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TRAINING AND EQUIPPING PARENTS OF YOUTH IN THE
STUDENT MINISTRY AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
ELLINGTON, MISSOURI, TO DISCIPLE
THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Educational Ministry

by
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December 2017

APPROVAL SHEET

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I dedicate this project to my bride, Kryssi. You have been an exemplary helpmate and an encouragement to me during all these years of study and ministry. You have supported me and given to me in more ways than I can count, and I shall remain forever grateful for that. I also dedicate this this project to my parents, who always believed that I could excel at school. Finally, I dedicate this project to the church, the bride of our Lord Jesus Christ. May all things be done for the glory of God and for the edification of His people.

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PREFACE

This project could not have been completed without the love, prayers, and support of many people. But first and foremost, I would thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His rich grace during my studies. Yet, I compare earning degree as rubbish compared to knowing Him. May this work be used to further your kingdom and serve your church well.

I would also like to thank my wife, Kryssi. You have endured patiently as I have followed the Lord's leading to study and pursue ministry. Your prayers, love, and timely encouragement, have been a gift from God on many occasions. This project has undoubtedly been a joint effort, and I am indebted to you.

I would also like to thank my parents, Bill and Jeannette Kitinoja, who have always supported me. They never stopped believing in and encouraging me. Furthermore, they are examples of faithfulness to the Lord and to each other.

I am grateful to First Baptist Church of Hermitage, Jefferson Avenue Baptist Church, and First Baptist Church of Ellington for supporting my academic work. Completing this degree would not have been possible without a church that understands, supports, and is patient with me, as I complete my studies. Thank you also for your encouraging words. Furthermore, I would also like to thank Ginny Redding, Brandon Fields, Kryssi Kitinoja, Jason St. Gemme, Melissa St. Gemme, and Paul Johnson, who have been helpful editors at various stages throughout this process.

Finally, I would like to thank my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Anthony Foster. Your guidance has been critical as I completed my work. Thank you for your support and encouragement during this process, which have been greatly needed at various stages.

Dan Kitinoja

Ellington, Missouri

December 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train and equip parents of youth in the student ministry at First Baptist Church, Ellington, Missouri, to disciple their children at home.

Goals

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal of this project was to write discipleship tools for parents based on the senior pastor's Sunday morning sermons. These discipleship tools were called "Talk Sheets," and were included as inserts in the Sunday morning bulletin, and also sent to project participants via email. Steps to effective use of the "Talk Sheets" were explained to parents of youth at First Baptist Church of Ellington as part of the training and equipping seminar which is mentioned below in goal two. For parents who were unable to hear the Sunday morning worship service, the sermons were to be made available online. Goal 1 was measured by having an expert panel composed of key lay leaders complete a questionnaire called a "Talk Sheet Assessment Tool" (appendix 1) that reviewed various aspects of the "Talk Sheets," such as biblical accuracy and ease of use. The questionnaire was e-mailed or hand delivered to the expert panel members along with a copy of the "Talk Sheet," and then returned each week upon completion. This goal was successfully met when all

members of the expert panel completed the questionnaire each week, and when 80 percent (80 percent of 360=288) of the assessment items on the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” received either a “3=sufficient” or “4=exemplary” rating.

The second goal of this project was to host a Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar that was open to all parents of students in the youth ministry at First Baptist Church of Ellington. The seminar explained to parents how to conduct home discipleship, using devotional tools called “Talk Sheets” that were based on the senior pastor’s Sunday sermons. The seminar also addressed the biblical mandate for parents to disciple their children. This goal was measured by having the seminar attendees complete a questionnaire called the “Home Discipleship Seminar Survey” (appendix 2). The survey measured the helpfulness of the seminar for equipping parents with a biblical and practical understanding of family discipleship. The goal was successfully met when 80 percent of the responses on the survey are marked “sufficient (3)” or “exemplary (4).”

The third and final goal of this project was to measure the change in the home discipleship practices and attitudes of parents of students at First Baptist Church of Ellington. This goal was measured by administering a questionnaire called the “Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey” (appendix 3) on two separate occasions. The survey was first administered at the beginning of the discipleship training and equipping seminar. The survey was also administered a second time at a post-project debriefing meeting for all parents of students at First Baptist Church of Ellington. The debriefing occurred after a Sunday morning worship service at the end of the ten-week period in which the “Talk Sheets” were created and disseminated. The third goal was successfully met when a t-test analysis of the completed questionnaires demonstrated a

positive statistical difference between the pre-project and post-project home discipleship practices and attitudes of parents of students at First Baptist Church of Ellington.

Context of the Ministry Project

First Baptist Church of Ellington, Missouri (referred to as FBCE below), serves a rural community of 979 people.¹ Ellington is a twenty-minute drive, in any direction, from the next nearest small town. Furthermore, Ellington is one-hour drive from the nearest Walmart, and two and a half hours drive from any major city such as Jefferson City, St. Louis, Cape Girardeau, and Springfield, Missouri. Finally, the town is secluded due to being situated in Missouri's Mark Twain National Forest and the Ozark Mountains.

Ellington's town motto is "Beautiful, naturally." Undoubtedly outdoor recreation is vitally important for its industry, tourism, recreation, and cultural identity. Hunting, fishing, four wheeling, and boating, are activities that are regularly enjoyed by individuals, friends, and families. Indeed, it is not uncommon for a deer camp to have members of three and even four generations from one family hunting together. Furthermore, deer season is such an important event in Ellington that there is no school for two days during Deer Season in November, to allow students opportunities to hunt. Additionally, the Current River is also a vital part of Ellington's culture. On the Current River, in addition to hunting and fishing, people earn income through animal trapping, using methods that are reminiscent of the American frontier days of the 1700's. Finally,

¹U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Estimate for Ellington, MO, 2014, accessed November 18, 2015. <http://www.census.gov/search-results.html?q=ellington%2C+mo&page=1&stateGeo=none&searchtype=web&cssp=SERP&search.x=0&search.y=0>.

the river not only provides recreation and commerce, it is also a favorite place to be baptized, which is also a family tradition for many.

Due to its location in the middle of Mark Twain National Forest, logging has historically been a major industry in Ellington. Furthermore, ancillary industries such as pallet mills and trucking, as well as the manufacture of wood working machinery are the main employers of people in town. Additionally, the recreation on the Current River has also inspired a local family to manufacture flat bottom boats that are ideal for fishing and boating on shallow rivers like the Current River. This boat manufacturer, Blazer Boats, in addition to Ellington Public Schools, Black River Electric Cooperative, and Gastineau's, a local family owned and operated hardware store round out the main employment opportunities in Ellington. The shortage of employment opportunities hinders opportunities to attract outsiders to the area. But for this small, secluded, family and community minded town, that is not considered to be a bad thing by most.

Furthermore, it should be noted, that in the late 1980's a major lead mine closed, greatly hindering Ellington's economy. When the mine closed, the population shrank a bit, and several businesses, including the town's three car dealerships soon closed. More recently, a local hat factory also closed, leaving the town to further rely on the local lumber industry, which many say began drying up in the 1980's, along with the Current River for its main sources of industry. Thus logging, outdoors activities, and the river are critical for understanding the cultural and economic makeup of Ellington. Additionally, in this small town where a slower pace of life is both embraced and perpetuated, the city government has made zoning restrictions to keep out fast food

restaurants and other large businesses that would be viewed as a threat to their way of life.

One of the admirable aspects of life in Ellington is the enduring nature of relationships. Understanding this is also a critical aspect for gaining an understanding of Ellington's culture. Few people move out of Ellington, and few people move in. Among those who moved into Ellington as adults, some report that even forty years later they are still made to feel like outsiders at times. They also report, however, that their children who were raised here do not feel that way because they are considered to be a part of Ellington. Of those born and raised in Ellington who do leave town, many move back, sometimes decades later. Furthermore, many who leave Ellington own land or homes there and thus maintain their roots in the community. Upon returning, they typically resume old friendships seemingly as though they never left. Indeed, it is not uncommon to see friendships formed in grade school continue into retirement years. Finally, these bonds are often made more concrete through marriage and a shared worship experiences.

Ellington has ten churches, most of which have less than fifty people on Sunday morning, while two churches have over one hundred, FBCE being one of them. Among those churches, there are three Southern Baptist Churches, a Methodist, Assemblies of God, Missionary Baptist, General Baptist, and three non-denominational churches. On a typical Sunday, as much as half the town can be found worshipping in a church. FBCE being the largest church in the county is considered the "Big Church" by some.

FBCE could be described as a traditional church, though it has been willing to adapt in some meaningful ways. Founded in 1885, FBCE values its history and tradition,

having taken the opportunity at key anniversaries to produce a historical review of events in the church. The first one was created at its centennial anniversary in 1985, entitled *Trails of Trials and Triumphs*. These historical sketches provide important details and facts about how money was saved and spent, pastoral tenures, ministry initiatives, and building projects, as well as the effects of World Wars I and II, and both the Korean and Vietnam wars on both the church and the town. It is noteworthy that FBCE was the first church in Missouri to host a Vacation Bible School.² An emphasis on ministry to children and youth continues to be a vital part of FBCE's ministry to this day.

Though FBCE can be described as traditional, the church has recently transitioned from almost exclusively engaging in traditional worship music to a blended worship service. Around 2007, the church was polled and it was determined that the vast majority of worship attenders desired to move towards a blended worship service. However, almost as a reflection of the town, the change towards blended worship music happened slowly. This change, coupled with the recent call of a man that many consider young to be pastor, was done partially with the hope of continuing to reach young families.

FBCE experienced frequent pastoral turnover during the first eighty years of ministry, but in recent decades the church has enjoyed longer pastoral tenures. The previous pastor, Jim Stewart, served for ten years and emphasized evangelizing children through a program called Kids-N-Christ (called KNC below). The current pastor hopes to build upon the success of the KNC program in its efforts to reach families. As the

²Delsa Lesh, *Trails of Trials and Triumphs* (Ellington, MO: First Baptist Church of Ellington, 1985), 13.

current pastor, I believe that implementing a project that is designed to equip parents to disciple their teenage children is simply building upon the previous pastor's major ministry emphasis. This will increase the likelihood that any such changes will be embraced by FBCE, because it aligns the vision of both the previous and current pastors.

The church also has a secretary and a janitor on staff, and as the church grows, there is talk of hiring a youth pastor in the future. In the history of FBCE, it has not been uncommon for the sanctuary to be filled to the point of requiring the church to ask the choir to remain in the choir loft in order to leave additional seating in the pews. This took place somewhat frequently in the 1980's. While that is the case, the church has recently endured a six-year decline in worship service attendance during the period from 2009 to 2014. During that period, Sunday School attendance, annual giving, and reportedly worship attendance reportedly declined substantially. Over the last twelve months there has been an increase in all three. Worship attendance was about 160 in 2015, compared to an average of 135 in October of 2014. Prior to October 2014, worship service attendance had not been consistently counted and no records were kept of those counts.

Sunday school attendance records have however been accurately kept for many years. The records indicate that Sunday school average attendance has been decreasing slowly but steadily since 1988, with occasional periods of slight growth followed by decline. The most recent peak was 2009, in which Sunday school attendance average was 113. Since then, the attendance averages have been 109 in 2010, 106 in 2011, 86 in 2012, 88 in 2013, and 80 in 2014. In 2015, the Sunday school average rose to 93. The attendance trends are concerning. However, an initiative to equip parents to disciple their

children will not be undertaken as an effort to increase attendance. Rather, this project will be conducted to increase faithfulness to the scriptural mandate that parents should disciple their children (Deut 6:4-9; Ps 78:1-8; Eph 6:4; 2 Tim 3:14-16).

The Sunday School department at FBCE has many classes typically delineated along gender and age lines. There is one adult men's class, two adult women's classes, two couple's classes, a mixed age and gender class for adults, as well as classes for youth and children. The children's classes are Preschool for children four years old up to kindergarten, Bible Learners for grades 1-2, Bible Discoverers for grades 3-4, Bible Searchers for grades 5-6. The nursery also does a Bible lesson each week during Sunday school.

The adult men's class and one of the women's classes always use LifeWay's Explore the Bible curriculum, while the others use selections of various curriculum offerings, such as those from Beth Moore, David Jeremiah, and Focus on the Family. Though the couple's class has frequently embarked on courses of study about marriage and parenting, there has not yet been an emphasis on discipling children or teens. Additionally, as the couple's class has leveled off after having grown rather large, a new couples class was started. The new class is currently using *Love and Respect* curriculum by Emmerson Eggerichs. The other couples class also intends to use *Love and Respect* in the future. To date, however, no curriculum has been used to encourage parents to disciple their children at home; thus, a project that would seek to equip parents to disciple their children would be a beneficial both for parents and children.

FBCE's ministry to children and youth could be categorized as *segmented-programmatic*. Timothy Paul Jones describes *segmented-programmatic* congregations as

those in which “every church ministry is segmented by age with little interaction or continuity between them. Ministries to families means having a separate ministry for each member of the family.”³ The segmented-programmatic nature of the ministries to children and youth will be discussed below, beginning with Sunday morning worship.

During the worship service, children under age four go to the nursery, while children four years old and older participate in the congregational worship. However, children four years old through fourth grade participate in corporate singing, then receive a short children’s lesson, and are then dismissed to children’s church during the sermon.

Recently there has been some movement towards a family equipping ministry model at FBCE. This transition began with aligning curriculum. Children’s church has begun using the *Gospel Project Chronological for Kids* that is published by Lifeway. While children’s church is for kids age four through fourth grade, the fifth and sixth grade Sunday School class called Bible Searchers has also recently begun using the *Gospel Project Chronological for Kids*. Furthermore, the *Gospel Project Chronological for Adults* is currently being used for the creation of the Sunday evening sermons. Finally, the youth director, who is also the senior pastor, is using the *Gospel Project Chronological for Students* for the Wednesday evening messages. Thus, from four years old through high school, as well as for several of FBCE’s adults who attend Sunday evening worship, the church attendees are working their way through the *Gospel Project Chronological*. This was done to begin aligning the ministries of FBCE to intentionally equip parents to disciple their children in the home. The goal was to help remove some

³Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, eds., *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 20.

of the parents' fear that they do not have enough knowledge to disciple their children. Teaching every age-group the same passages of Scripture increases opportunities for parents to engage in meaningful and intentional discipleship of their children. Furthermore, a shared experience of studying the same biblical content will help naturally foster conversations between children and parents. The transition to the *Gospel Project Chronological* for all age groups is an important first step towards a Family-Equipping model for student ministry with the ultimate goal that, as Jones describes, "Every activity for children or youth must resource, train, or directly involve parents."⁴

Wednesday evening is predominantly focused on outreach to youth and children through FBCE's KNC program. It should be noted that until recently, there were no mid-week adult Bible studies. The KNC ministry involves bussing, feeding, and teaching children and youth. On a typical Wednesday, FBCE ministers to about 120 children and youth. For a church that averages about 160 in Sunday morning worship, KNC is a large undertaking. Through KNC, over the years FBCE has seen many young people make profession of faith, and though it has consistently been a fruitful ministry, the involvement of parents, for the 90 or so children and youth who come to KNC but do not worship on Sunday, has been lacking. Plans are being put in place to reach out to these families with the intention of bringing them into the church family so that they might be discipled. Those plans include year-end celebration ceremonies coinciding with the commencement of the school year, Christmas programs involving children and youth, and outreach from FBCE's visitation ministry.

The youth ministry at FBCE operates as a segmented-programmatic ministry

⁴Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 27.

approach that is similar to the *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*⁵ model advocated by Doug Fields. This ministry model has many advantages, not least of which being intentionality, especially in the area of youth evangelism. This intentional focus includes outreach events where students are encouraged to bring a friend, training in how to write and tell your salvation testimony, as well as giving frequent evangelistic invitations. Additionally, the move to the *Gospel Project Chronological* curriculum for students began to align the student ministry with the other age groups including adults. This change was the first step towards becoming a parent equipping student ministry. A project that equips parents to disciple their teenage children is a strategic next step in the student ministry's attempt to be faithful to the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20).

Rationale

Parents of students at FBCE are understood to be the most important influence in their children's lives. However, the various ministries do not consistently and methodically attempt to partner with the parents in their efforts to disciple their children. Scripture mandates that parents be the primary discipler of their children (Deut 6:1-10; Ps 78; Eph 6:1-4; 2 Tim 1:5-6; Col 3:20-21), and yet in many ways the student ministry operates independently of the parents in regards to the discipleship process. The purpose of this project was to train and equip parents of youth at First Baptist Church, Ellington, Missouri, to disciple their children at home. In so doing, the student ministry partnered with parents to disciple their children. This project equipped parents by providing them with devotional tools and training in the use of these devotional tools.

⁵Doug Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

Furthermore, it should be noted that article II of the FBCE constitution states that “the object of the church shall be to carry on the work of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20) of the Lord Jesus by the preaching of the Gospel; teaching of the Sunday School, Training Union, choirs; study courses and by any other method or organization the church shall determine.” Despite this constitutional commitment to disciple making ministry, no formal ongoing efforts to equip parents to disciple their children at home are presently available. Because this is so, parents were not consistently being equipped in how to spiritually parent their children by engaging in family discipleship. This should not be understood to mean that nothing has been done to encourage or equip parents to disciple their children. However, the church had no process in place to ensure that parents were being equipped in home discipleship of children. Since the leadership and many of the parents at FBCE understood that parents are the primary disciplers of their children, it was necessary to provide a ministry that equips parents for home discipleship. Since this was so, this project was necessary, because it helped both the ministry practices of the church and the parenting activities in the home to be more faithful to the teachings of Scripture. This project called and enabled parents to disciple their children by giving them a discipleship tool, as well as the competence and confidence needed to use these tools for family discipleship.

In addition to meeting the discipleship needs of families by equipping parents, the timing of the project was also another important factor. Currently I serve as the senior pastor of FBCE and also functions as the youth director. At some point in time, I will transition out of the role of youth director and allow another person to transition into the role of youth director. Having family equipping in place, as a part of the initiatives of

the youth ministry, will be beneficial for two reasons. First, having the senior pastor, rather than the youth director, implement both the Family Equipping Seminar, and the practice of creating and disseminating “Talk Sheets” increased the likelihood that the initiative will be accepted by the church. This was because the position of senior pastor holds far more credibility and authority at FBCE than does the position of youth director. Second, the yet to be named youth director will then already have the practice of family equipping in place and will therefore only need to maintain an existing ministry initiative rather than implement a new one, which is typically more difficult to do. Therefore, implementing this project at this time was important because it increases the likelihood of successful implementation and maintenance of family-equipping ministry at FBCE.

Definitions

This project focused on family equipping for the purpose of home discipleship. Furthermore, as the pastor/youth director, I completed this project at FBCE. In order to ensure greater focus and clarity to this project, key definitions, limitations, and delimitations are listed and defined below.

Family equipping. Steve Wright and Chris Graves offer a helpful definition of family equipping which was used in this project. They describe “family equipping” as involving three key components: “(1) resourcing parents with tools such as a devotional curriculum to enable parents to disciple their children, (2) training parents on family related topics such as marriage, parenting, and home discipleship, (3) including parents in the discipleship process by involving them in the spiritual formation of their children,

e.g., praying for them, family mission trips, and rite of passage events.”⁶

Discipleship. Timothy Jones has defined discipleship as, “a personal and intentional process in which one or more Christians guide unbelievers to embrace and apply the gospel in every part of their lives.”⁷ Discipleship begins with confession of faith in Christ, and continues by developing “practices and perspectives that reflect the mind of Christ.”⁸ Furthermore, discipleship occurs in different contexts including the church and the home, and it includes activities such as teaching, service, and evangelism.

Student ministry. Student ministry was understood to be synonymous with the term “youth ministry.” In this project, the two terms shall refer to the age specific ministries directed to students in grades 7-12 at FBCE. The age specific ministries include “family equipping” activities such as resourcing, training, and involving parents in discipling their children (Deut 6:6-9; Ps 78; Eph 6:1-4).⁹

Delimitations and Limitations

The project had two major delimitations. The first delimitation was time. The project was to be conducted over a 15-week period. That period of time provided time to develop the curriculum, equip parents by training them in the utilization of the “Talk Sheets,” and to actually utilize the devotional curriculum. This time frame afforded parents sufficient opportunity to experience the normal events and occurrences which

⁶Steve Wright and Chris Graves, *reThink: Decide for Yourself, is Student Ministry Working?* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest, 2008), 158-63.

⁷Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 17.

⁸Ibid.

⁹W. E. Barrick, “Youth Ministry,” in *Harpers Encyclopedia of Religious Education* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 712.

might normally hinder them from discipling their children, thus allowing for a more helpful analysis of the project's success. Finally, the 15-week duration of the project also allowed for surveys to be taken, collected, and analyzed.

The second delimitation was the scope. The Family Equipping Seminar and "Talk Sheets" were only available to parents of students in the youth ministry at FBCE. Furthermore, the demographic data was limited to families who attended the parent-equipping seminar.

This project had two limitations. The first limitation was Sunday worship service attendance. Those adults who participated in the study, but who were absent from the Sunday morning worship service due to vacation, illness, or any other reason did not hear the sermon upon which the "Talk Sheets" were based, nor will they receive the hardcopy of the "Talk Sheet." To minimize this limitation, sermons were to be made available online, and "Talk Sheets" were sent via e-mail to those participants who were absent. The second limitation was that accuracy of the completed surveys would be impacted by the willingness of the participants to provide accurate information. To minimize this limitation, the respondents were asked to identify themselves on the surveys by providing their birthday and gender. This provided for a comfortable level of anonymity, and yet still allow for the T-test for dependent samples to be completed.

Research Methods

The first goal of this project was for me to write a weekly home discipleship tool called a "Talk Sheet." This "Talk Sheet" was written each week based on the Sunday sermon of the senior pastor. During this phase of the project, the Sunday sermons all came from the book of Philippians, and the "Talk Sheets" were created each

week alongside the sermons. An expert panel was consulted in order to assess these tools. The expert panel consisted of key lay leaders at FBCE. The expert panel included the chairman of the deacons, who also serves in the youth ministry, a retired youth minister, a high school principal who is also a deacon, and a parent of a student in the youth ministry. The expert panel reviewed the curriculum for the ten-week portion of this project that was devoted to the implementation of the “Talk Sheets” by completing an assessment survey that was created for this project. The survey tool enabled the expert panel to assess the “Talk Sheet” each week based on its ease of use, usefulness as a discipleship tool, and biblical accuracy using a “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1). The survey tool allowed users to assess the “Talk Sheets” based on these categories mentioned above on a scale of 1-4; 1=insufficient; 2=requires attention; 3=sufficient; 4=exemplary.

The second goal of this project was to host the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar for parents of students in the student ministry. This goal was measured through an assessment tool that seminar attendees were asked to complete. This goal was successfully met when 80 percent of all conference attendees who signed the attendance log completed the survey. The survey measured aspects of the seminar such as helpfulness of the material that was presented, preparedness of the presenter, how likely they are to recommend this seminar to other parents. The survey instrument, referred to as the “Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar Survey” (appendix 2 enabled users to assess the usefulness of these categories mentioned above on a scale of 1-4, 1=insufficient, 2=requires attention, 3=sufficient, 4=exemplary).

The third goal of this project was to measure the home discipleship perceptions

and practices of parents of students in the youth ministry at FBCE. To measure this, a survey referred to as the “Parental Practices and Perceptions Survey” (appendix 3)¹⁰ was administered at the beginning of the project, and again at the end of it. The pre-project survey was conducted at the beginning of the home discipleship and equipping training seminar. The post-project survey, which was identical to the pre-project survey, measured home discipleship perceptions and practices of parents of student in the youth ministry at FBCE. The post-project survey was conducted at a debriefing meeting after a Sunday morning worship service at the end of the ten-week period designated for the creation, dissemination, and use of the “Talk Sheets.” The pre-project and post project survey data was analyzed using a t-test for dependent samples to measure whether there was a positive statistical change. The third goal was met when the T-test indicates a positive change on the pre-project and post-project test score.

This project utilized three research tools. Those tools were the “Talk Sheets,” Home “Discipleship Seminar Survey” (appendix 2), and the “Parental Practices and Perceptions Survey” (appendix 3). Implementation of this project, along with the use of these tools for this project was approved by the SBTS Ethics Committee.

¹⁰Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 27-29, 201. The survey instrument was created by Timothy Paul Jones as part of a joint research venture conducted in 2007 by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Family Life. The survey measures parents’ attitudes, understanding of and practices related to family discipleship. Free use of the survey is granted by Timothy Paul Jones so long as he is credited as the creator of the instrument and so long as no changes are made. The survey is available to be downloaded at www.wesleyan.org/wph/fmfg/survey.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR EQUIPPING FOR HOME DISCIPLESHIP AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, ELLINGTON, MISSOURI

Introduction

This chapter offers biblical and theological support for family equipping for home discipleship at First Baptist Church Ellington, Missouri. The thesis of this chapter is that in the Bible, God commands that discipleship should take place in the home (Deut 6:4-9; Eph 6:1-4). This discipleship involves teaching obedience to the content of Scriptures (Ps 78:1-8; 2 Tim 3:14-15). Finally, the examples of Moses, Asaph, and Paul, calling God's people to disciple their children in the Lord, provide an example for ministers to follow today. This thesis shall be defended by an exegetical analysis of four key passages; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:1-8; Ephesians 6:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:14-15.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

In the book of Deuteronomy Israel is preparing to finally enter the Promised Land after enduring forty years of wandering the wilderness. Christopher J. H. Wright aptly characterizes Deuteronomy as “a renewal and reinforcement of the law given at Mount Sinai.”¹ Within this covenant framework, the Decalogue (Exod 20:2-17; Deut 5:6-

¹Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1.

21) lays out the means by which Israel is to remain faithful in their covenant relationship with Yahweh. The thesis of this portion of the biblical argument for family equipping for the purpose of home discipleship is that Deuteronomy 6:4-9 teaches that God's people are commanded to obey his commandments, including the command to teach those same commandments to their children. The goal of teaching the commandment to the children is that they, too, will be faithful to the covenant. In this way, they will glorify Yahweh, the God who makes covenants. In calling the people of Israel to disciple their children, Moses provides an example for Christian ministers to follow today.

Moses's command to Israel to disciple their children is linked contextually in Deuteronomy 6 with what is commonly referred to as the Shema (Deut 6:4-5). These verses are thus named after the transliteration of the Hebrew verb (שמע) that begins this call for Israel to maintain covenant faithfulness with Yahweh. As Merrill states, Jesus cited the Shema as "the fundamental tenant of the Jewish faith, an opinion with which his hearers obviously concurred (Matt 22:34; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28)."² While this imperative verb is usually translated "hear," it should be understood as "obey." Merrill explains, "'To hear' in Hebrew Lexicography is tantamount to 'obey'. . . to hear God without putting into effect the command is not to hear him at all."³ Thus Moses is not only calling Israel to hear the terms of the covenant, but to also obey them (Deut 5:16-21; 6:1-3).

The call to obey the terms of the covenant is defended by citing the fact that

²Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 163.

³Ibid., 162.

Yahweh alone (יהוה) is God. Christensen has rightly stated that “there are numerous ways to translate the six words of verse four, each of which may have a measure of truth.”⁴

However, as Merrill has helpfully pointed out, “The two most common renderings of the second clause of verse 4 is (1) The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Or (2) The Lord our God is one Lord.”⁵ While there is some flexibility as to how one can legitimately translate the Hebrew text, the meaning implies the uniqueness of Yahweh as the one true God. Since there is only one God, and he happens to be Israel’s God, Israel is therefore rightly called upon to obey him in order to remain faithful to their covenant with Him.

Obedience to the commandments should, however, issue from a love for Yahweh as the unique covenant-making God who is the source of those commandments. The love of Israel towards Yahweh should be all encompassing, generating out of one’s whole “heart,” “soul,” and “strength” (v. 5). In the context of this passage, the heart (לב) is identified as the source of one’s will,⁶ the soul (נפש) is understood as the source of one’s emotions,⁷ and loving God with one’s strength (מאד) implies putting physical exertion into demonstrating their love for Yahweh.⁸ Thus God’s people are commanded to love Yahweh with the entirety of their being. Compliance with the terms of the covenant, then, should not be understood as mere cultural convention; rather, it should be understood as a willing compliance that issues from a reservoir of love within the core of

⁴Duane Christensen, *Deuteronomy*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6a (Dallas: Word, 1991), 143.

⁵Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 163.

⁶William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), לב.

⁷Ibid., נפש.

⁸Ibid., מאד.

one's being. Indeed, this compliance should spring from Israel's relationship with the one true unchanging God (Gen 12:33; Exod 3:14; Heb 13:8), who has delivered her from slavery, and has entered into a covenant with them, a nation of former slaves. Love for Yahweh flows naturally from an awareness and understanding of his divine nature and his actions on behalf of his people. Given God's unchanging nature, the command to love God, then, has not been ameliorated.

For children to observe their parents loving Yahweh with the entirety of their being (Deut 6:4-5) would of necessity be a powerful pedagogical tool, probably the most powerful one. It is possible to assume that by modeling how to appropriately relate to Yahweh, the next generation will learn to be faithful to him. However, in verses 6-9, Israel is called to intentionally teach covenant faithfulness with Yahweh to her children through speech. In this way, Israel is to ensure that multiple generations remain in a blessed relationship with him (Gen 18:19; Exod 13:5-14; Deut 4:9, 10; 6:2, 5-9, 20-25), and that the nations might be blessed through the descendants of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). Given the high stakes involved with covenant faithfulness, it is necessary for Israel to teach her children the terms of their relationship with Yahweh.

Moses stated the terms of the covenant that "I am teaching you today, shall be on your heart verse 6."⁹ Thus he is calling for an internalization of, as Weinfeld put it, "the general paraenetic discourse of Deuteronomy."¹⁰ However, Merrill is likely correct in noting that the discourse in view is most fully encapsulated in the Shema of verses 4-

⁹All Scripture citations are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

¹⁰Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, Anchor Bible Commentary, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 340.

5.¹¹ To summarize, Israel is to meditate on the law, with special emphasis on the Shema, resulting in its internalization.

Internalization of the covenant combined with love for Yahweh will enable faithfulness to his covenant, and will also foster conditions conducive to passing this love and obedience on to the next generation (vv. 7-9). Brueggemann aptly summarizes the need to internalize “these words” of Moses’ by stating that “Deuteronomy always has its eyes on the children, on the coming generation (see 6:2). For that reason, the command is followed in verses 6-9 by a series of imperatives: ‘recite, bind, fix, write.’ The core claim of YHWH is to be everywhere available to Israel, audible and visible.”¹²

Teaching full-fledged love for Yahweh and the terms of the covenant shall happen throughout the course of everyday life. Indeed, in regard to the commandments, Israel is charged to “teach them diligently to your sons, 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 up (v. 7).” The Hebrew text of verse 7 includes two verbs in the Piel form. Swanson defined the first Piel verb (שָׁנַן) as “to teach by rote, impress formally, repeat, say again, i.e., teach information or behaviors to a student, implying that the material is gone over two or more times.”¹³ The second verb communicates the need to routinely speak about the things pertaining to Israel’s relationship with Yahweh. The presence of these verbs in the Piel form indicate a call for intensive teaching through repetition with the result of

¹¹Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

¹²Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 85.

¹³James A. Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew Old Testament*, 2nd ed., CD-ROM (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2001), שָׁנַן.

causing a state of faithfulness to the covenant with Yahweh among subsequent generations.

In order to ensure that their relationship with Yahweh will remain forever before the children of Israel, Moses calls for reminders of the covenant to be placed on one's person and on key areas of the home (vv. 8-9). Commentators tend to view these verses as containing hyperbolic rhetoric for effect, but doubt that the verses call for Israelites to literally place reminders of Yahweh's commandments on one's person (v. 8) and home (v. 9).

Whether one takes verses 8-9 literally or figuratively does not require a radically different understanding of their meaning. However, archaeological research has discovered frontlets and phylacteries that were used as small containers for parchment containing certain Bible verses.¹⁴ Furthermore, as Weinfeld points out, it can be demonstrated that at least some segments of Judaism interpreted these verses quite literally at various times in antiquity. Groups such as the Samaritans were known to write reminders of the commandments on their doorposts, and the Second Temple period witnessed the development of phylacteries for keeping portions of Scripture on one's person.¹⁵ Thus there is precedent for literally adorning one's house and person with reminders of God's law among Jewish parents who wished to ensure covenant faithfulness among their children. Whether or not it is held to a literal view, when taken as a whole, the meaning of verses 7-9 is quite clearly that passing Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh to the next generation was of critical importance. In view of

¹⁴Christensen, *Deuteronomy*, 144.

¹⁵Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 341-43.

the covenant's import, passing on its terms called for ongoing and intentional efforts on the part of Israelite parents to inculcate the fear of the Lord in their children.

Given the redemptive-historical significance of Yahweh's covenant relationship with Israel, faithfulness on the part of Israel was necessary. Suzerain-vassal covenants between one nation who ruled another was somewhat commonplace in the Ancient Near East, but a suzerain-vassal covenant between the one true God and a nation of former slaves was unprecedented. So astonishing were God's acts on behalf of his people that love and obedience were rightly demanded. Furthermore, Israel's role as God's redemptive agents to the world was so critical that multigenerational faithfulness to the covenant had to be maintained. Because of these factors, it was imperative that Israelite parents teach their children to obey the commandments.

God has not changed. He continues to make a covenant with former slaves (Matt 26:28; Rom 6; Heb 9:15-20). Only now God's people are not former slaves of Egypt but former slaves of sin. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 God taught the means by which the old covenant was to be passed on to the next generation. The church today does well to follow the example of Moses and call Christian parents to teach the terms of the New Covenant as revealed in the Scriptures to their children. The unique nature of the covenant making God remains a constant reality. The church exists within this historical reality as God's redemptive agency as the spiritual descendants of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; Gal 3:1-14). Indeed, the charge to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:5-8) demands nothing less of the church than faithfulness in passing on the covenant in Christ's blood to the next generation. To do this, the leaders of the church must also call on parents to disciple their children, teaching them to love and obey God.

Psalm 78:1-8

The thesis of this portion of the chapter is that the Psalm 78:1-8 calls parents to pass on the law and narratives depicting God’s redemptive and relational acts in history. This Psalm, which is the second longest in the psalter, begins with introductory comments that are reminiscent of wisdom literature and has overtures to Deuteronomy 6:4-5. What follows below, is a discussion of the introduction to Psalm 78 which is found in verses 1-8.

This wisdom song (מְשִׁכִּיל) begins with a call to listen to Asaph, the Spirit inspired speaker. That call to listen is emphasized in verse 1 by the presence of the Hiphil imperative verbs הִשְׁמָעוּ “hear,” and הִטְוּ “‘incline’ your ear.” These verbs call for Israel to willfully and actively listen to this “Maskil of Asaph” as he dispenses wisdom. Such a call to listen to “instruction” from one who says, “I will open my mouth in a parable and utter dark sayings of old” (v. 2), seems to “refer to the speech of a prophet or wisdom teacher.”¹⁶ While these two roles are not necessarily mutually exclusive, the role of a wisdom teacher is accepted here as being primary for the speaker in Psalm 78.

Prior to moving on to interpreting the passage as a whole, a minor matter needs to be addressed. It is worth noting, that while Israelite parents in general are addressed in Psalm 78, it is fathers who are specifically addressed throughout verses 1-8, as indicated by the repeated use of masculine forms of verbs. Thus, the responsibility to ensure that the children are taught the laws and actions of Israel’s God is primarily that of the father. That this is true is further demonstrated in verse 3 and verse 8 below. But first, verse 2

¹⁶John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol. 2, *Psalm 42-89* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 484.

will be discussed below.

Asaph refers in verse 2 to the history between God and Israel which is recounted in verses 9-72 as mysterious “dark sayings of old” (See also Ps 77:5). He does so to highlight the importance of understanding his “teaching” (תּוֹרָה v. 1). The fact that Asaph characterizes his Psalm as a “proverb” or “parable” (מִשְׁל) implies that his goal in writing it is that his audience would gain wisdom through observing comparisons. The wisdom shall be gleaned by looking at the failure of the ancestors in the wilderness generation (vv. 12-39), and the failure of the ancestors in the Ephraimite territory (vv. 40-72).¹⁷ These failures were due to the foolish manner in which the ancient Israelites lived before God. Indeed, their way of life indicated that they did not fear the Lord and were thus to be regarded as fools (Ps 111:10; Prov 1:7). The overall point being made is that had Israel’s forefathers feared God, they would have obeyed his commandments.

Asaph’s goal is that Israel will understand that past suffering was due to failing to obey God. Additionally, he intends for his audience to understand that failure to obey God leads to misery. He hopes that this understanding will cause his audience to teach obedience to God’s laws to the next generation. If the next generation is taught the danger associated with disobeying God, they will gain wisdom and thus discern the danger of disobedience and avoid it.

The wisdom in view is not simply knowledge of the facts of God’s actions, but also the knowledge of God Himself and how to relate to him (Jer 9:24). Indeed, Israel already had such knowledge (Pss 77, Ps 78:3). Rather, the wisdom in view includes an

¹⁷James Luther Mays, *Psalms, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 255.

understanding of how to act properly towards God and people, in light of how God has acted in the past. Furthermore, this wisdom has two components. The first component is faithfulness towards God that flows from love for him (Deut 6:4-5). That love was to flow out of an understanding of how he has acted mercifully and graciously in the past (Pss 78:11-16, 23-29, 34-39, 43-55, 65-72). His mercy and grace have been seen in his glorious acts, namely, leading Israel out of slavery in Egypt, then continuing to shepherd them in spite of their rebellion. God's shepherding included the experience of economic loss and military defeat which functioned as God's corrective punishment of Israel. In order to ensure that their children will be wise, Israel is to teach her children to love and obey God, because of his history of benevolent actions on their behalf, and because he continues to lovingly correct his people when they sin. That loving correction, however, can be rather uncomfortable.

The second component of the wisdom in view is love from Israel toward their children, who are their nearest neighbors in that they live in their home (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37-40; Gal 5:14). Due to love for their children, Israel is called to teach God's laws and actions to their children, so that they might walk in them. Asaph hopes that by reading his maskil, the next generation will avoid the sinful ways of the previous generations. In so doing, the next generation will glorify the covenant-making God because he is worthy. Furthermore, it will also protect future generations from enduring the hardships that result from disobeying God and experiencing his corrective punishment.

For Israel, knowing and understanding God's actions on behalf of his people should result in honoring his covenant out of love for him. Israel's love for their children

should lead them to ensure that their children maintain the terms of the covenant with the God who delivers and shepherds his people. They can ensure the next generation's covenant faithfulness by teaching them the terms of the covenant and the actions of God in Israel's history. For parents, the wisdom in view means that love for one's children will result in teaching them to obey the legal code of the God who has delivered them and entered into a covenant with them. These codes were "heard and known" by Israel because their "fathers have told them" (v. 3).

Asaph assumes in verse 4 that there is a community-wide resolution to be faithful to the covenant that has been passed on by "our fathers." Thus, he writes of the covenant terms, "We will not conceal them from our children" (v. 4). Rather the opposite will be true; they will reveal God's nature by teaching it to the next generation. Asaph calls Israel to join him in openly telling their children about God's "power," and his "wonderful deeds." Included among God's deeds would be the covenant that he made with Israel. Indeed, given the status of the Shema (Deut 6:4-5) within Israelite life (see also Ps 78:5 below), the covenant would have loomed large among God's "wonderful deeds" that would have been recounted. Tate explains that the "Torah is a combination of story and commandments; the commandments are understood in the context of the story and the story is incomplete without the commandments."¹⁸

Recounting the story of God's redemptive acts and his covenant terms is not to be a one-time event; rather, it should occur frequently. Thus, the presence of a Piel verb (גִּמְסָרִים), indicating intensified action through repetition. God's people then should busy

¹⁸Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100, Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 20 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 289.

themselves with continually talking of his wonderful deeds to future generations.

The reason for the continual recounting of the nature and deeds of God to future generations is given in verses 5-6. Indeed, what was alluded to in verse 4 is stated plainly in verse 5 which says of God: “For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, that they should teach them to their children.” Thus, Israel is to be obedient to Yahweh by teaching the laws of his covenant to their children. Yahweh’s covenant people are to tell their children about his actions and his laws so that they will in turn tell it to the next generation, and then that generation would tell it to the generation after them (v. 6). Thus, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Asaph is writing for the purpose (וַיִּזְכֹּר, see discussion below) of ensuring multigenerational faithfulness of Israel’s children to their God. He is doing so by calling the current generation of parents to teach the next generation of children about God and his laws.

The Hebrew text of verse 6 indicates purpose by including the particle conjunction וַיִּזְכֹּר. This conjunction controls the interpretation of verses 7-8 as also being related to the purpose of writing the Psalm. The presence of imperfect tense verbs in these verses denotes a future orientation to verses 7-8. Thus, Israel is to teach the praiseworthy acts of God to their children in hopes that “they should put their hopes in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and not be like their fathers” (vv. 7-8a). Wilcox summarizes these verses well in stating that the objective “is that as the successive generations grasp these ever-fresh truths, they should put their trust in God, and not forget his deeds, but keep his commands.”¹⁹

¹⁹Michael Wilcox, *The Message of Psalms 73-150*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove,

In what is perhaps an indication of the historical circumstances surrounding this Psalm,²⁰ Asaph states that the next generation should avoid having the same heart condition as their fathers (vv. 8b-9). The fathers of Israel should be motivated to join Asaph in teaching the praiseworthy acts of Yahweh to their children so that unlike their fathers, they might “prepare their hearts right” (v. 8b). The heart, as Goldingay states, is the “dynamic center of our being;”²¹ furthermore, Moses adds, “you must love the Lord your God with your whole heart (Deut 6:5).” Indeed, if Israel teaches their children about their wonder-working Lord, they will be unlike their parents whose “spirit was unfaithful to God” (v. 8c).

The concepts taught in Deuteronomy 6:4-8 are present in the text of Psalm 78, and this is most clearly evident in verses 6-8. Here Asaph is interpreting Israel’s current situation in light of Israel’s failure to uphold the terms of the covenant (see Pss 73-83). For indeed Moses commanded Israel to etch the word of God on their hearts (Deut 6:6), to teach it diligently to their children (6:7), and to talk about it throughout their daily activities (6:7). Furthermore, recounting the terms of the covenant was to become a part of the cultural fabric of Israelite society (6:7-9). In being diligent to teach the next generation God’s deeds, they might remember that the “Lord is our God, the Lord is One” (6:4), and thus love Him with all their “heart, soul, strength” (6:5). If Israel’s children will learn this, they might avoid the corrective punishment of the God who shepherds his people (Ps 78:40-51), and simply enjoy their blessed relationship with Him

IL: IVP, 2001), 27.

²⁰Tate, *Psalms 51-100*. Tate offers a thorough discussion of the various options for setting and date of Ps 78.

²¹Goldingay, *Psalms*, 487.

(vv. 65-72). By enjoying their relationship with him they will love him more fully and give him the glory he is due as the redeeming God who makes covenants.

Christian ministers do well to follow Asaph's example in calling Israel to teach their children the law and deeds of God. Indeed, their goal should be the same, that their children would love Yahweh and enjoy a blessed relationship with the God through whom salvation comes. This love for God should result in children living wisely before him and with other people. To attain this goal requires parents to teach their children about God.

New Testament

The New Testament portrays the nature of the new covenant of salvation through Christ's blood. That portrayal also continues the theme that parents must teach their children to love and obey God. The discussion of the biblical support for family equipping will continue with a discussion of two passages which call for families to disciple their children: Ephesians 6:1-4 and 2 Timothy 3:14-15.

Ephesians 6:1-4

In the midst of an extended discourse (Eph 5:22-6:9) on proper roles and interaction between spouses (5:22-33), slaves and masters (6:5-9), Paul addresses children and fathers regarding their roles in the home (6:1-4). The discussion includes a somber warning that Christians should not live as fools but as wise people "because the days are evil" (5:16). The warning then includes specific instructions to various members of the ancient household including fathers and children. The thesis of this section is that Ephesians 6:1-4 supports family equipping for the purpose of discipleship, because family equipping is commanded and lauded by Paul. In Ephesians 6:1-4, the Holy Spirit

inspired the apostle to call for a reciprocal relationship in which parents and children both obey the Lord. Parents obey by consistently discipling their children in the faith, and children obey the Lord by obeying their parents. These expectations are warranted for Paul by virtue of the members of the household being “in the Lord” (Eph 6:1, 4).

These verses give biblical support from the NT witnesses for the practice of family discipleship. Likewise, the example of the apostle Paul giving this exhortation gives support to the role of ministers in exhorting children to listen while parents teach the beliefs and requisite behaviors of the Christian life (Eph 6:1-5; Col 3:20-21). Indeed, ministers are wise to follow the example of Paul’s life and testimony (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Tim 3:11). Furthermore, Foulkes summarizes the goal of family discipleship in the NT well where he writes, “foremost in the parents’ minds, is to be not just the harmonious relationships of the home, or the happiness of the children, but their regard for the Lord.”²² That regard for the Lord is first demonstrated when one puts their trust in him for salvation, and then as one learns to live like Jesus. Indeed, discipleship in the home is necessary because the days are evil and full of temptations to deny the Lord and fall into the snare of temptation, rather than bring glory to Christ as his ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20).

Paul begins the call for discipleship in the home by addressing children (Eph 6:1). Clinton Arnold observes that Paul even addresses children at all “underlies the fact that he not only treats them as responsible members of the various households and the Christian community, but also accords them a degree of preference and honor.”²³ While

²²Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 170.

²³Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 411.

this address was unique within a Roman context that allowed fathers unrivaled authority in the home, it was a logical outworking of Paul's theology which recognized equality of value in people regardless of social status due to the work of the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:28; see also Acts 2:17-18). Regardless of one's social status, they were a person for whom Christ had died, and who therefore had potential and even actualized access to God the Father by virtue of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. While this is so, Paul does not attempt to undermine the social fabric of society. Rather, he accepts as normative the responsibility of Christian children to obey their parents (τοῖς γονεῦσιν) because it is the morally right (δίκαιον) thing to do. Furthermore, Bruce Metzger says that while a child was expected by society to obey their parents, the moral imperative took on added import in the Christian community by virtue of the child being "in the Lord" (v. 1).²⁴ Paul is here setting up the reciprocal manner in which home discipleship is to take place. Arnold says that children (τέκνα), meaning "offspring of elementary age and even teenage or early twenties,"²⁵ are to listen and obey, and parents are to teach.

Paul continues his charge to Christian children in verse 2, but without explanation or even the use of a conjunction, he quotes what Jews number as the fifth commandment (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16). Apparently, no explanation of the verse Paul cited was necessary because as Thielman states, "It is well known to his readers and that it is self-evidently authoritative."²⁶ Thus according to both the Old and New Testaments,

²⁴Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 541. Some early manuscripts do not include the GK terms "ἐν κυρίῳ." However, they are included in most translations by virtue of external evidence and the belief that if it was a copyist error it would have come from Eph 5:22 and been rendered ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ in keeping with the text of that verse.

²⁵Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

²⁶Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand

children are charged to “honor your father and mother” (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16; Eph 6:2). Paul continues his charge by offering motivation for children by citing the fifth commandment, stating that it is “the first command with a promise” (Eph 6:2b). Paul’s assertion that the command was the first with a promise has engendered much discussion because many interpreters have seen Exodus 20:4-6 rather than Exodus 20:12 as being the first commandment with a promise. This issue will be discussed below.

The prohibition against idolatry (Exod 20:4) is followed by a warning in verse 5 about Yahweh’s wrathful response to idolatry. The text continues with a statement that those who are faithful to Yahweh will receive his multigenerational loving-kindness (v. 6). Therefore, Ephesians 6:2 has received a lot of attention because Paul seems to have made a mistake. Several suggestions have been made to resolve the problem.²⁷ A more recent suggestion is that the Greek word “πρώτη” which is translated “first” (Eph 6:2) refers to first in priority or importance. Following this approach, some scholars such as Foulkes resolve the problem thus, “We take it that this commandment is urged on children as a priority for them, but also holding out a great promise.”²⁸ While not all will be fully satisfied with this explanation, Paul’s point is clear enough; children should be motivated to honor their parents by the fact that God has promised blessings to those who do.

In verse 3 Paul continues his flow of thought by explicitly stating that the result of obedience will be the reception of good things which God has promised to

Rapids: Baker, 2010), 398.

²⁷Thielman, *Ephesians*, 398-401. Thielman offers a helpful summary of the interpretive options that have been put forward to resolve this interpretive difficulty.

²⁸Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 169.

obedient children (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16; Eph 6:3). There are two components to this promise: (1) “that it might go well with you,” (2) “that you may live long on the earth.” Thus, as Best says, “Children who keep the fifth commandment will prosper (εὖ) and live for a long time.”²⁹ These promises are tied to the commandment to parents to teach their children the terms of the covenant and the blessings that are to follow obedience (Deut 6:1-15).

Honoring one’s parents will, of necessity, include heeding their guidance, warning, and instruction as a result of holding them in high esteem (v. 2). Honoring one’s parents is not only morally just according to both natural law and Scripture, it also results in blessings from God. God promised blessings to the children of Jewish parents in the OT (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16), and now it has been applied to children who are in Christ (Eph 6:1-3). As children honor their parents, it brings glory to Christ. As they heed their parents, they shall learn to understand the Triune God and live appropriately in light of that knowledge. This combination of command and promise to children is joined in verse 4 by a command to fathers to teach their children to obey Christ. As F. F. Bruce points out, “The father as the paterfamilias is singled out by the apostle for admonition.”³⁰ While some translators and scholars might wish to render the Greek text “parents,” the text in question is rightly understood both grammatically and contextually to be addressing fathers. Arnold summarizes the issue well, stating, “Although it is possible for ‘fathers’ to be understood here in a generic sense with reference to both

²⁹Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T & T Clark, 1998), 568.

³⁰E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 136.

parents, (see Heb 11:23, where the term is used of Moses' 'parents') as the CEV and TEV translate it, Paul is most likely focusing here on the men."³¹ However, more shall be said in support of the role of mothers in family discipleship below, especially in the analysis of 2 Timothy 3:14-15.

In the text of Ephesians 6:4, the apostle Paul clearly charges fathers with the responsibility of discipling their children, but this does not negate the role and responsibility of the mother. Previously, Paul has charged the wives to be "subject to their husbands" (Eph 5:22). If they are faithful to this charge, they will be partners with him in the practice of child rearing and family discipleship. As has been noted above, the children are called to honor and obey their parents (6:1-3). Furthermore, if the husband is obeying the command to "love his wife the way Christ loved the church" (5:22), he will of necessity be laboring to sanctify and purify her by ensuring that she learns to obey the word of God (v. 23). Indeed, he will be "nourishing" (ἐκτρέφει) her (v. 29) by teaching godly doctrine and modeling Christ-like behavior as he "gives himself up for her" (v. 25). Thus the husband, in submission to Christ, is to give himself to the task of joining Jesus in the ongoing process of sanctifying his wife and children. As a result, the Christ-likeness that the husband is working to develop in his wife (by first developing it in his own life), will also be transferred to the children who are called to honor their mother. A wife then, has a powerful role in the spiritual development of her children as she partners with her husband who has been charged to disciple their children (6:1-3).

The charge to fathers to disciple their children has three thrusts, one negative

³¹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

(do not), and two positive (do). First, fathers are charged to not “provoke your children to wrath” (v. 6:4a). Here Paul is writing a prohibitive command (μὴ παροργίζετε) as a general precept³² for parenting not as an indictment of the habits of the Ephesian fathers. Thus, Paul is warning against a common error of fathers to exasperate their children to the point of anger through harshness, insensitivity, callousness, and carelessness. For fathers to effectively disciple their children, they must learn to teach them without exasperating them. Given the importance of wise living during “evil days” (vv. 5:15, 16), Paul meets the need to not simply tell fathers what not to do, but also to tell them what to do (v. 6:4b).

In the second half of verse 4, fathers are called to “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (v. 4b). The word ἐκτρέφετε (which also used of the husband’s responsibilities toward the wife in 5:29) means to “raise a child to maturity by providing for physical and psychological needs.”³³ Thus, it is a general term referring to the overall ongoing process of raising children. This does not necessarily imply that the father must do all aspects of childrearing; rather, it means that at the end of the day, the responsibility for the manner in which the child is raised is his.

This general charge to raise the children is further nuanced in a way that depicts Christian discipleship in the home by the addition of two nouns “παιδεία” and νοουθεσία. These two terms are related but not synonymous. They highlight two different aspects of family discipleship. The first word (παιδεία) means “to train someone in

³²Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 724-25.

³³Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Society, 1989), 88.177.

accordance with proper rules of conduct and behavior.”³⁴ Proper rules of conduct are defined in part by society, but societal norms however are trumped by the demands of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, a Christian father must teach his children to live wisely in the world but to not be of this world. Indeed, Christian fathers must teach their children to live like their true citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20) because they live as ambassadors of Jesus Christ on earth (2 Cor 5:20). To meet that need for wisdom, a Christian father must ensure that the norms of heaven, as revealed in Scripture, are taught to the child. This charge to teach proper rules of heavenly conduct is joined by the noun “νουθεσία.” It means “to provide instruction as to correct behavior and belief—to instruct, to teach, instruction, teaching.”³⁵ This instruction might include warnings, encouragement, reproof, personal example, and even chastisement when necessary.

Parents, and more specifically fathers, are charged to lead the home by discipling their children, teaching them to live wisely in the world and before the Lord. Children are commanded to pay heed to their parents’ instructions since it is morally right according to natural law, and even more so since it is commanded by God in Scripture. The church can and should follow Paul’s example by calling children to obey parents, and calling both parents to consistently obey God’s command to disciple their children together. This can be done through several methods including: preaching, teaching, mentoring and accountability, as well as equipping parents with discipleship tools that empower them to consistently carry out their responsibility.

³⁴Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 36.10.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 33.231.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

The thesis of this final exegetical section is that Paul's charge to Timothy to remain faithful to the biblical truth he has learned from his mother and grandmother provides (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-15) support for the practice of home discipleship. This passage supports and portrays as exemplary the home discipleship practices of Timothy's grandmother Lois' and mother Eunice.

Paul writes his second letter to Timothy from prison while facing the likelihood that he would receive a death sentence (2 Tim 4:6). As such, Paul writes to "prepare Timothy to carry on the work of Christ even after he was gone."³⁶ Paul seeks to encourage boldness (1:7), give final instructions for ministry (2:14-16; 22-26), and motivate Timothy to loyalty to the gospel of Jesus Christ (1:13-18). There is a heightened urgency in Paul's instruction because of his impending death (4:6), apostasy in Ephesus (1:15), and because he expects a rise in wicked praxis and heresies in the church (3:1-9). Within this context, Paul encourages Timothy to hold fast to the truths that he has learned from his own example and teaching (vv. 10-11), as well as from believing family members (vv. 14-15). However, although learning the Scriptures can foster a lifestyle that pleases God (vv. 16-17), Paul warns that "all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (v. 12).

In spite of the evil deeds of the wicked (3:13), Timothy is to stand firm in the things he has been taught (vv. 14-15). While he expects an increase of wickedness, both within the church and without, Marshall notes that Paul seeks to motivate Timothy by

³⁶Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 45.

“contrasting him with the ungodly.”³⁷ He indicates that contrast in verse 14 with the words Σὸ δὲ. The description of adversative particles in BDF is helpful, it avers that by using the adversative particle (δὲ), Paul is seeking to make a general contrast between Timothy and evil people.³⁸ In so doing, he is highlighting the difference that having been inculcated with Scripture during childhood should have on his conduct (vv. 16-17). That contrast should not end, because according to Bauer et al., the Greek word μένω implies that Timothy should “not leave the realm or sphere”³⁹ of the things he has been taught. Rather, he should “continue” in them. Thus, his life and doctrine should match the life and doctrine called for in the Scriptures.

As George Knight points out, “With this verb (ἐπιστώθης) we see that Paul appeals not to traditionalism or to the status quo but to adherence to what Timothy has become convinced is true.”⁴⁰ The reliability of the things he has believed in are based on two critical factors; the messengers who taught him, and as shall be seen below, the divinely inspired nature of the Scriptures he has come to have confidence in (vv. 16-17). However, it should be noted here that the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture will not be discussed here, except insofar as it is necessary for understanding family discipleship as presented in verses 14-15. Finally, the messengers who taught Timothy the divinely

³⁷I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 787.

³⁸F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Trans. and rev. R. W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 447.1.

³⁹Walter Bauer, et al., *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), μένω.

⁴⁰George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 442.

inspired Scriptures are his mother Eunice and grand-mother Lois, women whose godly character Timothy knew well (1:5; 3:14-15).

Timothy had known (οἶδας) the ‘Holy Scriptures (ἱερὰ γράμματα, these terms will be discussed below)’ from an early age (βρέφους) because his mother and grandmother, who were both Jewesses, taught them to him (1:5; 3:15; cf. Acts 16:1). The Holy Scriptures he had been taught were “God breathed” (2 Tim 3:16a, e.g., inspired by God), and able to both make him “wise unto salvation” (v. 15b), and equip him for service (v. 17b). For these reasons, Timothy should be confident and steadfast in his belief in, obedience to, and proclamation of, the gospel.

The logic of Paul’s argument in verse 15 is easy enough to follow, because as Marshall stated, “The point is rather that in ancient antiquity that the value and truth of information in the ancient world is related to the identity and trustworthiness of the agents who transmit it.”⁴¹ Thus the value and truth that Timothy should “remain” in is trustworthy because it comes from his mother and grandmother, whose character is well known and reliable to him. Their godly character was fundamental to the formation of Timothy’s faith, because it was their character that motivated them to train him to obey the Scriptures. Indeed, they disciplined Timothy out of obedience to God, in keeping with their identity and character as godly women.

The narrative of Acts 16:1 reveals that although Timothy’s mother was Jewish, his father was a non-Christian Greek. In obedience to Yahweh (Deut 6:4-9) and in order to ensure that the covenant was passed on to Timothy, Lois and Eunice taught him the

⁴¹Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 788.

Scriptures during his childhood. This action was necessary in order to fill a void of spiritual headship in the home due to Timothy's father not being a believer (Acts 16:1). It is noteworthy that these verses (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-15) implicitly commend Lois and Eunice for discipling Timothy by teaching him the Scriptures. Indeed, their godly character supports the reliability of the message they taught by virtue of their own obedience to it without the support of a believing husband. Thus, it is evident that it is necessary and prudent for mothers and even grandmothers to fill the void in spiritual headship in single parent homes, as well as homes where the husband is not a Christian. However, in homes where the father is present, and is also a Christian, the responsibility to disciple their children resides ultimately with him (Deut 6:4-9; Eph 6:1-4).

The content of Lois and Eunice's teaching was the OT Scripture. The terms *ἱερὰ γράμματα* have several possible meanings. However, the literary context limits those possibilities, even if the Greek text permits different renderings. The most common options are "Holy Scriptures" (NASB, KJV, TNIV), or the more wooden rendering "sacred writings" (ESV). Yet as Philip Towner argues, "The combination 'holy writings' (cf. "sacred writings" NRSV) is sufficient to refer to the writings of the Jewish religion in distinction from other literature."⁴² Grammatically, they (*ἱερὰ γράμματα*) are linked via asyndeton to verses 16-17. In so doing, Paul is adding solemnity to the discussion of Timothy's upbringing by highlighting the divine nature of the Scriptures (*γραφή*) he has been taught.⁴³ Paul is doing this to motivate Timothy to remain faithful to the Scriptures

⁴²Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 583.

⁴³Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 658.

his godly mother and grandmother had taught him, because that message was no less than the Word of God.

The practice of teaching Scriptures to children is commended in 2 Timothy 3:14-15. That Timothy's mother and grandmother taught him the OT was critical for his saving faith in Jesus Christ (v. 15a; Acts 16:1). Furthermore, Scripture supports women taking the lead in teaching the Scriptures to their children when there is an absence of spiritual leadership from the father. Finally, the example of Lois' and Eunice' discipleship practices in Timothy's childhood provides further support for a project that seeks to equip parents to disciple their children.

Conclusion

The thesis of this chapter was that, in the Bible, God commands discipleship to take place in the home. The exegetical analysis of Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:1-8; Ephesians 6:1-4; and 2 Timothy 3:14-15 has supported the thesis. These passages call for parents to disciple their children by modeling obedience and requiring obedience to God and his Word. Obedience to God is wise, leading to blessings, and the advance of the Gospel. Churches should follow the example of Moses, Asaph and Paul by charging parents to disciple their children, and charging children to obey God by obeying their parents.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES
FOR EQUIPPING PARENTS FOR
HOME DISCIPLESHIP

The Bible mandates that parents are to disciple their children. In light of the preceding argument, conducting this ministry project was appropriate because it was designed to increase awareness, practical skills, and confidence in parents' ability and biblical responsibility to be their children's primary discipler. It remains to be seen, however, whether there is evidence from other fields such as education, sociology, and psychology, which supports the rationale for conducting this research project. Furthermore, such research may provide practical guidance for successful implementation of the project.

The thesis of this chapter is that the rationale for implementing a project at First Baptist Church of Ellington to equip parents to disciple their children at home was supported by theoretical and practical research. This thesis is defended along four lines of argumentation: (1) parents are more likely to engage in home discipleship when they are equipped with tools and training in home discipleship, (2) when parents disciple their children, increased spiritual maturity is a likely result, (3) youth ministries are more effective in discipling students when they partner with parents, (4) family equipping can be done effectively by the student ministry at First Baptist Church of Ellington.

Parents Are More Likely to Engage in Home Discipleship When Equipped with Effective Tools and Training

For several reasons, parents have shied away from obeying the biblical mandate to disciple their children. The first section of this argument for equipping parents to disciple their children will discuss the two most common reasons that parents are not discipling their children at home. This discussion will therefore support the view that equipping parents is necessary, and that it has the potential to be beneficial in promoting home discipleship. The second section of this argument will examine theoretical and practical evidence which demonstrates that parents who are equipped to disciple their children in the home are more likely to engage in home discipleship. This section will begin by demonstrating the need to equip parents to disciple their children, then move to demonstrate reasons why equipping parents will be beneficial. The need to equip parents to disciple their children rises out of several factors, but busyness and a fear of inadequacy for the task are the two most common reasons.

While there might be more reasons for the lack of parented discipleship of children, this section will address what are perhaps the two most common reasons that parents neglect this responsibility: (1) Parents have become too busy and thus relinquish their responsibilities to other institutions and people. This response is a culturally-supported solution that provides parents with an easy but inadequate solution to this pressing problem, (2) Parents are aware of their biblically mandated responsibility, but are afraid that they do not have either the necessary skills or requisite knowledge to disciple their children and therefore do not engage in family discipleship. These two phenomena are related in that they have developed simultaneously during the last few decades, due in large part to economic growth as well as cultural and societal change.

These changes have decentralized the family as the primary locus of child development. This is due in large part to the development and growth of the public school system, but also to the widening use and availability of day care programs which provide childcare for working parents.

After the Industrial Revolution, parents began to work outside of the home away from their families with increasing frequency. Along with that shift came the growth of the public school system, which took over a large part of the parental role of monitoring, feeding, mentoring, disciplining, and educating children during the bulk of the waking hours of the day. As a byproduct of these shifts in economic, academic, and family life, parents have become accustomed to letting others train their children. Because of these developments, Wes and Sandra Black write, “Some parents simply relinquish their educational role to others. They undermine their own authority by looking to other agencies to teach and discipline their children.”¹ George Barna adds that it is common for parents who wish to address this problem to “push the problem onto someone else. When it comes to the well-being of their children, people might naturally turn such matters over to the government, local schools, or perhaps churches to make things right.”² Furthermore, at the conclusion of their book *Soul Searching*, which was a major research effort on the religious and spiritual lives of teenagers, Smith and Denton observed that, “Adults do not hesitate to give direction and have expectations of teens when it comes to school, sports, music, and beyond. But there seems to be a curious

¹Wes Black and Sandra Taylor Black, *Discipleship in the Home* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1985), 26.

²George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting: What the Research Shows Really Works* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2007), 11.

reluctance among many adults to teach teens when it comes to faith.”³ The reasons that some parents relinquish their educational role may vary, but it can perhaps be summed up well for many parents as being a product of cultural customs, as well as a convenient solution to the existential problem of busyness. The nature of these two reasons will be described more fully below.

For centuries, most children were educated primarily in the home and participated in family businesses such as cottage industries and farm labor. While public education is not new, its pervasive influence on family life began to grow rapidly about a hundred years ago. Thus, children have spent an increasing amount of time away from home under the watchful care of educated and qualified teachers. As this approach continued to develop, in addition to teaching children to read, write, and do arithmetic, the schools also promoted values and character education. For many years the morals and values espoused by educators was in general agreement with those espoused by the predominantly Christian society of America. Additionally, although some very influential educational theorists such as Lawrence Kohlberg have opposed values education, the practice is still a part of the fabric of public schools.⁴ However, values education is present in American public schools but is commonly referred to as character education. Furthermore, in addition to values and scholastic education, the public school systems began to provide tutors for students who are struggling in school, as well as athletic trainers and coaches to ensure that students could participate and compete in sports.

³Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 267.

⁴Lawrence Kohlberg, *Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 1-14.

Finally, craftsmanship and mechanical skills which had traditionally been taught to children by their parents began to be taught by shop teachers and vocational skills programs.

Because schools have taken on greater responsibility for educating and forming the lives of children, society has inadvertently expanded the problem of parental disengagement from training their children. This problem is further compounded by the frequency with which young children are cared for in day care services in order for both parents to be able to be in the work force. Thus, many children from birth through adolescence spend the vast majority of their waking hours, when formation takes place, outside of the home under the care of people with whom they are not related.

While many of these things are not inherently bad in and of themselves and are in many cases quite beneficial, they help foster an environment which leads parents to operate as though training children is best left to those they consider to be experts. Indeed, whether a student needs help with biology or baseball, the school and other public agencies are increasingly trusted and expected to provide specialists to meet those needs. Furthermore, as Black points out, “Some educators even argue that they can better direct the young into desirable paths if the influence of parents can be lessened.”⁵

This pervasive cultural construct has led parents to become accustomed to letting others train their children. Furthermore, this shifting of responsibility for training one’s children is not limited to academic and cultural pursuits, it also includes spiritual training. This has resulted in parents opting to leave the discipling of their children to

⁵Black and Black, *Discipleship in the Home*, 26.

youth pastors and children’s ministers, ostensibly because they have the education and/or know how to properly disciple teenagers. Indeed, youth and children’s ministers are entrusted to carry out this responsibility for many parents who believe that they are both too busy and unqualified to do it themselves. Finally, as Graves and Wright point out, “Some parents and churches unfortunately view student ministry in the same way: as a spiritual drop-off service best left to the professionals.”⁶

In fairness to parents, it should be noted that many of them are willing to switch churches and commute farther in order to attend a church with programs that they believe will effectively disciple their children. This indicates a high level of interest in the spiritual welfare of their children. However, their approach to meeting these spiritual needs may be somewhat misguided and incomplete. Furthermore, it should be noted that churches, Bible colleges, and seminaries, have added to these circumstances by creating educational programs that produce discipleship specialists in several fields including youth ministry. Additionally, churches commonly seek to provide children and youth ministries to serve as engines for numerical growth.⁷ Thus, in so doing, many churches have inadvertently encouraged parents to relinquish their discipleship responsibilities to various ministries of the church.

This culturally-created approach to training children that indicates that discipleship is best left to a youth or children’s minister is buttressed by the simple fact that it is convenient for busy families. With all the challenges that have been mentioned,

⁶Steve Wright and Chris Graves, *reThink: Is Student Ministry Working?* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest Publishing, 2008), 47.

⁷Dick Hardy, *27 Tough Questions Pastors Ask* (Springfield, MO: Onward Books, 2010), 36, 39, 40.

it is indeed noteworthy that many Christian parents appear to understand that the responsibility to disciple their children belongs to them. Thus, it is incumbent on the church to find ways to encourage parents to accept their biblically-mandated roles as their child's primary discipler.

Recent research has supported the claim made above. Timothy Jones conducted a study called the "Home Discipleship Perspectives and Practices Survey." This survey involved 278 parents who attend adult Bible study groups. Interestingly, the research revealed that 100 percent of those parents who took the survey believed that parents, and in particular fathers, have a responsibility to personally engage in a discipleship process with each of their children. However, as encouraging as this statistic is, these beliefs do not translate into parental faithfulness when it comes to family discipleship. Jones goes on to report that 66 percent of parents only led a family worship time on two or fewer occasions in the previous two months. The largest group of parents (35 percent) indicated that they had not engaged in a family devotion or family worship time once in the last sixty days. In what is perhaps the most telling statistic, Jones reports that 49 percent somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree that they would like to do family devotions or Bible reading, but their family is too busy and likely will be for quite a while.⁸ Thus, Jones's research indicates that although Christian parents recognize their responsibility to disciple their children, few disciple their children regularly, and nearly half of them feel that they are too busy to do so. Barna aptly describes the challenges that face busy Christian parents this way: "What makes it especially difficult is that the rest of

⁸Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 215-18.

our lives do not stop in the midst of these efforts, enabling us to give our undivided attention and full energy to raising children. Sadly, helping our kids develop is just one of the tasks in the plethora of responsibilities we juggle every day.”⁹

It is evident that a pervasive cultural shift has taken place as it regards how parents train their children. However, the cultural shift towards parents leaving the training of children to people other than themselves cannot be permitted to undermine the biblical call of parents to disciple their children, no matter how busy they are. For this reason, a project which equips parents to disciple their children will be beneficial because it not only equips them with tools, but also encourages them to be faithful to their God-given responsibilities. However, these cultural and existential realities cannot simply be ignored by ministries that seek to equip parents to disciple their children. Thus, a project in which parents are held accountable to carry out their biblically-mandated discipleship responsibilities must also include suggestions for finding time to engage in discipleship, as well as reminders and encouragement to actually disciple their children.

In summary, the shift away from parental discipleship has been ongoing for several decades. During this time, parents have largely not been equipped, encouraged, or held accountable by churches for discipling their children. Thus, as Jones writes, “After decades of disengagement, many parents simply don’t know what it means to function as primary faith trainers in their children’s lives.”¹⁰ In addition to a lack of training and accountability from the church, many Christian parents today were themselves not disciplined by their own parents. As Brian Haynes writes, “Most parents

⁹Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 3.

¹⁰Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 34.

lack a healthy model of faith training in the context of the home.”¹¹ For this and similar reasons, this project aims to equip and resource parents for faith training in the home. Furthermore, Wright and Graves sum up the issue well in stating that, “Most parents feel ill-equipped to create such resources. Studies show us that most families are busier than ever, only having a little over 30 minutes per week to spend in meaningful conversation with their children; therefore, resources provide a great starting point to mentor and disciple their children.”¹²

The above discussion demonstrates the need to equip parents to disciple their children. Additionally, it is evident that providing tools, training, and encouragement will be beneficial to parents who wish to carry out their God given duty to disciple their children. The question of whether or not equipping parents to disciple their children is likely to be effective will be examined next.

Evidence that Family Equipping Will Improve Christian Discipleship

This section will answer the question, “Is a project which equips parents to disciple their children likely to improve Christian discipleship?” The thesis of this section is that evidence shows that family equipping ministry in the church will likely result in improved Christian discipleship practices. This thesis will be supported by two arguments: (1) Churches who equip parents to disciple their children are likely to experience an improvement in family discipleship practices; (2) Children who are

¹¹Brian Haynes, “Building a Milestone Ministry in Your Church,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 196.

¹²Wright and Graves, *reThink*, 158, 159.

discipled by their parents benefit spiritually. The evidence that churches who equip parents to disciple their children are likely to see an improvement in family discipleship practices will be examined first.

Equipping parents to disciple their children involves both providing training and tools for home discipleship as well as accountability for carrying out their biblical responsibility as primary disciplers. That parents, and specifically fathers, need to be challenged by the church to carry out their biblical responsibility as the primary disciple makers is forcefully called for by Voddie Baucham. Baucham states, “I am convinced that holding men accountable for evangelism and discipleship of their families does more to motivate and engage them than any weekly Bible study ever could.”¹³ His position and call for action are not without merit or support. Indeed, in agreement with Baucham’s position, a 2003 study by Barna found that most Christian parents (85 percent) recognize that they bear the primary responsibility for discipling their children. However, few were doing so. The study also found that, “parents are not so much unwilling to provide more substantive training to their children as they are ill-equipped to do such work.” According to the research, “parents typically have no plan for the spiritual development of their children; do not consider it a priority, have little or no training in how to nurture a child’s faith, have no related standards or goals that they are seeking to satisfy, and experience no accountability for their efforts.”¹⁴ Barna’s research

¹³Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 196.

¹⁴George Barna, *Parents Accept Responsibility for Their Child’s Spiritual Development but Struggle with Effectiveness*, May 6, 2003, accessed March, 30,2014. <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/120-parents-accept-responsibility-for-their-childs-spiritual-development-but-struggle-with-effectiveness#.UziOPJWPLIU>.

demonstrated that there is a great need for churches to begin equipping parents with the tools necessary to disciple their children.

The church is not alone in recognizing its need to equip parents to train their children; educators are also calling for similar approaches in order to improve the academic achievement of children. In June of 2000, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services put out a joint report on the various efforts to equip parents to help with the education of their children. These government agencies report that “there is overwhelming evidence that a parent’s involvement in a child’s education makes a very positive difference.”¹⁵ The report makes suggestions for how to maximize the effect of these efforts, making several suggestions as well as highlighting several schools that are successfully carrying out this type of service in their community. Their findings have much in common with what scholars and practitioners in Christian education, children’s ministries, and youth ministries are suggesting about equipping parents for discipleship in the home. These suggestions include encouraging fathers to read with their children and “making the most of bedtimes” by reading to them and discussing the events of their day.¹⁶ This suggestion is similar to what Reggie Joyner and Carey Nieuwhof recommend in their book *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity*, where they argue, “Tucking children into bed can also be a meaningful time for families . . . there is something about the private domain of a child’s bedroom that gives the parents a chance to have an intimate conversation and become the

¹⁵U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *A Call to Commitment: a Fathers’ Involvement in Children’s Learning* (Jessup, MD: Editorial Publications Center, June, 2000).

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 13.

kind of counselor who listens to the heart of a child.”¹⁷ This, of course, would likely need to be adjusted to meet the needs of teens more effectively, but as Tim Smith and George Gallup state, “Our teens do want to dialogue with us . . . it might start with milk and cookies and a casual, ‘tell me about your day.’”¹⁸ Whatever the case, it is evident from research that children, regardless of age, greatly benefit from dialogue with parents, and this project aims to promote such dialogue around spiritual topics for the purposes of family discipleship.

The U.S. Department of Education report also recommends that schools should be “teaching mothers and fathers how to tutor their children in basic subjects and/or help their children, for example; with motor skills development, which has also been designated as an area of need. This support to children’s learning can be given through home visits or at parent workshops in schools or other childcare and community centers.”¹⁹ The report goes on to give summaries of schools which are experiencing successful implementation of such parent equipping services, most of which report a growing interest in the services on the part of parents. Additionally, it is noteworthy that similar to Voddie Baucham who argued that churches must hold parents accountable, the joint report also called for educators “to communicate clearly to all parents that fathers and mothers as well are *expected* to be involved”²⁰ in their children’s education.

¹⁷Reggie Joyner and Carey Nieuwhof, *Parenting beyond Your Capacity: Connecting Your Children to a Wider Community* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook 2010), 131.

¹⁸Tim Smith with George Gallup Jr., *The Seven Cries of Today’s Teens: Hear their Hearts, Make the Connection* (Nashville: Integrity, 2003), 125.

¹⁹U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *A Call to Commitment*, 17.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 16.

The report of the U.S. Department of Education supports Voddie Baucham's assertion that parents need to be challenged to disciple their children; and among family ministry practitioners he is not alone in holding that position. In his book *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, Mark DeVries states, "Equipping parents for their work as the primary nurturers of their child's faith has been an essentially untapped resource in youth ministry. Churches can learn to be just as intentional about equipping parents as they are about developing programs for children and youth."²¹ Thus, the need to equip parents is also met with optimism on the part of some family ministry practitioners such as DeVries, Baucham, and others including Doug Fields. Fields encourages youth leaders to "offer educational opportunities for parents to ask questions and look for personalized answers,"²² and to facilitate a parenting panel involving "four or five experienced parents to sit on a panel and answer questions."²³ We see that several schools and student ministry experts are finding that equipping parents to train their children is an effective approach to improve parental mentoring, as well as educating and discipling children. This evidence from research and the experiences of ministry experts demonstrates that beginning a project that equips parents to disciple their children is likely to be successful, and is in fact necessary for the development of both parents and children.

With such calls for a change in ministry practices coupled with research which demonstrates the necessity for those calls, several churches, ministers, and scholars have

²¹Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry: Reaching the Been-There, Done that Generation* (Downers Grove: IL: IVP, 1994), 66.

²²Doug Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 262.

²³Ibid.

begun to take the need to equip parents to disciple their children seriously. However, for a church to move toward a family equipping approach to ministry is a major shift. In their book *reThink*, Steve Wright and Chris Graves discuss their experience of transitioning their youth ministry to one which partners with and equips parents to disciple their children. They report that from the outset, there was a higher than expected interest on the part of parents in being equipped to disciple their children. A high interest level in training supports the belief that parents are intrinsically motivated to receive such training, indicating that offering such training is likely to be effective. Indeed, as educational theorist Raymond Wlodowski points out, adults learn better when they are motivated, stating, “People motivated to learn are more likely to do things they believe will help them learn,” adding “they attend more carefully to instruction.”²⁴ The experience of Wright and Graves demonstrates that Christian parents have an internal motivation to learn discipleship practices when they believe that it will help them disciple their children. Given parents’ internal motivation to learn to disciple their children, it is likely that making a similar transition at First Baptist Church of Ellington to a family-equipping approach to ministry has much potential to be successful in that parents already desire such training.

Ministry that equips parents to engage in home discipleship should be understood as a part of their spiritual formation in that it trains them to be disciple-makers of their children. Indeed, as Mark Maddix argues, spiritual formation “is a lifelong process that takes place in the context of community.”²⁵ The church, then,

²⁴Raymond J. Wlodowski, *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: a Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 5, 6.

²⁵Mark A. Maddix, “Spiritual Formation and Christian Formation,” in *Christian Formation*;

should be the primary community context for spiritual formation of parents in order to equip them to disciple their children. Furthermore, Maddix argues that “equipping church members for discipleship and personal ministry,”²⁶ is one of the most critical tasks of the church. Yet, unfortunately, as Tidwell argues “discipleship training may be the most neglected area of educational ministry in the church.”²⁷ However, this neglected area of discipleship training is one that is likely to meet with success. Indeed, Wright and Graves reported for example that early in their transition to a family equipping approach to student ministry, they held a parent equipping event expecting 50 people to attend. However, they found that they were “overwhelmed when more than 250 parents attended this training session.”²⁸

As part of their strategy, Wright and Graves endeavor to equip and involve parents in the task of discipling their children. Furthermore, they report that they found that when they equip parents with discipleship tools such as devotionals and journals, “parents are able to take these resources fashioned for their use and adapt them to the needs of their family. As our church provides resources for parents, they have expressed great appreciation for our partnership with them.”²⁹ Parents now welcome the training, because they find that discipleship activities can happen much more naturally and freely as they are fit into the daily lives and unique makeup of each family unit. Finally, Wright

Integrating Theology and Human Development, ed. James R. Estep and Jonathon H. Kim (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 242.

²⁶Charles A. Tidwell, *The Educational Ministry of a Church: a Comprehensive Model for Students and Ministries* (Nashville: B & H, 1996).

²⁷*Ibid.*, 97.

²⁸Wright and Graves, *reThink*, 161.

²⁹*Ibid.*, *reThink*, 159.

and Graves believe that in student ministry, “the most important involvement from parents is when they embrace the biblical assignment to become spiritual leaders to their families.”³⁰

Encouraging parents to take on their biblical role of primary disciplers of their teens is critical for churches that wish to see teens grow into spiritual maturity. Indeed, as Smith and Denton’s research on the formative factors that determine student’s spiritual life revealed, “Grandparents and other relatives, mentors, and youth workers can be very influential as well, but normally, parents are most important in forming their children’s religious and spiritual lives.”³¹ This finding was both unexpected and welcomed. It was unexpected, because as Jonathan Kim notes of Western society, “Adolescents are not expected to remain under family influence; rather, they are expected to individuate themselves from parents by identifying more strongly with peers.”³² The findings of Smith and Denton were encouraging because their research indicates that if parents are equipped and challenged to engage in family discipleship, it is likely to result in improved discipleship practices in the home.

As has been demonstrated, the research and experience of sociologists, educators, and ministry experts supports the view that equipping parents to disciple their children is an effective way to improve the discipleship practices of parents. Furthermore, based on the research, parent equipping should include providing resources,

³⁰Wright and Graves, 162.

³¹Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 261.

³²Jonathan H. Kim, “Cultural Development and Christian Formation,” in *Christian Formation, Integrating Theology and Human Development*, ed. James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 284.

training, encouragement, and accountability. Finally, the research indicates that teens have an inherent need to learn from their parents, and many of these teens recognize this need personally. In order for this type of ministry to begin in a church, student ministry leaders must understand that, as Doug Fields points out, “Our role in a student’s spiritual development is helpful, but a parent’s role is crucial.”³³ This perspective must be embraced by those who serve as leaders of the student ministry. Having demonstrated in chapter 2 the biblical mandate for parents to disciple their children, and having demonstrated thus far that there is research which demonstrates that a project that endeavors to equip parents to disciple their children is likely to be effective, it must be demonstrated how a youth ministry can successfully carry out such a project. The latter issue will be discussed below.

Youth Ministries Are More Effective at Discipling Students When They Partner with Parents

It was demonstrated that the Bible mandates that Christian parents must disciple their children. Additionally, it has also been demonstrated above that when parents disciple their children, it is likely to result in an increase in parental discipleship practices in the home, leading to greater spiritual maturity in their children. While it may seem, then, to be self-evident that a youth ministry should implement a family equipping approach, it must be demonstrated that youth ministries are likely to be more effective at discipling students when they partner with parents. This section will seek to do that along three lines: (1) discipleship of students in grades 7-12 is the task of the student

³³Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, 254.

ministry at First Baptist Church of Ellington, (2) the effectiveness of a student ministry's discipleship efforts will be limited by the amount of time it has access to students, (3) youth ministries are most effective when they work to support the discipleship efforts of parents. This third line of reasoning will include recognizing some of the practical limitations of the student ministry and youth director at FBCE to equip parents.

Some youth ministries might be described as functioning as a church within a church. As such, many youth ministries, including the one at FBCE have their own calendar and liturgy, as well as their own mission trips, evangelistic efforts, and discipleship approaches. While this approach to youth ministry is common in the American church, some such as Voddie Baucham characterize discipleship through age-segmented youth ministries as being an ineffective approach to discipleship, lacking a clear biblical mandate, and even posing a potential hindrance to biblical discipleship.³⁴ Regardless of one's view of the biblical or practical legitimacy of this type of approach, student ministries do have a biblically legitimate and biblically mandated goal, namely, to make and develop mature disciples of Jesus Christ. As such, the student ministry at FBCE, by virtue of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15), focuses on making and maturing disciples of students in grades 7-12. Furthermore, it is the expressed responsibility of the youth director at FBCE to create a disciple making and maturing ministry. Thus, due to the responsibility placed on the youth director, as well as the biblical mandate to make disciples, and the practical issues related to ministry effectiveness, it is wise for the student ministry to partner with parents in this endeavor.

³⁴Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 179-83.

The first practical reality that must be addressed is the time restraints which limit a youth ministry's ability to disciple students.

The effectiveness of a student ministry's discipleship efforts will be limited by the quantity of time they have access to students. Effective discipleship requires a substantial investment of time in groups and in one-to-one mentoring relationships. Additionally, discipleship is an intentional process that takes place over the entire span of human life. Furthermore, it is a process of spiritual formation which involves many facets including the transmission of biblical content, relationships with other Christians, service, mission, and the practice of spiritual disciplines. Indeed, the end goal of discipleship in the youth ministry at FBCE is to help students become more like Jesus Christ. This can be seen both in whether students apply biblical principles in their way of life, and in whether or not they take an active role in making more disciples, among other things.

While a student ministry can endeavor to teach and model all of these discipleship activities, they do so within the limited time frame of roughly one to three hours per week in which they generally have access to students. They also do so from a limited vantage point as outside observers who have neither a thorough knowledge of a student's life experiences, nor a knowledge of their day-to-day decisions and actions outside of the church. This poses a hindrance on the student ministry's ability to disciple a student, because they simply do not know as much about their students as they would like. Parents, however, have far greater understanding of the life span and development and personal tendencies of their child. For these reasons, a student ministry is more likely to be successful in discipling students by partnering with parents who have a

greater understanding of their child's history and formational experiences.

Parents observe the spiritual, emotional, and physical growth of their children day in and day out over the span of many years, and have a greater understanding of their tendencies, traits, and needs. For these reasons Doug Fields was correct in stating, "Our role in a student's spiritual development is helpful, but a parent's role is crucial."³⁵

However, what parents sometimes lack is practical knowledge of how to respond to their teens' needs as they change. Likewise, they often times lack an understanding of Scripture, spiritual disciplines, and the power they have to influence their middle school and high school aged children. A student ministry can partner with parents by encouraging and equipping them with resources such as books and DVD's, as well as connecting them with other parents who have already gone through similar challenges who might be willing to mentor them. Furthermore, by creating a discipleship tool to spark discussion at home, student ministries can empower parents to actively engage in the spiritual formation of their children. Applying this strategy will increase the ability of the student ministry to disciple teens by working with and through parents to increase the quantity of time that students are being disciplined.

At FBCE, the student ministry meets only twice per week on most weeks. There is a youth worship service on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings for Bible Study. Furthermore, the student ministry also participates in the Sunday morning worship service with the rest of the church family. While these corporate worship and discipleship times are necessary and valuable for worship, relationships with peers, and

³⁵Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, 254.

learning spiritual disciplines, what it lacks is the necessary amount of time to have lasting and formative impact on most students because of its limited duration. Because this is so, it is necessary for the student ministry to partner with parents in their discipleship efforts. Finally, it is necessary to partner with parents, because they have a far greater impact on their children than do youth ministries. One of the reasons parents have greater impact on their children than do student ministries is the amount of opportunities they have access to their children to engage them in discipleship.

Although parents and families, as has been mentioned above, are busy, the goal of this project is to give parents the necessary tools and training to maximize their opportunities to disciple their children. Furthermore, this project seeks to maximize the discipleship activities of the church and the family by aligning the Sunday morning preaching in corporate worship with private times of family worship at home. This will be a powerful approach, because the concepts discussed in the sermon will be repeated and reinforced through the “Talk Sheets.” These “Talk Sheets” will foster one-on-one discussion between parent and child maximizing the naturally influential relationship that parents have with their children.

The relationships between parent and child are sometimes referred to as dyadic relationships, involving a more mature peer, the parent, dialoguing with a younger peer, namely their child. Paul Philibert describes the shaping power of these dyadic relationships, stating, “Values come to be through a constant dialogue with those important to us, a dialogue where our quest for meaning becomes the most intense.”³⁶

³⁶Paul Philibert, “The Motors of Morality,” in *Holy Community and Values Education in Moral Development Foundation, Judeo-Christian Alternatives to Piaget/Kohlberg*, ed. Donald M. Joy (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 107.

Additionally, these values lead to moral actions in students. Philbert explains that through dialoguing in a dyadic relationship a child's "impulsive life becomes increasingly structured by the symbolism of interpersonal relations and of goals mediated by attractive modeling figures, so the life of virtue becomes increasingly personal and relational."³⁷ In short, the development of Christ centered thought patterns through dyadic relationships with a Christian parent will enable students to act in Christ-honoring ways by creating internalized impulse control mechanisms. For most students, their parents are clearly among those adults closest to them, and for this reason, it is wise for the student ministry to partner with parents in the process of discipleship because of the increased potential for developing Christ-like thoughts and actions. This development occurs most effectively as parents use their influence on their children for discipleship purposes leading to spiritual maturity.

Partnering with parents is a wise approach to discipleship because parents have far more influence on their children than do youth ministries. Indeed, the existence and force of this phenomenon has led Doug Fields to make this comment about the youth pastor's importance in the spiritual formation of teenagers: "I've come to realize that I can have little long-lasting influence on a student's life if the parents aren't connected to the same transformation process that we're teaching at church. While students may think you are nice and feel safe talking to you, parents are the primary influencers in students' lives."³⁸ Therefore, when parents and students share the same disciple making

³⁷Philibert, 103.

³⁸Doug Fields, *Your First Two Years in Youth Ministry, a Personal and Practical Guide to Starting Right* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 105.

experiences, the formative influence is far greater for the children than if they were experienced independent of each other. For this reason, this project will involve creating “Talk Sheets” built off the senior pastor’s Sunday morning sermon. In so doing, the project will empower parents to lead their children in discussions about how to live out the Christian life in their unique contexts in light of the biblical sermon they both have been exposed to. Additionally, the parents will be far more likely to feel qualified to speak to their children about spiritual topics after having learned of them first in the sermon, and then after also having received a “Talk Sheet” that will seek to guide the discussion. Likewise, the power of the dyadic relationship will be enhanced, because students will have a far greater ability to have meaningful dialogue with their parents after having learned the same topics and concepts in the pastor’s sermon. Furthermore, this combination of learning via lecture (the sermon), and learning through mentor to mentee discussion has far greater power for learning retention and life change than lecture alone.³⁹ Finally, if the student ministry at FBCE can partner with parents through the use of “Talk Sheets” involving a shared sermon experience, it will be far more effective in achieving its objective of discipling students. Indeed, the student ministry will be more effective at discipling students precisely because it will be attempting to further empower parents to maximize their God-ordained dyadic relationships with their child.

As has been demonstrated above, partnering with parents increases a student ministry’s effectiveness through at least two means: (1) increasing the amount of time

³⁹David A. Sousa, *How the Brain Learns*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2006), 95.

that students are being intentionally disciplined, and (2) maximizing the power of the parent-child relationship. While this is so, there are some practical realities of partnering with parents that must be addressed. This chapter will conclude by discussing the limits of the youth director at FBCE to teach parents of teenagers on discipleship.

At this stage of life, the youth director at FBCE has never parented teenagers. This limits his credibility and ability to effectively teach parents of teenagers on how to parent. Indeed, as Doug Fields wisely warns, “I caution youth workers not to teach on parenting if they haven’t been a parent of teenagers.”⁴⁰ Having acknowledged this limitation, there are still many helpful ways that a youth director who has not parented teens, can help parents learn to disciple their children.

First, this project involves having the youth director equip parents with “Talk Sheets,” and the knowledge and skills necessary to use these discipleship tools. This training, which will take place at a parent-equipping seminar, will be beneficial to parents as they endeavor to carry out their biblically mandated responsibility as primary disciplers of their children. The equipping seminar will include making practical suggestions on how to find time to engage in discipleship activities. Furthermore, since discipleship is not exclusively the province of parents, the youth director can credibly teach parents on discipleship practices such as how to use “Talk Sheets.” Second, the youth director can remind and even challenge parents to make discipleship activities a priority in their homes. Third, the youth director can encourage parents by reminding them of their ability to influence and disciple their children, pointing to research that

⁴⁰Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, 262.

demonstrates this reality. Finally, the youth director can helpfully lead parents to disciple their children by reminding them that no one discipled perfectly, but that is not a good reason to not obey God's clear directive to disciple one's children.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS OF THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Two Weeks Leading up to the Project Implementation Phase

The weeks prior to beginning the project implementation phase at First Baptist Church of Ellington were devoted to promoting and preparing for the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. To promote the seminar, a letter was written by the pastor/youth director of First Baptist Church of Ellington. The letter, which was written with a warm, personal tone, was included in the Sunday morning bulletin on two consecutive Sundays just prior to the seminar. The letter, which gave pertinent dates and a description of the project and its research, was also read by the pastor during the morning announcements on both Sundays. Furthermore, the letter was also sent out via email to those on the church database and posted on the church Facebook page. A final reminder notice about the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar was sent out via email and Facebook on the Thursday prior to the seminar.

During the two weeks leading up to the seminar, steps were taken to prepare for the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. It was determined that the most effective way to prepare for the seminar was to write an outline of the seminar's subject matter, and then to write a manuscript to be read during the seminar. Reading the manuscript ensured that all the pertinent information was taught and that the seminar followed the schedule. The outline was written during the first week of the promotional

time that led up to the seminar, and then the manuscript was written, edited, and then practiced three times.

While the manuscript for the Home Discipleship Equipping and Training Seminar was being written, a sample “Talk Sheet” (appendix 4) was created for use during the seminar. This sample “Talk Sheet” was created in the same manner that the “Talk Sheets” are to be created during the remainder of the project. The sample “Talk Sheet” (appendix 4) was also stapled to the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1) and then given to the expert panel members prior to the worship service the morning of the seminar. This was done to allow expert panel members a trial run through of evaluating a “Talk Sheet” in conjunction with the Sunday Morning sermon. The trial run helped to ensure that the expert panel understood what they are being asked to do. Furthermore, the trial run provided feedback which made it possible to address and correct any weaknesses with the design of the “Talk Sheets” before the project implementation began. The expert panel was given the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1) and asked to complete them and place them in the mail pouch outside the pastor’s office. This approach ensured that they could complete and return the form, while maintaining anonymity. This is the procedure they will follow when reviewing the “Talk Sheets” for the next 10 weeks. The expert panel successfully completed the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1), with each panel member having assessed each of the nine aspects as being “4=exemplary.”

The Home Discipleship Training and Equipping took place shortly after the morning worship service beginning at 11:15 a.m. and lasted until 12:10 p.m. The seminar lasted ten minutes longer than the anticipated time. Brownies were provided to

ensure that seminar participants were not distracted by hunger. Eight parents of teenagers attended the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar, as well as a grandparent of one of the teenagers. She attended out of personal interest in the subject but did not fill out any of the survey materials.

The seminar began with a welcome and greeting followed by instructions. First, seminar attendees were asked to write their names on a sign in sheet and to include their email addresses. The sign in sheet was necessary to have a record of who attended, and to ensure that the “Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey” (appendix 3) will be completed both at the beginning and end of the project implementation. The sign in sheet also gathered email addresses making it possible to send reminders and encouragement to participants throughout the project. After signing in, guests were guided in how to self-identify on the “Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey” (appendix 3), as well as how to complete the survey. The test subjects indicated that they had completed the survey when they turned the survey over on its front and placed their pen on top of it. Once they had completed their surveys, a large envelope was passed around so that they could place their surveys in them. After the surveys were collected, it was explained that they would take the same survey on a later date.

After the surveys were collected, the manuscript of the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar was read. The seminar material addressed the biblical mandate for parents to disciple their children, as well as how the shift away from family discipleship took place. The participants were then led through an explanation of the “Talk Sheet,” including how it will be created each week, disseminated, and how it should be used. The audience received a “Sample Talk Sheet” (appendix 4), which

included the commentary that was designed and written to give the parents a sense of how a discipleship time might go while using the “Talk Sheet.” The commentary included sample answers to questions, as well as some explanations and tips. The participants were encouraged to keep their copy of the sample “Talk Sheet” for future reference. After leading the project participants through the “Sample Talk Sheet” (appendix 4), I allowed time for questions from project participants. There were no questions from the participants, so the seminar moved on to the “Discipleship Seminar Survey” (appendix 2).

The second goal of this project was to host a Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. The seminar explained how to use the “Talk Sheets.” The biblical mandate for parents to disciple their children was also discussed. The benchmark for success was that 80 percent of all conference attendees who signed the attendance log would complete the “Home Discipleship Seminar Survey” (appendix 2). This goal was successfully met, because 100 percent (8) of the seminar attendees completed the survey.

The “Home Discipleship Seminar Survey” (appendix 2) was administered after the completion of the Home Discipleship Equipping and Training Seminar. The participants received the “Home Discipleship Seminar Survey” (appendix 2) at the conclusion of the seminar along with a pen. The method for completing the anonymous survey was explained. Participants were instructed to read each statement and then rate each statement by circling the response that most closely represented their opinion about the statements. The survey, which utilized a Likert scale offered four possible ratings. The ratings options were 1=insufficient; 2=requires attention; 3=sufficient; 4=exemplary. The statements in the survey addressed various aspects of the Home Discipleship

Training and Equipping Seminar, specifically, its usefulness to parents for helping them understand and apply methods of discipling their children. They were also asked to turn their survey over and place their pens on top of them when they were finished. When all the participants had completed the survey, a large envelope was passed around for them to place them in. The surveys remained in the envelope until they were assessed by this the following day.

Finally, at the beginning of the Home Discipleship Equipping Seminar, participants received a document called “Tips and Takeaways” (appendix 5). This document included the text of Ephesians 6:1-4, which was discussed during the seminar. The “Tips and Takeaways” (appendix 5) document was given to participants to enable them to easily follow along while this passage dealing with parental discipleship was discussed. In addition to Ephesians 6:1-4, the text of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 was also included along with some helpful tips for success in parental discipleship. Participants were encouraged to keep the “Tips and Takeaways” (appendix 5) sheet for future reference.

The weeks leading up to the project implementation phase involved not only promotion of, and preparation for the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar, but also study of the book of Philippians in order to preach a series of expository sermons from the book. Expository preaching is the method that will be used exclusively for this project. The definition of expository preaching given by Haddon Robinson in his book *Biblical Preaching, the Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* is what is intended by the term expository preaching in this project. Robinson defines expository preaching as “the communication of a biblical concept, derived from

and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.”¹ This definition characterizes the preaching method used for this project.

Preparation for the sermon series included reading the book of Philippians through in one sitting from three English translations (ESV, HCSB, NKJV). The introduction sections of the commentaries on Philippians by Gordon D. Fee,² Frank Thielman,³ and Joseph Hellerman,⁴ were also read. This step was taken in order to gain a greater grasp of the book of Philippians in its historical and literary context, as well as its interpretive issues.

The same approach to expository sermon preparation will be followed each week. The exegetical procedures that are used and the order in which they appear are as follows: (1) The passage is read in multiple English translations (ESV, HCSB, NLT, NKJV, NASB). The near context is kept in view during this step. (2) A syntactical analysis of the passage in the ESV translation is created. (3) As the syntactical analysis of the passage is created, exegetical notes and questions are written down. By this time, a basic outline of the passage is usually written. These appear to be different steps, but they really flow together out of the creation of the syntactical analysis and are thus

¹Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching, the Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 21.

²Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

³Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995)

⁴Joseph H. Hellerman, *Philippians*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B & H, 2015)

treated here as one item. (4) The passage is then translated from Greek to English. (5) Further analysis of the Greek text is made including word studies and grammar. During the analysis of the Greek text, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*,⁵ and Daniel Wallace's *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*⁶ are consulted. Lou and Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*⁷ is also used for help with word-studies. Throughout the translation and analysis of the Greek text, interpretative and application thoughts are written down. (6) Two scholarly commentaries are read and notes taken. (7) The basic exegetical outline created during step 3 above is further developed and reworded for clarity and accuracy as needed. (8) Cross references are identified and studied to gain a deeper understanding of the biblical thought that informed the text. (9) An outline of the theological themes contained within the passage is created. (10) An application-oriented commentary is then consulted as deemed necessary. (11) A homiletical outline is written with a focus on application of the biblical text for a contemporary audience. (12) The above steps typically result in an 8 to 12 page document which is then referenced and reviewed during sermon creation.

After all the exegetical work was done, the sermon outline is created. This involved collating the exegetical, theological, and homiletical outlines into a sermon form. This step typically involved rewording the outline to make it better fit the audience

⁵Walter Bauer, et al., *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁶Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

⁷Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Society, 1989).

at First Baptist Church of Ellington. From that point, introduction, illustrations, and conclusion were added. When the sermon had been developed to this point, the “Talk Sheet” was written based on one or two points from the sermon. The “Talk Sheet” was then proofread by at least one additional person before being published. There was little if any variation in the approach to preparing and preaching from the letters in the New Testament. This approach was followed for the ten-week project phase involving the “Talk Sheets” being written based on the sermons from Philippians. These steps are not restated below but they were used throughout the ten-week project implementation phase.

The Ten-Week Project Implementation Phase

Through the exegetical methods described above, it was determined that the first week’s sermon would cover Philippians 1:1-11. This passage was in large measure an introduction to the book of Philippians. Four main themes emerged which undergirded the rest of the book of Philippians. Those four themes were; unity, humility, spiritual growth, and Paul’s gratitude for the ongoing financial support of Paul by the Philippians. The theme of humility was brought to the surface by Paul who referred to himself as Christ’s slave in verses 1-2. The theme of unity is a major theme in the book of Philippians, and it is anticipated in verses 3-5 where Paul highlights their unity by saying he prays with joy for “you all.” The need for spiritual growth is expressed in verses 6-11. As the text unfolds, readers encounter two prayer reports, one describing how Paul prays with thanksgiving for the Philippians, and what specific requests he makes for them. The sermon brought out these points. The passage was applied by calling Christians to pray for unity, spiritual growth, and humility for themselves and for their church.

The “Talk Sheet” for week 1 focused on Philippians 1:6, which spoke of God’s ongoing work of sanctification in the believer’s life. The goal of the first week’s “Talk Sheet” was to help both parent and student to grow in their understanding of sanctification (also referred to as transformation in the “Talk Sheet”) as an ongoing process that follows salvation. The “Talk Sheet” included questions designed to lead both the parent and student to give their salvation testimony, that is, assuming they have had one. The “Talk Sheet” also included a suggested prayer for salvation that was found on the Southern Baptist Convention website.⁸

The “Talk Sheet” was printed and distributed in the Sunday morning bulletins. Each member of the expert panel received a copy of the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1). The expert panel members had all returned their assessments by Monday, having placed them in the mailbox outside the pastor’s office door. They were reviewed on Tuesday. The “Talk Sheet” all met with the approval of the expert panel who rated each aspect of the “Talk Sheet” with either a “sufficient (3)” or “exemplary (4).” Only one statement, “The ‘Talk Sheet’ is well written and free of spelling and grammatical errors,” received a “3=sufficient.” Additional care in proofreading will be employed for subsequent “Talk Sheet.” The final step for week 1 was to send an email to the parents who participated in the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. This email, which was sent out on Tuesday at noon, was intentionally brief. The purpose of the email was to remind the parents of the charge to disciple their teenage children, encourage them, and to send them a copy of this week’s “Talk Sheet” in case they lost the original

⁸Southern Baptist Convention, *How to Become a Christian*, accessed March 9, 2017, <http://www.sbc.net/knowjesus/theplan.asp>.

copy. The message was also posted on Facebook. This step was repeated each week.

Through the exegetical methods described above, it was determined that the second week's sermon would cover Philippians 1:12-18. In this passage, Paul explains that God is in fact using his imprisonment to continue advancing the gospel. The gospel advanced through his imprisonment because (1) the Praetorian guard heard the gospel; (2) many others learned the real reason that Paul was in prison was because of his faithful proclamation of Jesus; (3) other Christians have begun to proclaim Christ more boldly, though some did so from self-centered motives. The passage was applied to the contemporary audience by pointing out that for the Christian there is purpose in our pain, and that God can use bad circumstances to bring about something good. This is evident both here in Philippians 1:12-18 (especially in vv. 13-14) but also in Romans 8:28-39.

The "Talk Sheet" for week 2 emphasized Philippians 1:13-14 coupled with Romans 8:28-39. Using the illustration of an oyster enduring pain to create a pearl, the point was made that God will use hardship to do a good work in a person's heart. The goal of the second week's "Talk Sheet" was to help parents and students take a more biblical perspective on hardship than what is commonly held. This included having parents discuss times when hardship had a positive result in their personal growth. The "Talk Sheet" concluded with a prayer that led parents and students to praise and thank God for his transforming work through hardships.

The "Talk Sheet" was printed and distributed in the Sunday morning bulletins. Each member of the expert panel received a copy of the "Talk Sheet Assessment Tool" (appendix 1). The expert panel members had all returned their assessments by Monday, having placed them in the mailbox outside the pastor's office door. They were reviewed

on Tuesday. The “Talk Sheets” all met with the approval of the expert panel, who rated each aspect of the “Talk Sheet” with either a “sufficient (3)” or “exemplary (4).” Only one statement, “The ‘Talk Sheet’ is well written and free of spelling and grammatical errors,” received a “3=sufficient.” This rating was because there were minor editing errors involving commas noted by one reviewer. This marked a substantial improvement over the first week’s “Talk Sheet.” The final step for week two was to send an email to the parents who participated in the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. This email, which was sent out on Tuesday at noon, was intentionally brief. The purpose of the email was to remind the parents of the charge to disciple their teenage children, encourage them, and to send them a copy of this week’s “Talk Sheet” in case they lost the original copy. The message was also posted on Facebook.

Through the exegetical methods described above, it was determined that the third week’s sermon would cover Philippians 1:18-26. In this passage, Paul discusses what he expects to result from his impending trial. He expects to be released as an answer to the Philippians prayers and the help that the Holy Spirit will supply (v. 19). He goes on to explain that being put to death is preferable, because he will get to see Jesus (vv. 21-23), but he expects to be released, because he will then be able to help them grow spiritually, and because it will give them another reason to glory in Jesus (v. 26). This third sermon, which was entitled, “*How to be More than a Conqueror*,” highlighted Paul’s perspective and approach to his suffering, explaining that it is what made him more than a conqueror (Rom 8:35-37). He had this perspective because of his experience of meeting the resurrected Christ (Acts 9:1-39) and his experiences of being delivered in the past while servicing Jesus. As such, Christians today should share his perspective on

suffering if they want to be more than conquerors.

The “Talk Sheet” for week 3 emphasized Philippians 1:19, focusing on the question, “Just how did Paul come to know that he would be delivered as a result of the Philippian church’s prayers and the help of the Holy Spirit?” The “Talk Sheet” led participants in a simple study of the OT texts that may have informed Paul’s thinking about deliverance. The “Talk Sheet” included discussion of hardships, and how it makes them feel to know that God desires to help his people overcome hardships. The discussion moved on to focusing on how they typically respond to hardships. It was then suggested that prayer should be the first response to hardships. Finally, participants were encouraged to read Jesus’s model prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, using it as a model for prayer, with special focus given to asking God to address personally felt hardships.

The “Talk Sheet” was printed and distributed in the Sunday morning bulletins. Each member of the expert panel received a copy of the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1). The expert panel members had all returned their assessments by Monday, having placed them in the mailbox outside the pastor’s office door. They were reviewed on Tuesday. The “Talk Sheet” all met with the approval of the expert panel who rated each aspect of the “Talk Sheet” with either a “sufficient (3)” or “exemplary (4).” Only one statement, “The ‘Talk Sheet’ is well written and free of spelling and grammatical errors,” received a “3=sufficient.” This rating was because there were minor punctuation errors noted by one reviewer. While this marked a substantial improvement over the first week’s “Talk Sheet,” this marked the third consecutive week where such errors were noted. In response to this challenge, an additional person would proofread the “Talk Sheet” each week prior to publication.

The final step for week 3 was to send an email to the parents who participated in the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. This email, which was sent out on Tuesday at noon, was intentionally brief. The purpose of the email was to remind the parents of the charge to disciple their teenage children, encourage them, and to send them a copy of this week's "Talk Sheet" in case they lost the original. The message was also posted on Facebook.

Through the exegetical methods described above, it was determined that the fourth week's sermon would cover Philippians 1:27-30. However, it should be noted that portions of the commentaries on Philippians by Moises Silva⁹ and P. T. O'Brien¹⁰ were read in addition to the normal commentary reading. Also, the book called *Spiritual Warfare in Missions*¹¹ was also read to properly prepare for this sermon series. These additional readings were deemed necessary because the sermon became part two of a multi-part sermon series called How to be More than Conquerors.

The text of Philippians 1:27-30 instructs the church how to function while enduring external opposition. Amidst opposition from society, Paul charged the church in Philippi to (1) conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel, (2) remain united, and (3) to work together to advance the gospel. Thus, the sermon focused on how the church should operate if it wishes to be more than conquerors in the face of external opposition.

⁹Moises Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

¹⁰Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

¹¹Jerry Rankin and Ed Stetzer, *Spiritual Warfare and Missions: the Battle for God's Glory among the Nations* (Nashville: B & H, 2010).

The “Talk Sheet” for week 4 emphasized Philippians 1:27 and examined the question, “How vital would you say your church is to your life today?” It challenged both parents and students to examine how united they feel with their church and asked what changes they could make to unite more fully with their church. The goal was to see participants more fully engage in the life of the church to contribute to the growth of others and to receive the ministry contributions of others themselves.

The “Talk Sheet” was printed and distributed in the Sunday morning bulletins. Each member of the expert panel received a copy of the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1). The expert panel members had all returned their assessments by Monday, having placed them in the mailbox outside the pastor’s office door. They were reviewed on Tuesday. The “Talk Sheets” all met with the approval of the expert panel who rated each aspect of the “Talk Sheet” “exemplary (4).”

During the previous 3 weeks one aspect, punctuation and spelling, continually earned a “sufficient,” or 3 rating. There were minor errors each week, therefore a determination was made to have an additional editor proofread the “Talk Sheet” before publication. This made a measurable improvement, as no errors were noted by the expert panel for week 4. The practice of having an additional editor proofread the “Talk Sheet” will continue for the duration of the project.

The final step for week 4 was to send an email to the parents who participated in the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. This email, which was sent out on Tuesday at noon, was intentionally brief. The purpose of the email was to remind the parents of the charge to disciple their teenage children, encourage them, and to send them a copy of this week’s “Talk Sheet” in case they lost the original. The message was

also posted on Facebook.

Through the exegetical methods described above, it was determined that the fifth week's sermon would cover Philippians 2:1-4. This was the third sermon in the series "How to be More than Conquerors." In this passage, the Philippians are exhorted to protect and promote unity by being humble. Thus, the sermon called for Christians to be more than conquerors by protecting and promoting unity, and in so doing, resist divisiveness which hinders the unity of a church and therefore weakens her.

The "Talk Sheet" for week 5 focused on Philippians 2:1-4, specifically verses 3-4. The "Talk Sheet" encouraged both parents and students to think about arguments that they have encountered, and whether or not humility could have helped diffuse the problem. The "Talk Sheet" then encouraged the participants to consider how they might choose to act humbly and thus diffuse divisive situations. Participants were then informed that the Bible says in 1 Peter 5:5, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Therefore, they were encouraged to humbly ask God for forgiveness for the times when they have not been humble.

The "Talk Sheet" was printed and distributed in the Sunday morning bulletins. Each member of the expert panel received a copy of the "Talk Sheet Assessment Tool" (appendix 1). The expert panel members had all returned their assessments by Monday except one, having placed them in the mailbox outside the pastor's office door. The fourth expert panel member hand delivered their "Talk Sheet Assessment Tool" (appendix 1) on Wednesday. The assessments were reviewed on Thursday. The expert panel members rated each aspect of the "Talk Sheet" either "sufficient (3)" or "exemplary (4)."

During the previous 3 weeks one aspect, punctuation and spelling, continually earned a “3=sufficient.” There were minor errors each week so a determination was made to have an additional editor proofread the “Talk Sheet” before publication. This made a noticeable improvement as no errors were noted by the expert panel for week 4. However, in week 5 there was one error noted by one reviewer. The practice of having an additional editor proofread the “Talk Sheet” continued for the duration of the project.

The final step for week 5 was to send an email to the parents who participated in the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. This email, which was sent out on Tuesday at noon, was intentionally brief. The purpose of the email was to remind the parents of the charge to disciple their teenage children, encourage them, and to send them a copy of this week’s “Talk Sheet” in case they lost the original copy. The message was also posted on Facebook.

Through the exegetical methods described above, it was determined that the sixth week’s sermon would cover Philippians 2:5-11. This sermon was delivered on Easter Sunday and was entitled “The Easter Effect.” The sermon discussed three implications of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ: (1) The atonement for sin which makes salvation possible: (2) the exaltation of Jesus Christ above every other name, (3) the call for Christians to adopt the mindset and attitude of Jesus Christ, whose humble self-sacrifice made salvation possible.

The “Talk Sheet” for week 6 included a review of the essential theological matters found in Philippians 2:5-11, emphasizing that Jesus is both Savior and Lord, as well as the call for Christians to follow Jesus example of humility. The effort to follow Jesus’ example will lead to transformation but may involve hardship. Participants were

encouraged to “dig deeper” by reading Hebrews 12:1-2, noting that although Christians are to put effort into their spiritual growth, it is in fact Jesus who is the “founder and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2b). The journey of spiritual growth was compared to running a race in which some segments were more challenging than others. The “Talk Sheet” was written this way to help participants have a correct understanding of what to expect when they follow Jesus. The discipleship tool ended with a prayer for endurance to follow Jesus through hard times, with the understanding that hard times are often some of the most transformative experiences.

The “Talk Sheet” was printed and distributed in the Sunday morning bulletins. Each member of the expert panel received a copy of the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1). The expert panel members had all returned their assessments by Sunday, having placed them in the mailbox outside the pastor’s office door. They were reviewed on Tuesday. The aspects of the “Talk Sheets” all met with the approval of the expert panel who rated each aspect of the “Talk Sheet” either “sufficient (3)” or “exemplary (4).” Two reviewers noted punctuation errors.

The final step for week six was to send an email to the parents who participated in the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. This email, which was sent out on Tuesday at noon, was intentionally brief. The purpose of the email was to remind the parents of the charge to disciple their teenage children, encourage them, and to send them a copy of this week’s “Talk Sheet” in case they lost the original copy. The message was also posted on Facebook.

Through the exegetical methods described above, it was determined that the seventh week’s sermon would cover Philippians 2:12-18. This sermon, which was

entitled “How to Position Yourself to Receive God’s Grace,” followed the passage which called for obedience to God in general (vv. 12-13), as well as obedience to God specifically by avoiding divisive speech (vv. 14-16). The theological principle that was taught was that God’s blessings, though not a reward for obedience, are however contingent upon our obedience. Thus, audience members were encouraged to position themselves to receive God’s blessings through obedience.

The “Talk Sheet” for week 7 gave a general review of Philippians 1:27-2:18, and emphasized the call for speaking to people in a unifying way. In the “Digging Deeper” section, participants were encouraged to read Philippians 2:14; Proverbs 6:16-19; Ephesians 4:5; and James 3:9-10. Participants were led through this collection of Scriptures to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of speaking in ways that are unifying.

The “Talk Sheet” was printed and distributed in the Sunday morning bulletins. Each member of the expert panel received a copy of the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1). The expert panel members had all returned their assessments by Monday, having placed them in the mailbox outside the pastor’s office door. They were reviewed on Tuesday. All but one of the aspects of the “Talk Sheet” met received either a “sufficient (3)” or “exemplary (4)” from the expert panel members. The expert panel member approached this me of her own volition to gain clarity for herself, and to explain why she rated gave an aspect of the “Talk Sheet” “2=requires attention.” She was not required to speak to me privately, and she understood that she could discreetly place the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1) in the mail-pouch outside the pastor’s office to maintain anonymity. Her effort to speak to me, although not required of her, provided

helpful insight for how to more effectively write “Talk Sheet.”

The aspect of the “Talk Sheet” that the expert panel member felt required attention was the first one on the sheet, “The ‘Talk Sheet’ is biblically and theologically accurate.” The expert panel member was uncertain that Ephesians 4:5 fit the emphasis of the “Digging Deeper” section’s overall emphasis on the importance of unifying speech. The verse in question was re-examined, and it was determined that the verse does fit well within the emphasized theme of unifying speech. However, when the verse is read in isolation, it can be difficult to see how the verse is connected to the overall theme of the section. Having included the surrounding context (Eph 4:1-6) would have likely removed the uncertainty. To avoid this problem in the future, greater attention will be paid to ensuring that context is included where necessary to ensure that readers can easily grasp the biblical and theological concepts that are being addressed.

The final step for week 7 was to send an email to the parents who participated in the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. This email, which was sent out on Tuesday at noon, was intentionally brief. The purpose of the email was to remind the parents of the charge to disciple their teenage children, encourage them, and to send them a copy of this week’s “Talk Sheet” in case they lost the original. The message was also posted on Facebook.

It should be noted here that on the Saturday morning before the eighth week’s sermon there was a major flood in Ellington and surrounding communities. This flood led to the cancellation of the worship service. The project was simply resumed the following week thus delaying the completion of the project by one week.

Through the exegetical methods described above, it was determined that the

eighth week's sermon would cover Philippians 2:19-30. This sermon, which was entitled "Impact Players," looked at the character examples set forth in Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, describing them as God's impact players, because they humbly served God and others. The audience was then challenged to follow their examples of humble service, so that they might have an impact for Christ in their own spheres of influence including their homes, schools, and workplace.

The "Talk Sheet" for week 8 gave a general review of Philippians 2:19-30, and emphasized the humble service of Timothy and Epaphroditus in the "Refresh" section. In the "Digging Deeper" section, participants were encouraged to read Matthew 20:20-28. In this narrative, readers encounter the sons of Zebedee and their mother attempting to gain prominent positions of leadership for themselves in Jesus' kingdom. The passage of scripture concludes with Jesus explaining that rather than desiring to be served, he had come to serve others by meeting their need for forgiveness at his own expense through his death on the cross. The audience learned that by humbly serving others like Timothy and Epaphroditus did, they were ultimately following the example of Jesus.

The "In Your Words" and the "In Your Walk" sections led participants to consider their own desire and ability to humbly serve others. Readers were asked the question, "Have you ever thought about humble self-sacrifice to bless others as being a vital part of what it means to follow Jesus?" Finally, the "Talk Sheet" concluded by having the participants read Philippians 2:5-11 together, and then pray, asking God to help them develop the Christ-like mindset of humble service as presented in the passage.

The "Talk Sheet" was printed and distributed in the Sunday morning bulletins. Each member of the expert panel received a copy of the "Talk Sheet Assessment Tool"

(appendix 1). The expert panel members had all returned their assessments by Monday, having placed them in the mailbox outside the pastor's office door. They were reviewed on Tuesday. All the aspects met with the approval of the expert panel who rated each aspect of the "Talk Sheet" either "sufficient (3)" or "exemplary (4)."

The final step for week 8 was to send an email to the parents who participated in the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. This email, which was sent out on Tuesday at noon, was intentionally brief. The purpose of the email was to remind the parents of the charge to disciple their teenage children, encourage them, and to send them a copy of this week's "Talk Sheet" in case they lost the original. The message was also posted on Facebook.

Through the exegetical methods described above, it was determined that the ninth week's sermon would cover Philippians 3:1-11. This sermon was entitled "Salvation through Relationship, Not Rules." In this passage, Paul wrote to warn the Philippians to "beware" of people who would likely come to their church and tell them that they must also be circumcised to be saved (v. 2). He rebuts their position by reminding the Philippians that he had abandoned attempting to be righteous through his own efforts as a devout Jew in favor of obtaining the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 4-7). That Paul spoke of salvation by using relationship language and concepts such as "know" and "faith," was highlighted in the sermon. Audience members were encouraged not to impose rules on other Christians to test of the quality of their relationship with Christ. Some audience members were called to renew their relationship with Jesus, while others were called to enter a saving relationship with Jesus.

The “Talk Sheet” for week 9 gave a general review of Philippians 3:1-11, reminding the readers that the passage served to warn and protect the Philippians against false teachers. Readers were reminded that the passage also spoke of salvation as being available to those who have a relationship with Jesus. That relationship was built on “knowing” (v. 8) and trusting (e.g., “faith” v. 9b) Jesus. Thus, salvation does not come through following a list of “do’s” and “don’ts.”

The “Digging Deeper” section encouraged participants to read Matthew 9:9-13, pointing out that Matthew became a Christian because of his relationship with Jesus not because he had done good works. The “In Your Words” and the “In Your Walk” sections led participants to consider whether rules, or a relationship with Jesus would be more likely to make being a Christian a more joyful experience. Participants were led to consider how reading their Bible, praying, and serving others might help them grow in their relationship with Jesus. Finally, participants were encouraged to pray, asking God to give them a growing desire to become more like Jesus and to grow in their relationship with him.

The “Talk Sheet” was printed and distributed in the Sunday morning bulletins. Each member of the expert panel received a copy of the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1). The expert panel members had all returned their assessments by Monday, having placed them in the mailbox outside the pastor’s office door. They were reviewed on Tuesday. All the aspects of the “Talk Sheet” met with the approval of the expert panel who rated each aspect of the “Talk Sheet” either “sufficient (3)” or “exemplary (4).”

The final step for week 9 was to send an email to the parents who participated in the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. This email, which was sent

out on Tuesday at noon, was intentionally brief. The purpose of the email was to remind the parents of the charge to disciple their teenage children, encourage them, and to send them a copy of this week's "Talk Sheet" in case they lost it. The message was also posted on Facebook. The email message also included a reminder about the upcoming debriefing meeting that was scheduled after the morning worship service on May 28. A notice about the upcoming meeting was also published in the bulletin, and this notice was also read aloud during the announcements.

Through the exegetical methods described above, it was determined that the tenth sermon would cover Philippians 3:12-4:1. In this passage, Paul discusses his pursuit of perfection in Christ, his failure to attain perfection, and his continued pursuit of this goal despite how he has performed in the past (vv. 12-14). This passage portrays a vivid expression of what it looks like to "live in a manner worthy of the gospel" (Phil 1:27), and to work out one's salvation with "fear and trembling" (2:12). This pursuit of perfection in Christ is likened to a foot race (3:13-14), and requires that one live like a citizen of heaven (v. 20), with the understanding that a physical transformation awaits those who are disciples of Christ (v. 21).

The tenth, and final week's sermon, which was entitled, "The Parable of the T-Ball Game," used the examples of children who are growing in their T-Ball skills from their first years of playing at age 3 to their current level of skill at age 5. This illustration was used because there are several T-Ball games going on each week this time of year in Ellington, and they are well attended by many adults and young people. Parallels were drawn between the improvement in a T-Ball player's skills, and what drove that improvement, and the spiritual growth in a Christian's life, and what it is that drives

spiritual growth in a Christian's life. Furthermore, parallels were made between what hindered children from improving their T-Ball skills and what hinders spiritual growth in a Christian's life. The message informed the audience that the Bible calls Christians to pursue perfection, to find godly examples to follow (vv. 16-17), and to pursue spiritual maturity together with other Christians (3:17).

The "Talk Sheet" for week 10 emphasized Philippians 3:12-14, focusing on the question, "What do you think hinders a person from really pursuing Jesus?" The "Talk Sheet" also led the participants to examine the passage in context, and explained the basic but powerful rule of biblical interpretation that "context is king." The "Talk Sheet" led the participants to reflect on actions they have taken to pursue spiritual growth, and to discuss actions they might take to continue the pursuit of spiritual growth. The "Talk Sheet" ended with a short, suggested prayer, thanking God for the assurance of salvation, and asking for the Holy Spirit to stir up both the desire and strength to pursue Jesus with steadfast determination.

The "Talk Sheet" was printed and distributed in the Sunday morning bulletins. Each member of the expert panel received a copy of the "Talk Sheet Assessment Tool" (appendix 1). The expert panel members had all returned their assessments by Monday, having placed them in the mailbox outside the pastor's office door. They were reviewed on Tuesday. The "Talk Sheet" all met with the approval of the expert panel who rated each aspect of the "Talk Sheet" "exemplary (4)."

The final step for week 10 was to send an email to the parents who participated in the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar. This email, which was sent out on Tuesday at noon, was intentionally brief. The purpose of the email was to remind

the parents of the charge to disciple their teenage children, encourage them, and to send them a copy of this week's "Talk Sheet" in case they lost the original. The message was also posted on Facebook. This step was repeated each week of the project implementation phase. This week's email message also included a reminder about the debriefing meeting that is scheduled for the following Sunday after the morning worship service. A notice about the upcoming meeting was also published in the bulletin, and this notice was also read aloud during the announcements.

Post-Project Debriefing Meeting

The third and final goal of this project was to measure the change in the home discipleship practices and perceptions of parents of students at First Baptist Church of Ellington. This goal was measured by administering a questionnaire called the "Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey" (appendix 3) on two separate occasions, and then performing a paired two sample t-test on the survey results. The survey was initially administered at the beginning of the discipleship training and equipping seminar prior to the project implementation phase. The survey was administered a second time at the post-project debriefing meeting immediately after the Sunday morning worship service, to the same test subjects who participated in the first survey. The answers were assigned a value based on rank (see methodology description below). These scores were entered in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and a paired two sample t-test was performed. The third goal was successfully met because the t-test demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the pre-project and post project survey results.

The "Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey" (appendix 3) consisted of 14 multiple choice questions given in two sections. These questions offered

6 possible answers to each question which was designed using a Likert scale to measure how parents viewed their role in disciplining their children, as well as what actions they took to discipline their children. Part 1 of the survey measured parental perceptions. The possible answers were SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, SWD=somewhat disagree, SWA=somewhat agree, A=agree, SA=strongly agree. On some of the questions the answer deemed to be the most positive would be SD=strongly disagree, with the least positive answer being SA=strongly agree. In these instances, SD was ranked a value of 6, and SA was ranked a value of 1, with the other possible answers having values assigned appropriately. On the other questions, however, the answer deemed to be the most positive would be SA, and the answer deemed least positive would be SD. As such, the ranking was reversed and SA was ranked a 6 and SD was ranked a 1, with the other answers receiving the appropriate ranked value. Thus, the possible answers were assigned a score from 1 to 6 based on their ranking between least positive response to most positive response. The rankings are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Response rankings for part 1

Response rankings for survey questions: 1, 6, and 8.		Response rankings for survey questions: 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7	
SD	1	SD	6
D	2	D	5
SWD	3	SWD	4
SWA	4	SWA	3
A	5	A	2
SA	6	A	1

The second part of the survey examined parental practices. The possible answers

were “Never,” “Once,” “A Couple Times,” “3-4 Times,” “5-6 Times,” “7 or more times.” For each of the six questions in Part 2, “Never” was deemed the least positive response, while “7 or more times” was deemed the most positive response. These questions were designed to assess how frequently parents engaged in different family discipleship related activities. Each possible response was ranked from 1 to 6. See Table 2 below.

Table 2. Response rankings for part 2

Rankings for Survey Questions 9-14:	
Never	1
Once	2
A couple times	3
3-4 times	4
5-6 times	5
5-6 times	5
7 or more times	6

After ranking the values for the survey responses as noted above, a paired sample t-test was performed in Microsoft Excel using the before and after survey answers. See Table 3 below. The goal of the t-test was to determine whether this ministry project, including the Parent Equipping Seminar, weekly publication of “Talk Sheets,” and ongoing e-mail reminders resulted in improved perceptions and practices from parents regarding family discipleship. The level of significance was set at $\alpha = .05$. The null hypothesis was that there is no difference between the populations means. The alternative hypothesis was that there is a difference between the before and after population means.

$$H_0: \mu_D = 0$$

$$H_1: \mu_D \neq 0$$

Table 3. Paired t-test for dependent means

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Dependent Means		
	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	3.984126984	4.76984127
Variance	2.447746032	1.266603175
Observations	126	126
Pearson Correlation	0.447710915	
Df	125	
t Stat	-6.03219111	
P(T<=t) one-tail	8.49237E-09	
t Critical one-tail	1.657135178	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.69847E-08	
t Critical two-tail	1.979124109	

T-Test Results and Interpretation:

The t-critical two tail value is 1.979124109. The t-stat is -6.03219111. Since the absolute value of the t-stat is greater than the t-critical two tail value, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The benchmark for the third goal was met; the t-test demonstrates a positive difference in the mean of the before project survey test results, and the mean of the after-project survey results. There was therefore a correlation between participating in this project and having more positive perspectives and practices regarding home discipleship.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to train and equip parents of youth in the student ministry at First Baptist Church, Ellington, Missouri, to disciple their children at home. Upon theological reflection, and analysis of literature from fields related to discipleship and family ministry, it was determined that to achieve its purpose this project must involve equipping parents with discipleship tools and training on how to use those tools, followed by ongoing encouragement. The project would be deemed successful if it met the benchmarks for three specific goals. All three of the project goals were successfully met, thus, the project successfully fulfilled its purpose. The goals and the benchmarks will be discussed below.

The first goal of this project was to write discipleship tools for parents called “Talk Sheets” that are based on the pastor’s Sunday morning sermons. Goal 1 was measured by having an expert panel composed of key lay leaders complete a questionnaire called a “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1). This tool reviews various aspects of the “Talk Sheets” such as biblical and theological accuracy, relationship of the “Talk Sheet” to the sermon, and ease of use. The benchmark for success was 80 percent of all aspects assessed on the would receive either a “sufficient (3)” or an “exemplary (4)” rating on a Likert scale from all four members of an expert panel. During the ten-week project implementation phase, there was only one time when

an aspect received a “needs attention (2)” rating. Therefore, the benchmark for success was met, as 99.7 percent (359 out of 360 possible) of all aspects assessed received a “sufficient (3)” or an “exemplary (4)” rating. The expert panel member approached me and explained why she gave the “needs attention (2)” rating. The rating stands as is; however, it should be noted that the question was one of a theological nature, thus it was taken quite seriously. The theological point in question was examined, and it was determined that a correct interpretation on the “Talk Sheet” was given, but it was not communicated as clearly and concisely as necessary for readers to understand. Because of this experience, additional care was taken to ensure that the problem was not repeated and that the “Talk Sheets” were clear and concise. However, given that the “Talk Sheets” met the bench mark for success, the “Talk Sheets” clearly helped the project to achieve its purpose of equipping parents of students in the youth ministry at First Baptist Church of Ellington to disciple their children.

The second goal of this project was to host a Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar that was open to all parents of students in the youth ministry at First Baptist Church of Ellington. The purpose of this goal was to train parents in how to use the “Talk Sheets” and to briefly explain the biblical rationale for discipling one’s children. Immediately after the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar ended, a survey called the “Home Discipleship Seminar Survey” (appendix 2) was administered. The benchmark for success was that 80 percent of all project participants complete the survey. This benchmark was successfully met as 100 percent of the project participants completed the survey. The project met the benchmark of success for the second goal. Therefore, the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar aided

the project in achieving the purpose of equipping parents of students in the youth ministry at First Baptist Church of Ellington to disciple their children. More will be said about the second goal in the “What Would I do Differently?” section below.

The third and final goal of this project was to measure the change in the home discipleship practices and perceptions of parents of students at First Baptist Church of Ellington. This goal was measured by administering a questionnaire called the “Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey” (appendix 3) on two separate occasions; once at the beginning of the Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar, and again after the ten-week project implementation phase at a post-project debriefing meeting. The benchmark for success was that a paired t-test of the before and after survey data would demonstrate a positive change. The third goal was successfully met as the paired t-test revealed a positive change in discipleship perceptions and practices after the project was implemented. The correlation between participating in this project and developing more desirable family discipleship practices and perceptions demonstrates that the project fulfilled its purpose of equipping parents to disciple their children.

Strengths of the Project

This project had four main strengths: (1) The ministry project can be reproduced in other ministry contexts, (2) it fit naturally within the normal schedule of activities at First Baptist Church of Ellington, (3) it successfully laid a foundation for future parent equipping ministry developments at First Baptist Church of Ellington, and (4) the completion of the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 3) provided ongoing and up to date feedback on the “Talk Sheets.” Each one of these strengths is described below.

The first strength of the ministry project was that it can be reproduced in other ministry contexts. The efforts to equip parents with the confidence, discipleship skills, and discipleship tools necessary to disciple their children could be reproduced in other congregations, as well as other ministries at First Baptist Church of Ellington. There are few churches that do not routinely include preaching as a part of their regular weekly worship service, many of whom also publish a bulletin each week, and have some sort of online communication capability such as email and Facebook. As such, the initiatives undertaken in this project could be reproduced by simply holding a comparable parent equipping seminar, and creating “Talk Sheet” each week that would be published along with the church bulletin. Encouragement and reminders can be printed in the bulletin, sent by email, and posted on Facebook. For those churches who do not have online capabilities, the bulletin, newsletter, and bulletin board could be used as a low-tech alternative to online communication. Finally, beyond the preparation for, and implementation of, the initial Parent Equipping Seminar, minimal additional work would be required by ministry leaders to duplicate this project in other settings.

The second strength of the project was that the initiatives fit well within normal schedule of activities at First Baptist Church of Ellington. While there was a pre-project survey and a seminar which required that parents stay a bit longer at church than they normally would have, the rest of the initiatives occurred naturally within the churches routine activities. Sermons are part of the expected activities at First Baptist Church of Ellington, as is the publishing of weekly bulletins. That a “Talk Sheet” would be published alongside of the bulletin, in conjunction with the weekly sermon, was not a major inconvenience for the church staff and was not a disruption to the normal activities

of the church. Furthermore, parents appeared to be able to find opportunities to go over the “Talk Sheets” with their students once the tools were routinely available and their correct usage understood. Finally, both the staff and congregation of First Baptist Church of Ellington regularly use email and social media, so disseminating encouraging reminders occurred quite easily.

The third strength of the project was that it laid the foundation for future parent equipping activity in several different ways. First, the practice of publishing a “Talk Sheet” has become a routine part of the life of the church, both for the members of the congregation but also for the church staff. Second, at least half of the parents of teenagers who participated in the ministry project also had non-teenage children. These parents expressed interest in having additional family discipleship resources made available to them. Third, there are now two pathways that can be used to equip parents with tools to help them disciple their children. First, simply involves the continuation and further development of the initiatives undertaken in this ministry project to equip families to disciple their children. Equipping families for home discipleship is now a part of the congregation’s history and is therefore the challenge of starting something new is alleviated. Second, there is the possibility of maximizing the parent equipping tools that are published by Lifeway along with the various curriculum’s that are currently used in First Baptist Church’s various age segmented ministries. To maximize these tools would only require informing parents that the tools are already being distributed on a weekly basis, and then explaining to them how they are designed to be used.

The fourth strength of the project was that weekly completion of the “Talk Sheet Assessment Tool” (appendix 1) provided ongoing and up-to-date feedback on the

“Talk Sheet.” This feedback from the expert panel made it possible to make necessary adjustments to the “Talk Sheets” throughout the duration of the ten-week project implementation phase. Finally, this step of the project kept me informed of how parents of teenage children might view the quality and usefulness of the published discipleship tools. This allowed for ongoing improvements of the “Talk Sheets.”

Weaknesses of the Project

There was one major weakness of the project; the project’s design required having all four of the expert panel members be present each Sunday. This presented a great challenge. The people that were asked to serve as expert panel members are faithful worship service attenders. However, even these members found it difficult not to miss a worship service for 10 weeks straight. The plan was to address this anticipated problem by providing an audio recording of the sermons when they missed the morning worship service. The recording was also to be posted online, which would enable parents who missed a sermon to listen and keep up with the “Talk Sheets.” However, First Baptist Church of Ellington had only very recently had its old audio equipment reinstalled in the multi-purpose building. Previously, the sound system had been used in the old sanctuary. But it was removed prior to the demolition of the old sanctuary in anticipation of building a new one. Since the sound system was reinstalled in the multi-purpose building, there have been ongoing major to minor problems on a nearly weekly basis with the sound system. The result was that although recordings could initially be made, the process was far less reliable than it was in the recent past. To solve this problem, a sound system repair company was hired to fix the problem. The technician did fix the sound system, making it possible to record the sermons, but only temporarily. Furthermore, even when

the sound system worked, the quality of the recording was very poor, making it difficult to hear and understand the messages. To date, the sound system is unable to record sermons, and likely will not be able to at any time in the near future.

The expert panel members proved to be exceptionally reliable but there still were a few absences. Due to the inability of the sound system to reliably record sermons, a decision was made to simply have comparable alternatives fill in as expert panel members. For example, when an expert panel member who was chosen to be on the panel as the parents of a student in the youth group at First Baptist Church of Ellington, was absent, another parent of a student in the youth ministry was asked to serve as an alternate. When a deacon missed, another deacon was asked to serve as an alternative. There was a total of 4 absences of a possible 40 (10 weeks x 4 expert panel members). Selecting suitable alternate panel members was an effective solution.

The parents involved with the study were faithful in attendance during the project implementation phase. However, most parents likely missed at least one Sunday morning worship service. There was no way for them to keep up with the sermons that they missed, though they did complete the “Talk Sheet” for the missed sermons anyway.

What Would I Do Differently?

If this ministry project were to be done over, there are three things I would do Three elements differently to enhance the quality of the ministry project. The first thing change that I would make is directly related to the major weakness of the project. Given that First Baptist Church of Ellington consistently endures sound system challenges which make recording the sermons unpredictable, I would select alternate expert panel members. While I would still have only four panel members complete the “Talk Sheet

Assessment Tool” (appendix 1) each week, I would also have four alternates on standby. Then, in the event of an absence, one or more of the alternates could complete the “Talk Sheet Assessments Tool” (appendix 1) in their place. For congregations like First Baptist Church of Ellington who often deal with recurring technical difficulties in their sound system, the project could continue smoothly when expert panel members have unplanned absences for things like illnesses, or planned absences such as to make a Gideon ministry presentation.

The second thing that I would do differently would be to interview some of the parents who participated in the study. After completing the planned activities for the post-project debriefing meeting, I had some informal conversations with the parents who had participated in the study. One of the participants, who grew up in a pastor’s home, said of the project’s material, “I wish someone had told me how to do this a long time ago.” A few others nodded their heads in agreement with her comment. This comment was very enlightening for me as a researcher. It caused me to sense that perhaps more parents would engage in family discipleship, if they were equipped and encouraged to do so. This informal conversation made me believe that perhaps the project could have been further strengthened by the inclusion of a qualitative research component. This would not have had to be done with all the project participants, but perhaps interviewing a cross section of the participants, such as a participating couple and single parent, would suffice to give greater insight into how or why parent equipping succeeds or fails, why parents struggle to disciple their children, and why they have experienced success.

The third thing I would do differently is to make the benchmark for the second goal a little bit more stringent and meaningful. To successfully meet the second goal, all

that was required was that 80 percent of those who attended the Home Discipleship and Equipping Seminar complete the Home Discipleship Seminar Survey (appendix 2). I would make goal 2 more stringent by adding a second component; that 80 percent of all the aspects that are rated on the Home Discipleship Seminar Survey (appendix 2) receive either a “sufficient (3)” or a “exemplary (4)” rating on a Likert scale. That suggested addition to the benchmark for success was met, however, as 100 percent of the aspects on the survey received either a “sufficient (3)” or a “exemplary (4)” rating.

Theological Reflection

Just before Jesus returned to heaven, he gave his followers one final instruction; he commanded them saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20). The task of disciple making has been written about at length by many different authors, and for good reason, it is the task of the church and every Christian to be involved in discipleship. Although there are many useful books and articles on the topic of discipleship, it is helpful to have a concise definition of what it is to be able to confidently engage with the task. Timothy Paul Jones offers a helpful definition of discipleship, describing it as “a personal and intentional process in which one or more Christians guide unbelievers to embrace and apply the gospel in every part of their lives.”¹ Discipleship begins with confession of faith in Christ, and continues by

¹Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 17.

developing “practices and perspectives that reflect the mind of Christ.”² Given that worship and participation in a local church is part of discipleship, it is logical that the church, and therefore the pastor of the church, would play a role in the intentional process of discipleship. These intentional processes of discipleship would also include those which fit under the category of family ministry. But how, then, is the pastor to be involved in the process of discipleship, specifically as it relates to children of parents who attend their congregations?

While the pastor’s responsibilities have changed in modern American Christianity to include things such as ex-officio member of all church committees, bus driver, and business meeting moderator, the task of disciple making is still part of his responsibility. With that said, the pastor cannot be realistically expected to effectively manage the business of the church while at the same time handle all the discipleship duties well. Scripture offers a more realistic and effective way for pastors to manage or shepherd the church while ensuring that discipleship takes place. Rather than attempting to handle all or most of the discipleship that takes place, a pastor is called and equipped by Christ to equip others to be disciple makers (Eph 4:7-16).

Paul informs his readers that every Christian has been given an allotment of grace for the edification of the church (Eph 4:7; 1 Cor 12:7). While Paul was a unique figure in Christian history, he did not see the allotment of grace by Christ for specific ministries as being unique to himself. While every Christian should be understood to have a different allotment of grace for the building of the body of Christ, the experience

²Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 17.

of receiving grace is not unique within those who have been regenerated through faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, all Christians receive a spiritual gift, but not all receive the same gift or gifts that are intended to be used for building up the church (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:1-7; Eph 4:7-16). Thielman summarizes this aptly, stating, “Paul’s particular role may be historically unique, but now we learn that just as God has graciously given Paul his role (Eph 3:2, 7, 8) and the power to carry it out (3:7), so also a role in the edification of the church is given “to each one of us” (cf. 1 Cor 12:7, 11; Rom 12:3; 1 Pet 4:10).”³ As such, the gifts given then are intended to edify the church helping produce Christian maturity in individual believers (Eph 4:13), including children (6:1-4). While this brief discussion has wide ranging implications in the wider discussion on the matter of spiritual gifts, the focus here will be on how the pastor should understand his role and function, specifically as it relates to family ministry. This will be discussed below.

All Christians are gifted for the work of the ministry. However, those with speaking roles in the church such as “the apostles, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers” (4:11) are specifically cited as having received those gifts to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Thus, as Thielman states, “Among those whom he (Jesus) has gifted, Paul lists five groups especially equipped to prepare other believers for the work of the ministry: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Those gifted in the ministry of the Word and those whom they equip for ministry work together to build up the body of Christ.”⁴ In most congregations, the pastor is either the primary teacher of

³Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 263.

⁴Ibid., 280.

the Word, or is one of the primary teachers and is therefore to be understood as holding an equipping function. This equipping function is linked to the command to go and make disciples (Matt 28:19-20), which includes family discipleship. How they are linked is described below.

The Great Commission calls on all believers everywhere to make disciples. This includes teaching for conversion and for spiritual growth post conversion. That this is so is indicated by the phrase, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:20). As an extension of the Great Commission, Christian parents are called to disciple their children (Eph 6:4). Furthermore, Timothy’s grandmother Lois and mother Eunice are held up as exemplary for their faithful teaching of God’s word to him (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15). But the command to parents to teach their children to obey God is not limited to the NT, this command is also in the OT (Deut 6:1-9; Ps 78). While God’s expectation that his people train their children to obey him is evident through the Bible, lack of consistent obedience to this command on the part of parents is also evident. To remedy this challenge to the church calls for pastors to disciple their own children, and to equip other parents to disciple their own children. Equipping parents to disciple their children will, of necessity require teaching what God has said on the topic, training them in discipleship skills, and providing accountability and encouragement. In so doing, the pastor will be stirring Christian parents up to “good works” (Heb 10:24) and obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). Furthermore, equipping and challenging others to obey the call to disciple their children is also part of discipleship. It is far more efficient and realistic for a pastor to equip the parents of the congregation to be disciple makers than to individually attempt to disciple

all the children of the church. Finally, beyond considerations of ministry effectiveness, calling (Deut 6:4-9; Eph 6:4) and equipping (Eph 4:11, 12) parents to disciple their children is supported by the Bible, and for this reason it is good and right for pastors to do so, for the good of the church and the glory of God.

Personal Reflections

Engaging in this ministry project fostered learning for me that went beyond the narrow scope of the project itself. In this personal reflection section, I will focus on items directly related to family ministry and parent equipping. However, some ancillary learning was fostered by this experience which will be discussed as well.

When it comes to people's ability to change, I tend to have low expectations. When I conducted the first "Parental Practices and Perceptions Survey" (appendix 3), I expected to get the results that I got. The parents who participated in the survey basically understood that discipling their children was primarily their responsibility, but by and large they were not doing this. What I was unprepared for was the changes that these same parents made in response to being called and equipped to disciple their children. Every parent who participated in the study made positive changes to be more intentional about family discipleship. More than one of the parents used the "Talk Sheet" for each week of the ten-week project implementation period. The desire to change that the parents demonstrated was encouraging, enlightening and challenging to me. It was encouraging, because it can be demonstrated by research that God's people can and do respond when they are called to be more faithful to Scripture.

One of the most enlightening moments for me came after the post-project survey was completed and informal conversations about the ministry project took place.

One parent, a spiritually mature, but very busy pastor's daughter and mother of five, said, "I wish that someone had told me how to do this a long time ago." This echoed a response I received from a parent about four years ago in a different congregation, when I preached on the topic of parents discipling their children. He stopped on his way out the door, shook my hand, looked me in the eye and said, "I wish someone had told me about this years ago." His children are now adults. Conducting this ministry project was enlightening because it revealed to me that parents, even very busy ones, are willing to be challenged to disciple their children, especially if they are equipped to do it. More importantly, they are willing to carry out what they have learned.

This project also challenged me as a pastor to ensure that I am equipping others to do the work of the ministry. By equipping parents to disciple their children, I am discipling them to be disciple makers, which is an extension of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). Through the process of being equipping to disciple their children, parents can learn to share the gospel with them, lead their children in a prayerful decision to follow Christ, and teach the Bible to them. While teaching and evangelism may not necessarily be every parent's spiritual gift, they can still be equipped to do what God has called them to do within the context of their home.

Engaging in this ministry project taught me several practical skills for pastoral ministry that go beyond family ministry related activities. I learned that I can accomplish far more things with strategic planning. Projects such as this one, with all the research, writing, and implementation, of necessity, require a great deal of time. Beyond the work related to this project, I am a husband and father, and I am also the pastor, and youth director of my church. Furthermore, I am involved in denominational leadership at the

state and county level. Not to mention my involvement in our congregation's new sanctuary construction project. This workload has clearly stretched me beyond what I would normally expect to be able to accomplish. However, strategically planning how to use my time on a monthly, weekly, daily, and hourly basis has helped me to carry out my responsibilities.

However, I have also learned through this project that while people can accomplish much more if they plan strategically, there is still the reality of unforeseen delays. During the project implementation phase, our community experienced a major flood. The flood damage was extensive enough for government officials to declare the region to be in a state of emergency. The flood hindered the project by pushing back the final week of the ten-week project implementation phase. This weeklong delay didn't seem to be much of a problem at first, but eventually became one. The delay, which was exacerbated by my involvement in disaster relief, pushed completing my academic work back into our scheduled Vacation Bible School, which ends on the same day that our associational mission trip, which I led, began. Upon returning from the mission trip, I was a chaperone at youth camp, spoke at a conference in another state, and chaperoned at children's camp. Furthermore, there was also a death in our family. These unexpected events presented a major challenge to completing this work in a timely way. In summation, while much can be accomplished with strategic planning and hard work, I learned that it is wise to allow margin for unexpected events. For, as Proverbs 19:21 states, "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand."

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to train and equip parents of youth in the student ministry at First Baptist Church, Ellington, Missouri, to disciple their children at home. To accomplish the project's purpose, parents were given discipleship tools, training in the use of those tools, as well as ongoing encouragement and reminders. The usefulness of these tools, which were distributed weekly, was assessed by an expert panel to determine whether they were logically linked to the sermon, biblically accurate, and easy for parents to use. The parents received training in the use of these "Talk Sheets" at a Parent Equipping Seminar. The usefulness of the parent equipping seminar was assessed by having the parents who participated in the study complete a survey called the "Home Discipleship Seminar Survey" (appendix 2). The survey assessed the usefulness of the seminar by determining whether the participants deemed it to be well prepared and delivered by the presenter, easy to understand, helpful, and biblical. Finally, the cumulative benefit of the tools, training, and encouragement, was measured by having the study participants complete the "Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey" (appendix 3). This survey was administered before the ministry project was implemented, and after it was completed. A paired 2 sample t-test was conducted, and it was determined that a positive change took place between the before and after surveys.

The ministry project successfully met its goals. In large part, the project succeeded because the study participants were kept in mind throughout the process. This pastoral concern for the needs of the parents and students was maintained throughout the project. As preparations were made for the Parent Equipping Seminar, the willingness and ability of the project participants to stay focused during the seminar was considered.

Likewise, the matter of how much new information participants would be able to learn after having spent considerable time in Sunday school and worship was also considered. Furthermore, the expert panel was composed of members of the congregation who would likely be able to assess whether the weekly “Talk Sheets” would be useful to parents. Finally, the fact that parents may need ongoing encouragement was considered, and therefore the encouragement emails were sent. In summary, the project met its goals and accomplished its purpose because the needs of the subjects were kept in view throughout the ministry project.

Further research needs to be done to determine how parents perceive the task of discipling their children. Specifically, parental perception of the receptivity of their children to their discipleship efforts needs to be studied. Finally, the family discipleship experiences of Christian parents who are single or have spouses who are unsupportive of family discipleship need to be studied. The issue that needs to be studied is the effect that lacking a supportive spouse has on parental attempts to disciple their children.

APPENDIX 1

TALK SHEET ASSESSMENT TOOL

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to equip parents of students in the youth ministry at First Baptist Church, Ellington, MO. to disciple their children. This research is being conducted by Daniel Kitinoja for purposes of project research. In this research, you will give feedback on your attitudes, perspective, and practices regarding discipling your children. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

This assessment tool has been created to measure the usefulness of the weekly *Talk Sheet*. The *Talk Sheet* is a discipleship tool that is created by the youth director every Sunday morning based on the pastor's sermon, and included in the weekly worship bulletin. Please evaluate each item on the scale given below with the following values; **1** = insufficient; **2** = requires attention; **3** = sufficient; **4**=exemplary. For each item below please circle the response that most accurately reflects your opinion.

The *Talk Sheet* is biblically and theologically accurate.

1 2 3 4

The *Talk Sheet* demonstrates that its content is based upon Pastor Dan's sermon.

1 2 3 4

The biblical and theological concepts taught by the *Talk Sheet* are easy to understand.

1 2 3 4

The content of the *Talk Sheet* is written in a way that will enable parents of students Ellington First Baptist Church to lead their children in home discipleship.

1 2 3 4

The *Talk Sheet* appears to be written to meet the home discipleship needs of families.

1 2 3 4

The *Talk Sheet* is well written and free of spelling and grammatical errors.

1 2 3 4

The *Talk Sheet* includes biblical and or theological content.

1 2 3 4

If illustrations were used in the *Talk Sheet*, they assist in communicating the biblical and theological content.

1 2 3 4

The *Talk Sheet* was distributed to parents of Ellington Baptist Church in the Sunday morning bulletin on the day Pastor Dan's sermon was delivered.

1 2 3 4

APPENDIX 2

HOME DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to equip parents of students in the youth ministry at First Baptist Church, Ellington, MO. to disciple their children. This research is being conducted by Daniel Kitinoja for purposes of project research. In this research, you will give feedback on your attitudes, perspective, and practices regarding discipling your children. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

For each item listed below circle the value that most accurately reflects your opinion of how helpful the *Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar* was. The values listed below are on the following scale: 1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 =exemplary.

1. The home discipleship seminar clearly presented the biblical reasons engaging in doing home discipleship.

1 2 3 4

2. The home discipleship seminar helped me understand the process of home discipleship better.

1 2 3 4

3. The home discipleship seminar enabled me to understand and use the “Talk Sheets” that will be disseminated each week.

1 2 3 4

4. The information that was given at the home discipleship seminar will assist me in engaging in home discipleship.

1 2 3 4

5. The home discipleship seminar helped me understand the role of parents in discipling their children.

1 2 3 4

6. The home discipleship seminar helped me understand the role of the church in discipling my children.

1 2 3 4

7. The home discipleship seminar presenter gave evidence that he valued me as the primary discipler of my children.

1 2 3 4

8. The home discipleship seminar increased my confidence in being able to disciple my children.

1 2 3 4

APPENDIX 3

THE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to equip parents of students in the youth ministry at First Baptist Church, of Ellington, MO. to disciple their children. This research is being conducted by Daniel Kitinoja for purposes of project research. In this research, you will give feedback on your attitudes, perspective, and practices regarding discipling your children. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Copied from Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis, IN. Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011). Used by permission.

Instructions: for each item on the assessment, please circle the value that most closely reflects your view. The value options include the following: **SD** = Strongly Disagree, **D** = Disagree, **SWD** = Somewhat Disagree, **SWA** = Somewhat Agree, **A** = Agree, **SA**=Strongly Agree.

You have taken this identical survey on a previous date. In order for the survey to provide the information necessary and to ensure anonymity, please identify yourself by indicating your date of birth and gender. Example: 12577M. _____

Part 1: Parental Perceptions Survey

1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.

SD D SWD SWA A SA

2. 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.

SD D SWD SWA A SA

3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.

SD D SWD SWA A SA

4. 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.

SD D SWD SWA A SA

5. 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.

SD D SWD SWA A SA

6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.

SD D SWD SWA A SA

7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.

SD D SWD SWA A SA

8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.

SD D SWD SWA A SA

Part 2: Parental Practices Survey:

9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?

Never Once A Couple Times 3-4 times 5-6 times 7 or more times

10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?

Never Once A Couple Times 3-4 times 5-6 times 7 or more times

11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?

Never Once A Couple Times 3-4 times 5-6 times 7 or more times

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?

Never Once A Couple Times 3-4 times 5-6 times 7 or more times

13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?

Never Once A Couple Times 3-4 times 5-6 times 7 or more times

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?

Never Once A Couple Times 3-4 times 5-6 times 7 or more times

APPENDIX 4
SAMPLE TALK SHEET

Refresh:

Slowly read 2 Peter 1 v. 5-8 aloud together.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we have undergone and are undergoing a massive change in our identity, purpose, and values. This came about because, by receiving salvation by grace through faith, we have joined a new family. This can be challenging because we learned to think, speak, act, and do things like people who are not in God's family. Our salvation brought us into His family, but He also desires that we experience His transforming power. We cannot transform ourselves but we can put ourselves in a position to receive that transforming power. We do that in several ways including spending time studying the Bible, praying, serving others, and spending time with other Christians. These activities are called Spiritual Disciplines and they are tools that God uses to transform us so that we live like we are in God's family. In sports, sometimes a player will transfer from one school to another. Their success as a player and the contributions they make to their new team will in large measure be determined by their ability to learn the new team's way of doing things. It is the same way when we become members of God's family.

Digging Deeper:

Our main passage urged us to pursue growth in godliness. Now, re-read verse 8, asking yourself; "What does God intend for me to avoid by growing in godliness?"

(You might say that God intends for me to grow in godliness so that I will avoid being an unfruitful or ineffective Christian.)

Ephesians 2:8-10 talks about how we receive the gift of salvation as well as some of the plans that God has for those who are saved. Have your student look up (use the table of contents if you are not sure where Ephesians is located) and read Ephesians 2:8-10 paying special attention to verse 10. In this passage, what seems to be God's goal in saving us according to this verse 10?

⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* ⁹ *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* ¹⁰ *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

(You might say, “I think that verse 10 is saying that God’s goal in saving us was that we would do good works.” You can ask your student, “What do you think? Does that seem right to you?”)

In Your words:

2 Peter 1 v. 8 & Ephesians 2:10 both address the same concept, that is, the idea of being a fruitful Christian. Combine the thoughts of these two verses as it regards fruitfulness and put those thoughts into your own words and share them with your student. Ask him or her if they agree, disagree, or if they would add anything to your statement based on what the Bible said in those two verses.

(You might say something like this, “I think that these two verses are saying that God’s desire for Christians is that they be fruitful and do good deeds.” You would then ask your student if they agree or disagree, and if they would add anything to your words.)

In Your walk: Both parent and student should give their perspective on the questions below.

1. What would it look like to be a fruitful Christian student? (They might say something like, “A fruitful Christian student goes to church, reads their Bible, is honest. Affirm their answers unless they are sinful ones. Be careful not to minimize what they say or you will likely shut down the conversation.)
2. What do you think hinders Christian students from trying to be fruitful Christians? (They might say, “I don’t know?” Be prepared to offer a suggestion such as peer pressure, but if you don’t know either, just say, “I don’t know either, who should we talk to who might be able to help us?” Your kids will not think less of you when you honestly answer that way. They will probably respect you more for your honesty and humility.)
3. What steps might a Christian student take so that they might become a fruitful Christian? (They might say, “Well I guess I could go to youth group on Wednesday.”)
4. What would it look like to be a fruitful adult Christian? (You might say, “A fruitful adult Christian disciplines their kids.” To which I would say amen!)
5. What do you think hinders adult Christians from trying to be fruitful? (You might say, “Being busy hinders me from discipling my kids. Actually, busyness hinders me from doing a lot of things that I know I should do.”)
6. What steps might an adult take so that they might become a more fruitful Christian? (You might say, “I should make discipling my kids a priority in my life and then talk to them to determine when would be the best time to do family discipleship.”)

Pray: Ask God to help you to grow in godliness and to help you become more and more fruitful. As you pray, specifically mention the things that you believe hinder Christian growth and productivity. Also, it is good to remember and therefore mention in our prayers that we grow in godliness for the good of others and the glory of God.

(Father in heaven, we pray that you would help us to become more mature Christians so that we might be more fruitful and do the good deeds that you want us to do. I pray for these adults that you would help them find the time to engage in family discipleship, and that they would get past the awkwardness that comes with doing something new. I pray Lord for our students, that you would stir their hearts to listen to what their parents say, to learn from them, and that they would enjoy being disciplined by their parents. Finally, Lord, I pray that through our discipleship efforts you would be glorified more and more through our families. In Jesus name we pray, amen.)

APPENDIX 5

TIPS AND TAKEAWAYS

Ephesians 6:1-4

¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—³“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” ⁴Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

⁴“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You 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. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Other passages in the Bible that discuss the role of parents in discipling their children: Psalm 78, Psalm 22:6; 2 Timothy 1 v. 5-7; 3:15.

Tips

1. Remember that the “Talk Sheet” is designed to encourage a discussion about spiritual matters. Your goal is not simply to get through the paper, but rather to have a conversation about God with your child.
2. It may feel weird at first but you will get used to it.
3. Find a time that works for you and your family and then stick with it. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 has some hints in these verses including using travel time as prime opportunities to talk about God. As a last resort, you can use text messaging as a platform for having spiritual conversations.
4. Ask your student to help you be faithful to the Lord by actively engaging in the discussion.
5. Students often appear not to be listening, but they are.
6. God has designed families to be the primary place for discipleship to take place, so be confident and trust the Lord.

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING AND EQUIPPING PARENTS OF YOUTH IN THE STUDENT MINISTRY AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, ELLINGTON, MISSOURI, TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME

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Chapter 1 argued that based on the needs of the community it was necessary to initiate a ministry project at First Baptist Church of Ellington, Missouri, to equip parents to disciple their children. This project involved a parent equipping seminar and weekly publication of “Talk Sheet” discipleship tools. Change in parental practices and perceptions of family discipleship was measured by having project participants take a before and after survey called the “Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey.”

Chapter 2 provided biblical support for equipping parents to disciple their children from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:1-4, and 2 Timothy 3:14-15. Chapter 3 gave theoretical support for equipping parents to disciple their children, citing research from the social sciences and ministry.

Chapter 4 detailed the project’s implementation. The ministry project included conducting and assessing a Home Discipleship Training and Equipping Seminar, and weekly publication of “Talk Sheet” discipleship tools which were assessed by an expert panel. Finally, a “Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Surveys” (appendix 3)

was completed by project participants before and after the project implementation.

Finally, a t-test demonstrated a positive statistical change in the before and after surveys.

The fifth chapter described the strengths and weaknesses of the project.

Suggestions were made for implementing a similar project in other congregations.

Finally, a theological reflection section stated that the project demonstrated that ministry leaders can effectively equip parents with the skills necessary to disciple their children by creating user friendly tools and training parents how to use them.

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