing and gratifying.

My hope in each lesson was for parents to understand their role and take the initiative to use the Bible and their stories to disciple their children. Each lesson built on knowledge of key scriptural passages to challenge parents' understanding of their responsibility. These parents were ready and simply needed some guidance or further direction. I was able to listen and hear their heart for their children to become Christ-followers. As parents thought through using their stories it became clear personal stories

are a valuable tool in home discipleship. I believe these stories require preparation that is not overwhelming and telling these spiritual stories will have an eternal and practical impact.

The staff and ministers at Champion Forest Baptist Church have been helpful and encouraging. These lessons will help accomplish our mission in the community of Houston and beyond. Many of the staff helped provide feedback and some rearranged schedules so that parents would be available to attend the course. When I first mentioned teaching parents to tell their testimony in the home several realized they needed to tell their own children. This affirmed the need for a project like this. I also believe that training more people to tell their testimony will impact more people outside of the home, too.

My plans are to continue teaching more and more parents to use their story in discipleship. This will help and benefit my church, my children, and eventually my children's children. The universal church must continue to proclaim the gospel and disciple future generations of church members and leaders. Parents must continue to realize their responsibility and the church proclaims truth. Then, the church must partner with parents to better equip them with ways to accomplish this task. In these days, the church is in a great position to be an influence on the culture through the families that make up the membership.

The Bible is God's story and it is the best story in all of the world. It is the most important story in history and for life as it reveals Jesus. Christian parents join in this story by responding to the gospel and passing it on to their children. I wish that every parent could experience the impact of personally discipling their own children. I hope

that teaching and training parents to tell their spiritual stories equips them to tell the best story ever told by telling the story they know best.

APPENDIX 1

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the effectiveness of your life stories to disciple your children. This research is being conducted by David Upchurch for purpose of project research. In this research, you will answer the following question the first week and the last week of the instructional period. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will you name be reported, or you name identified with your responses.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Please provide the following demographic information:

1. Please provide your date of birth in numeric for (e.g. 06211968 for June 21, 1968)
to be used as identification during the project: _____
2. What is your marital status?
Married Separated Divorced Single
3. What are the ages and gender of your children?
4. Are you a Christian? If so, how long have you been a Christian?

Interview Questions for Children

1. How often does your family have family devotionals?
2. How often does your family talk about spiritual subjects when you are together?
3. Do you learn more about Jesus at church or at home?
4. Have you ever heard your parent/s personal salvation testimony? If yes, when?
5. Have you ever heard the story of your parent's marriage? If yes, when?
6. How do your parents encourage you to make wise decisions?
7. How would you describe who God is?
8. How would you describe who Jesus is?
9. Why is the Bible an important book?
10. What is sin?
11. What is salvation?
12. What is the most important thing you have learned from your mom or dad?

THE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

This survey is intended for parents with children living at home. For the purposes of this survey, “church leaders” include pastors, elders, ministers, deacons, teachers, or small-group leaders.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
01. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family’s schedule.						
02. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.						
03. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.						
04. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.						
05. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.						
06. Parents—and particularly fathers —have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.						
07. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.						
08. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child’s spiritual growth.						

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
09. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past WEEK have I prayed aloud with any of my children?						
10. How many times in the past WEEK has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?						
11. How many times in the past MONTH have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?						
12. How many times in the past MONTH have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?						
13. How many times in the past TWO MONTHS has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?						
14. How many times in the past TWO MONTHS have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?						
15. How many times in the past YEAR have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?						
16. How many times in the past YEAR has any church leader made contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?						

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Questions about Personal Stories

My children have heard my personal testimony:

Yes No

My children have heard my dating/marriage story:

Yes No

My children would say we talk as a family about God's will and how to make good decisions:

Yes No

My children have heard a story about how I've seen God at work in one of my personal successes and/or one of my failures:

Yes No

APPENDIX 2

FAMILY SERIES CURRICULUM EVALUATION

This rubric was sent to three Champion Forest Life Group teachers and/or deacons who evaluated the course material to ensure it is biblically faithful and that the course's scope and teaching methodology are appropriate and practical for a majority of CFBC families to use.

Name of evaluator _____

Date _____

The Family Equipping Curriculum Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical					
The content of the curriculum is scripturally and theologically sound.					
Scope					
The curriculum covers the topics it is created to address.					
The curriculum addresses parents as the primary disciple makers of their home.					
Practicality					
The curriculum helps parents apply scriptures to their family's life.					
The curriculum helps equips parents and children know God better and grow spiritually.					

APPENDIX 3

SURVEY RESULTS

Pre-test Results

Table A1. Responses to Question 5

Q 5: I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	2%
Disagree	9	15%
Somewhat disagree	6	10%
Somewhat agree	12	21%
Agree	18	31%
Strongly agree	12	21%

Table A2. Responses to Question 6

Q 6: I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	7	12%
Disagree	19	33%
Somewhat disagree	10	17%
Somewhat agree	9	15%
Agree	6	10%
Strongly agree	7	12%

Table A3. Responses to Question 7

7: The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	17	29%
Disagree	30	52%
Somewhat disagree	2	3%
Somewhat agree	7	12%
Agree	2	3%
Strongly agree	0	0%

Table A4. Responses to Question 8

Q 8: When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	33	57%
Disagree	20	34%
Somewhat disagree	4	7%
Somewhat agree	0	0%
Agree	0	0%
Strongly agree	1	2%

Table A5. Responses to Question 9

Q 9: I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	29	50%
Disagree	20	34%
Somewhat disagree	7	12%
Somewhat agree	2	3%
Agree	0	0%
Strongly agree	0	0%

Table A6. Responses to Question 10

Q 10: Parents—and particularly fathers —have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	5%
Disagree	0	0%
Somewhat disagree	1	2%
Somewhat agree	1	2%
Agree	19	33%
Strongly agree	34	58%

Table A7. Responses to Question 11

Q 11: Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	25	43%
Disagree	24	41%
Somewhat disagree	6	10%
Somewhat agree	2	3%
Agree	1	2%
Strongly agree	0	0%

Table A8. Responses to Question 12

Q 12: My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child’s spiritual growth.		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	25	43%
Disagree	24	41%
Somewhat disagree	6	10%
Somewhat agree	2	3%
Agree	1	2%
Strongly agree	0	0%

Table A9. Responses to Question 13

Q 13: Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past WEEK have I prayed aloud with any of my children?		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Never	6	10%
Once	4	7%
A couple times	11	19%
Three or four times	6	10%
Five or six times	13	22%
Seven or more times	18	31%

Table A10. Responses to Question 14

Q 14: How many times in the past WEEK has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off ?		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Never	2	3%
Once	7	12%
A couple times	7	12%
Three or four times	10	17%
Five or six times	18	31%
Seven or more times	14	24%

Table A11. Responses to Question 15

Q 15: How many times in the past MONTH have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Never	2	3%
Once	4	7%
A couple times	12	21%
Three or four times	12	21%
Five or six times	12	21%
Seven or more times	16	27%

Table A12. Responses to Question 16

Q 16: How many times in the past MONTH have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Never	3	5%
Once	4	7%
A couple times	11	19%
Three or four times	9	16%
Five or six times	5	8%
Seven or more times	26	45%

Table A13. Responses to Question 17

Q 17: How many times in the past TWO MONTHS has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Never	16	28%
Once	8	14%
A couple times	6	10%
Three or four times	6	10%
Five or six times	5	8%
Seven or more times	17	29%

Table A14. Responses to Question 18

Q 18: How many times in the past TWO MONTHS have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Never	6	10%
Once	5	9%
A couple times	20	34%
Three or four times	6	10%
Five or six times	11	19%
Seven or more times	10	17%

Table A15. Responses to Question 19

Q 19: How many times in the past YEAR have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Never	18	31%
Once	8	14%
A couple times	22	38%
Three or four times	4	7%
Five or six times	3	5%
Seven or more times	3	5%

Table A16. Response to Question 20

Q 20: How many times in the past YEAR has any church leader made contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?		
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Never	24	41%
Once	9	16%
A couple times	15	26%
Three or four times	5	9%
Five or six times	1	2%
Seven or more times	4	7%

APPENDIX 4

PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST COMPARISON AND *T*-TEST

Figures and Conclusions

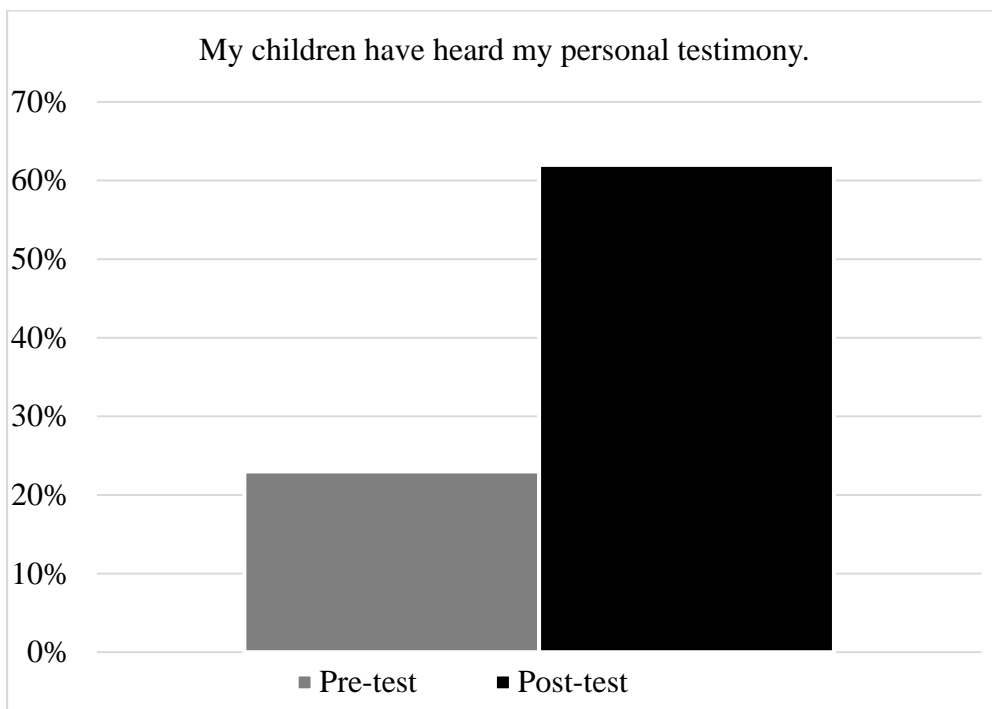


Figure A1. Responses to Question 21 Pre- and Post-Test

Mean of the pre-test = .23; mean of the post-test = .62; $df = 12$; $p < .05$;

1.783 for null hypothesis; $t = 2.73^*$

A significant statistical increase is realized however, only 13 relatable pre- and post-tests were received so results may not be significant.

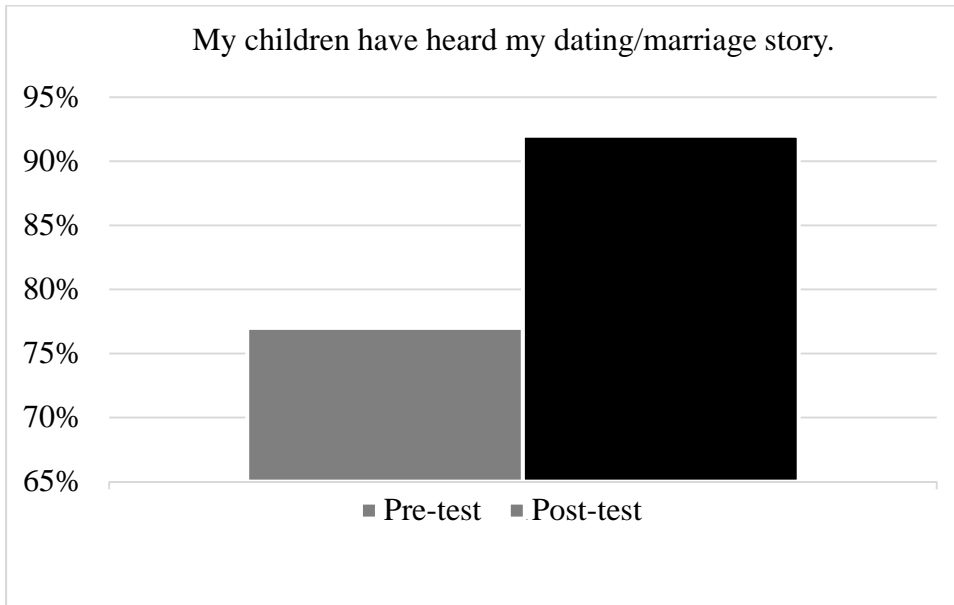


Figure A2. Responses to Question 22 Pre- and Post-test

Mean of pre-test = .77; mean of post-test = .92; $df = 12$; $p < .05$; 1.783 needed for a null hypothesis; $t = 1.48$.

The score is smaller than what is needed for a null hypothesis. This leads to a conclusion that there was little statistical difference in the sample of 13 returned post-tests.

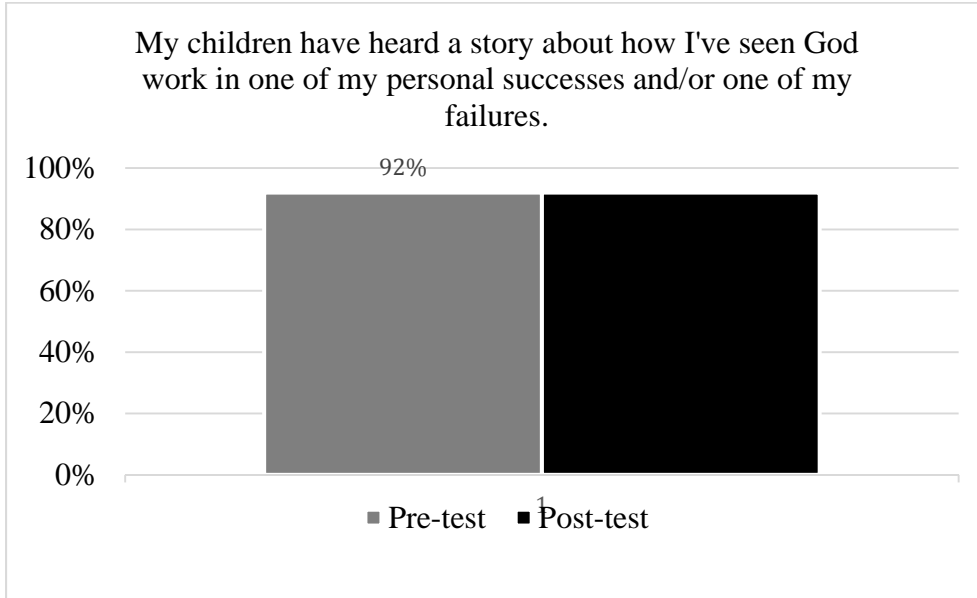


Figure A3. Responses to Question 24 Pre- and Post-test

Mean of pre-test = .92; mean of post-test = .92; $df = 12$; $p < .05$; 1.783 needed for null hypothesis; $t = 1$

The score is smaller than what is needed for a null hypothesis. This leads to a conclusion that there was little statistical difference recognized.

APPENDIX 5

PARENT COMMITMENT FORM AND COMPLETION DATE

This form was completed by each parent participating in the course. The form was used to track each family's commitment to family devotion and the completion dates of each one.

PARENT COMMITMENT AND COMPLETION FORM

I _____ commit to leading my family through each devotional prepared throughout the course.

Devotion 1 completed on this date, _____.

Devotion 2 completed on this date, _____.

Devotion 3 completed on this date, _____.

Devotion 4 completed on this date, _____.

Devotion 5 completed on this date, _____.

Devotion 6 completed on this date, _____.

Devotion 7 completed on this date, _____.

Devotion 8 completed on this date, _____.

After devotion 8 answer the following questions:

How did you feel leading these family devotionals?

What was the biggest obstacle you experienced leading these devotionals?

What was the biggest success you experienced leading these devotionals?

How did your children respond to your devotionals?

Will you continue leading family devotionals?

APPENDIX 6

COURSE EVALUATION RUBRIC

This form was completed by each participating adult and used to evaluate the course content and presentation. Each session was evaluated for ease of understanding and its practical application. Changes to the course was made as appropriate and based on the results.

Name of evaluator _____

Date _____

Equipping Parents Course Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Understandability					
The curriculum is written at a level that is appropriate for most parents.					
Applicability					
The curriculum helps parents address spiritual topics in their home.					
The curriculum is a resource for families to facilitate meaningful devotionals.					
Practicality					
The curriculum will help equip parents to lead spiritually and make disciples of their own children.					
The curriculum will help equip children know God better and grow spiritually.					

APPENDIX 7

FRAMEWORK FOR THE FAITH JOURNEY

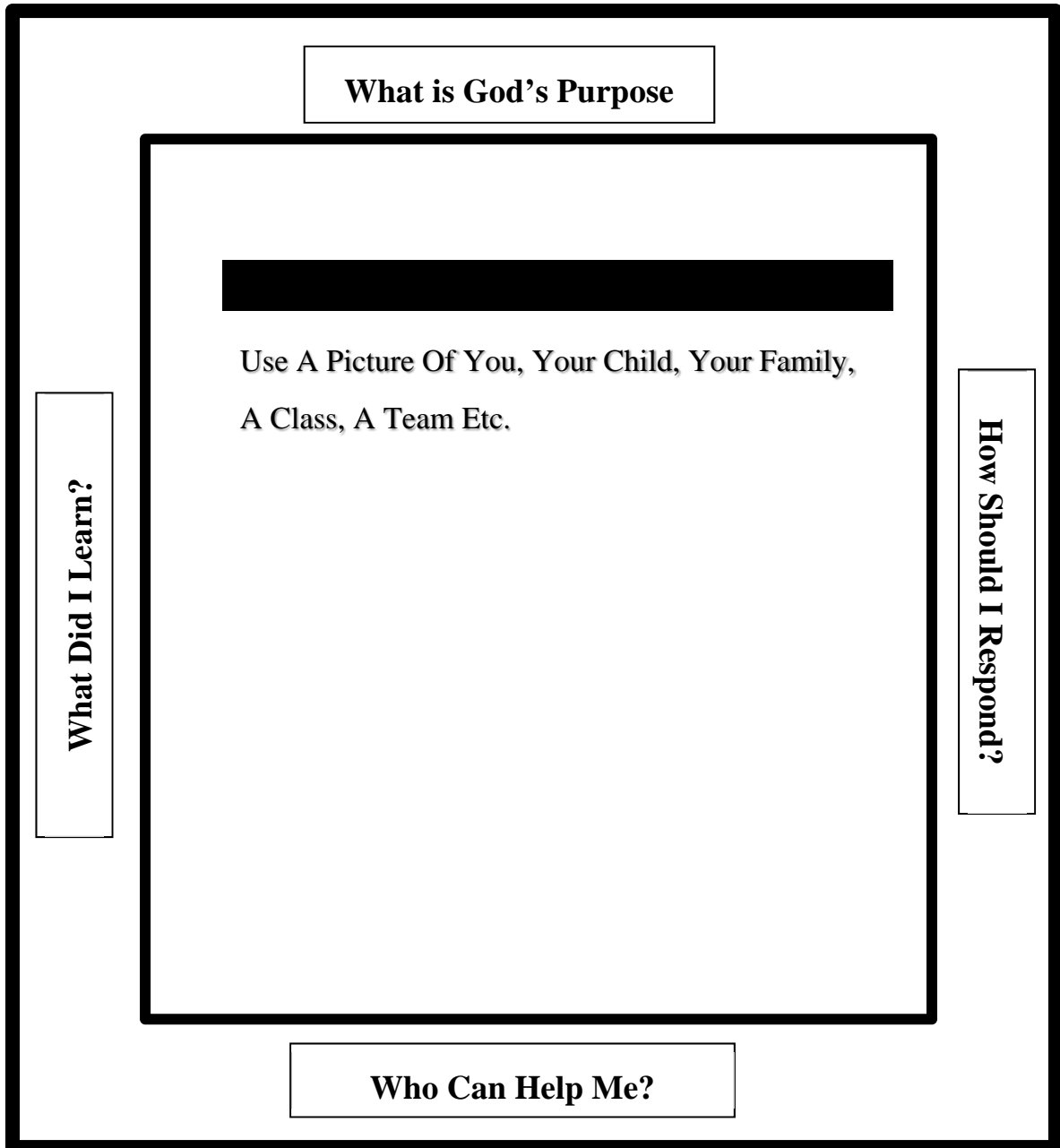


Figure A4. Framework and Questions

APPENDIX 8

TEACHING OUTLINES FOR COURSE

Week 1 Teaching Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. The home is a spiritual target for conflict from outside and inside. Ephesians 6:12 mentions this spiritual warfare.
 - a. Busyness accounts for a new normal but is not an excuse for a lack of disciple-making.
 - b. The attack disrupts God's ordained order for family life.
 - i. Parents and their children need a gospel-centered solution that reminds them of the truth and future reality.
- III. The home must be equipped and be equipping future generations. Ephesians 4:12 highlights who makes up the church and the role of equipping.
 - a. There is a need to be biblically and theologically grounded.
 - b. There is a need for parents to champion the role of disciple maker in their home.
 - c. It is never too early, or too late, to start.
- IV. The Essential Questions
Who? Who participates? God, parents, children, and the church. Who's responsible for disciple-making in the home?
 - a. God's goal found in Mal 2:15, "...Godly offspring."
 - b. Christian parents are to take the initiative leading their children to become gospel followers. The book of Deuteronomy contains many exhortations for parents to lead by teaching and talking about spiritual commands and topics.
 - i. Some current statistics about parent involvement about spiritual practices.
 - c. Children are a blessing and need to be told about the stories of faith and taught the word of God.
 - d. The church must be a partner in the discipleship process, coming alongside parents with encourage and resources.
- V. What? What is the content?
 - a. God's story and the gospel are key subjects for disciple-making.
 - b. The scope of the project will cover topics such as worldview, the gospel, key stories in relationship with God, and decision making.

- c. The gospel will be summed up simply: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration.
 - d. Key elements that impact a child's faith:
 - i. Talking with mother or father about faith.
 - ii. Participating in family devotions.
 - iii. Involved in family service projects.
- VI. Why? Why are parents the primary initiators of this discipleship process?
- a. The Bible clearly addresses parents to teach these spiritual topics even before they go to church.
 - b. The amount of time children spend at home outweighs the time spent at church.
 - c. The modern culture is also telling a story and it is a constant message without any reference to God. Parents must teach biblical truth to interpret and influence other stories.
 - i. Will our children try to understand the cultural story from within the biblical framework? Or, will they learn the cultural story first and use it as the lens through which they understand Scripture?

Week 2

- I. Recap and Introduction: recap of the Who, What, and Why parents are the primary disciple-makers of their children and how the church can help assist and resource them. The context of Deuteronomy 6 provides a look into the importance of discipleship within the family.
- II. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 The Shema
- III. Background about the Passage
 - a. The Shema
 - b. Historical setting
- IV. Three Commands to Follow
 - a. Love God all the time
 - b. Teach and talk about spiritual things everywhere
 - c. Post God's word everywhere
- V. How? How are parents to teach and train their children in the things of God?
 - a. A lifestyle to model
 - i. Love God
 - ii. Commands are to be in your heart
 - b. A format to follow
 - i. Teach these commands formal
 - ii. Talk about them informal
 - iii. Make God's word visible
- VI. When? When are parents to disciple their children?

- a. All of the time, “lie down,” “rise up,” “sit and walk,” – Hebrew grammatical construction that means all of the time.
- VII. Where? Where is the physical setting for discipleship in the home?
 - a. “In your house” and “by the way” means everywhere is a potential setting.
 - b. Archaeological discoveries of ancient floorplans reveal that most homes had a place of worship set aside.
 - c. “Doorposts” and “gates” provide a visible focus where families go every day.

Week 3

- I. Introduction
 - a. Recap the importance of a plan; sacred space set aside and then schedule the time
 - b. Incorporate planned teaching and be ready for spontaneous talks
 - c. Remember the three commands in Deut 6:4-9
 - i. Love God wholeheartedly
 - ii. Teach and talk to your children about God
 - iii. Post God’s word everywhere, beginning with your heart and home
- II. How did those Old Testament parents follow these commands?
 - a. Literally taught the Torah, dads began with sons at 5
 - b. Parents told stories of God’s activity during meals, festivals and symbols
- III. Examining ancient stories, scholars believe there are several types of stories unique to families
 - a. Stories about their god/God
 - b. Stories about the formation of family
 - i. Stories about the gift of land to the family
 - ii. Stories about the beginning of their family, tribe, clan
 - c. Stories about traditions, character, and values
 - d. Stories about heroes and significant events
- IV. In Psalm 78:1-8 provides some evidence about the use of these stories
 - a. This psalm begins with an urgent request to listen and act
 - b. The writer will use parables to teach
 - c. The writer recalls the practice of hearing stories from fathers and will repeat the practice
 - d. The writer uses first person plural, we, to be an example of telling the stories of God, v.4
 - i. Tell about the stories of God’s protection
 - ii. Tell about the stories of God’s provision
 - iii. Tell about the stories of God’s rescue
 - e. The goal of telling the stories of God

- i. So that our children and grandchildren will be impacted by God, v.6
 - ii. So that our children will have hope, deep seated confidence in God, in a world of despair and disappointment
 - iii. So that families will remember their God and his ways
- V. Some examples of storytelling in the Bible
 - a. Genesis 10 the story of Noah, family formation
 - b. Genesis 37:2-50 the Jacob/Joseph stories of family formation and God's protection/provision
 - c. Exodus 12:26-27 story about the Passover and fathers explaining the meaning of the symbols
 - d. Joshua 4:21-24 story about the crossing of the Jordan and how God provided
 - e. Judges 6:13 Gideon had heard some stories from his father
 - f. Matt 1:1- & Luke 3:23- the importance of Jesus' genealogy
 - g. Prov 1:8-8:36 a father instructing his sons
- VI. The remainder of Psalm 78 reminds the hearers of at least 7 stories of God's activity
 - a. What will your 7 stories be? See handout
 - b. Personal testimony
 - i. God's rescue
 - ii. God's provision
 - c. Marriage and dating story
 - i. Family formation
 - ii. Values and character formation
 - d. Others
 - i. Births
 - ii. Choosing a job/vocation
 - iii. Deciding whether to move or not
 - iv. Explaining why you celebrate some traditions

Week 4

- I. Introduction
 - a. Recap Psalm 78 Telling the stories of God in your history
 - b. The Christian life should be defined by being different
 - c. Notice the context preceding Ephesians 6
 - i. Imitate God, walk in love
 - ii. No hint of sin
 - iii. The difference between light and darkness
 - iv. Be wise, make the most of your time
 - v. Be Holy Spirit filled

- vi. Be subject to one another
- vii. Wives respect your husband and husband love your wife
- d. The Christian is called to be different than culture and distinguishable from the lost
- e. Now be different in your parenting
- II. Ephesians 6:1-4 Be different in your home
 - a. Passage known as a household code
 - b. These verses speak to relationships within a NT home; be different in these relationships
 - i. Husbands and wives 5:22-32 be different by respecting and honoring
 - ii. Parents and children 6:1-4, be different by honoring and obeying
 - iii. Employers and Employees 6:5-9, be different by obeying and treating fairly
 - c. Children obey and honor vv. 1-3
 - i. Actions
 - ii. Attitudes
 - iii. Promise realized in relationship to God, Initial steps to being a faithful Christ follower
 - d. Fathers uniquely singled out to be different, v. 4
 - i. A Negative, don't provoke or exasperate
 - 1. NT era fathers impulsive, harsh, inconsiderate
 - 2. *Patria potestas* "father power" in the home and often the power of life or death
 - 3. Be different by creating a spiritual, gospel-centered culture in the home
 - ii. A positive, bring them up, with discipline and instruction
 - 1. "Bring them up" same word as "nourish" used in 5:29
 - a. Value your children, be involved and engaged
 - b. Provide protection and provision both material and spiritual
 - 2. Discipline Greek word *paideia* means "training"
 - a. Formal instruction in all areas
 - b. Discipline that is more than punishment
 - 3. Instruction Greek word *nouthesia* means "to put in the mind"
 - a. In life situations not simply classroom/book knowledge
 - b. Help your children think through choices and consequences
 - c. Positive reinforcement
 - d. Celebrating good decisions, illustration be a cheerleader

- iii. Discipline and instruction “of the Lord”
 - 1. Holy Spirit guided
 - 2. Scripture based
 - 3. Jesus honoring

Week 5

- I. Introduction
 - a. Recap Ephesians 6:1-4
 - i. Children obey and honor
 - ii. Fathers don’t provoke but discipline by teaching, train by putting gospel-centered thoughts in the minds of your children
 - b. Paul writes to Timothy about Timothy’s home life in 2 Timothy 1:3-5, 3:14-15
 - i. Timothy’s unique home situation
 - ii. Timothy’s instructional foundation
 - iii. Challenges parents to model their faith and teach the Bible
- II. 2 Timothy 1:3-5 Be a model ancestor
 - a. Children learn through the daily life of their parents and grandparents
 - i. “My ancestors” v.3 Paul had learned how to serve and worship
 - ii. Jewish way of life and covenant with God
 - iii. “Clear conscience” daily holiness
 - b. Remember your examples v.5
 - i. Remembering is one of the ways people learn
 - ii. Key in our relationship with God, phrase from OT don’t forget/remember
 - iii. We learn from our mistakes
 - iv. Key when a child leaves home
 - c. Parents are to model their faith so that their children remember it when they need it
 - i. Lois and Eunice first introduced in Acts 16:1
 - ii. In a less than ideal home situation their faith was boldly evident
 - iii. Sincere faith v.5 literally their faith dwelled at home or was alive and authentic
 - iv. This faith is visible and noticed
 - v. Paul is complementing, cheering on Timothy because he can see his faith (remember Eph 6:4 put in the mind)
- III. 2 Timothy 3:14-15 Continue in what you have learned and believed because of the example in your home
 - a. The Greek word for learning is *emathes* and implies learning by watching
 - i. Timothy had learned spiritual truths by watching his mother and grandmother along with Paul

- ii. A faith that is seen is powerful and help a child stand in the midst of evil, notice 3:1-9
- b. The Greek word for believed is *epistothēs* and it means convinced assurance
 - i. The source of your examples display blessing and peace
 - ii. Strong faith because of your examples
- c. Your mother and grandmother taught you with the best possible textbook, v15
 - i. From childhood is a phrase that can mean from infancy, parents start early
 - ii. Scholars are discussing how 2 years are “innately” spiritual
 - iii. Jewish parents would teach the covenant to children formally at 5 years of age
- d. The Holy Scriptures make one wise for salvation
 - i. These scriptures are the story of God and his personal involvement in our lives
 - ii. The Scriptures support good decision making
 - iii. “Wise” also implies that the teaching of the Scripture aids the defense of faith
 - iv. Reveal Jesus and the gospel for salvation
- e. Parents must teach Scripture so that their children have a foundation and so that they introduce their children to Jesus

Week 6

- I. Introduction
 - a. Recap the four passages that have been covered
 - b. Deut 6:4-9 Love God and disciple your children
 - c. Ps 78:1-8 tell the stories of God so both parents and children trust God
 - d. Eph 6:1-4 fathers are called to be different because of Jesus
 - e. 2 Tim 1:3-5; 3:14-15 Timothy’s upbringing was the result of a faithful mother and grandmother who modeled their faith and taught the Scripture
- II. Worldview and ways to pass on a Christian worldview
 - a. Define worldview
 - b. Determining goals for your children
 - c. Scripture and the metanarrative of the gospel
 - d. Passing on a Christian Worldview
- III. Parenting and discipling children
 - a. Capture the heart and attitude not simply behavior
 - b. Do not settle for lack of conflict or being liked
 - c. Love Jesus is the parent’s priority
 - d. Equip your children

- e. What is best and what is wise?
- IV. Give them a framework to respond to life
 - a. Your children will face good and bad life situations
 - b. Help them respond biblically
- V. Build a framework by asking 4 questions
 - a. First question, what is God's purpose?
 - i. Focus on God and his activity
 - ii. Puts the situation in an eternal perspective
 - iii. Highlights the gospel
 - b. Parent stories about their life and decisions help begin the process
 - c. Enables cultural exegesis
- VI. Some other biblical examples
 - a. Rom 8:28
 - b. John 9:1-3
 - c. Prov 3:5-6
 - d. Col 1:9
 - e. Jer 29:11
 - f. Daniel, Joseph, Esther, Jesus, Paul

Week 7

- I. Introduction
 - a. Recap the first part of the framework for responding to life
 - i. What is God's purpose?
 - ii. Why that is important?
- II. The next 3 parts of the frame
 - a. What do I need to change? "Me first" is good on this occasion, avoid blame or excuses.
 - b. Who do I need to help me? Mentors, coaches, teachers, ministers, and parents
 - c. What did I learn? The strengths of evaluation
- III. Scriptures that help parents and families discern what God is doing and how to respond
 - a. Exod 12:26-27
 - b. Josh 4:20-24
 - c. John 9:1-3
- IV. Discipling your children and some spiritual disciplines, 2 Pet 1:3-8
 - a. Bible Study for morality and knowledge of the truth
 - b. Prayer for discernment and know God's will
 - c. Self-control for handling life's pressures
 - d. Worship for prioritizing God's glory
 - e. Love for putting other's ahead of self

- f. Rehearsing the gospel so that Christians will be fruitful and mindful of Jesus
- V. The example of Jesus as he grew and matured, Luke 2:52
 - a. Wisdom is understanding and discernment
 - b. Stature is physical growth
 - c. Favor with God and man, the importance of inherent value and positive reputation

Week 8

- I. Introduction
 - a. Recap the framework of responding to life situations
 - b. The modeling and discipling that occurs in the home, remember Timothy's influences 2 Tim 1 and 3
- II. Life is full of choices
 - a. Choices aren't always as easy
 - b. Mankind's heart is deceitful Jer 17:9, Prov 3:5-6
 - c. What is the wise thing to do? Eph 5:15-17, Jas 1:5
 - d. Consider your personal past, present and future
 - e. The decision making process is one way we learn to submit to God
- III. The 3rd piece of the frame seeking wise counsel
 - a. Prov 13:10
 - b. Prov 19:10
- IV. The importance of the last piece of the frame, personal evaluation
 - a. Remember other the teenagers in the Bible; Joseph, Daniel, Esther, Jesus
- V. Conclusion Deuteronomy 6 throughout Proverbs
- VI. Remember the goals for your children
 - a. Heart
 - b. Obedience
- VII. Evaluate the class and content
- VIII. Plans for your family practices
 - a. Commitment to use your story in your family practices
 - b. Reporting the completion and next steps
- IX. Parenting and the gospel
 - a. Parents mess up
 - b. Parenting is hard work without much training
 - c. God created the role of parents and gives grace
 - d. Grace means there is a second chance

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING PARENTS TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN AT CHAMPION FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH

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Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016
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This project seeks to equip parents of Champion Forest Baptist Church to understand and practice disciple-making in their homes. The emphasis of the project relies on scriptural exhortations to parents to disciple their children and for these parents to utilize their personal testimony and other life stories in family settings.

In chapter 1 the project goals and church context are discussed. The primary goal was to equip parents to use their personal testimony and other stories in the discipleship process with their children. These topics were chosen to help those parents who believe it is their responsibility to make disciples of their children but need help with preparation and topics.

In chapter 2 the biblical passages to be interpreted were introduced and explained. These passages contain direct commands and methods for parents to obey as the primary disciple makers in their homes. Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:1-4, and 2 Timothy 1:3-5 and 3:14-15 were chosen to demonstrate consistency in both Testaments of the Bible and the unique role of the parents.

In chapter 3 the sociological impact of parents and their stories was considered. The role of parents in society is ever changing but parents remain a powerful influence on

healthy families and children. When parents use their stories they imitate many other cultures and ancient parents as they use these stories to communicate important truths.

In chapter 4 the results of the pre-class survey and post-class survey were examined. Champion Forest Baptist Church is very similar to other churches who have participated in the Family Practices Survey. Of special note were the questions for parents use of their spiritual stories. All Christians should use their testimony to declare the gospel. Christian parents can and should use their testimony in their home with their children.

Finally, in chapter 5 the project is evaluated and reflected upon. There were some significant discoveries in parents' practices, and there were some strategies and methods that could be improved on. Overall, the project succeeded in getting the parents to tell their stories and declare God's glory.

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