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EQUIPPING PARENTS AT MOUNTAIN VIEW COMMUNITY  
CHURCH IN FREDERICK, MARYLAND, TO DISCIPLE  
THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME

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

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

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by  
Adam Tressler Williams  
May 2020

**APPROVAL SHEET**

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## PREFACE

First and foremost, I am thankful to my God, who “even when I was dead in my trespasses . . . made me alive together with Christ and raised me up with Him and seated me with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-6). He has and will be faithful.

I am thankful for two churches. First, Church of the Living Christ in Loysville, Pennsylvania, where I first heard and believed the gospel, and later had the opportunity to serve as a pastor for eighteen years. Second, Mountain View Community Church in Frederick, Maryland, where I continue to be humbled and honored to serve as one of the pastors. Both churches have supported me beyond words and especially during this academic pursuit.

I am thankful for the faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who not only served as a tremendous influence on my faith and ministry, but specifically served me during my time as a student in the doctoral program. I would be remiss if I did not specifically thank Dr. Joseph Harrod, who as my faculty supervisor always made time for me as I worked through this project, and whose wisdom was tremendously beneficial. In addition, I am thankful for my professors, Dr. Jeremy Pierre, Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, Dr. Shane Parker, Dr. Michael Wilder, and Dr. John David Trentham. I am also thankful for my peers in the Family Ministry program who traveled this journey with me and who have become my ministry associates and friends for eternity.

Finally, I am thankful for my family. Mom, who passed away just prior to my starting doctoral studies, always pushed me toward education, learning, care, and love, and for that I am thankful. My dad, who first inspired my love for God’s Word. To our boys, may the words of this project not merely be academic, but may you see, feel, and know



the fruit of this project in our family. Noah, Aiden, and Gavin, you have been patient with me during this time and brought me great joy as I witnessed your love and enjoyment for the Southern Seminary campus each summer. Finally, my wife, Shree, who has been nothing but supporting and understanding; she has been my greatest encourager during this time. I love each of you.

Adam Williams

Walkersville, Maryland

May 2020

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Only one institution was created prior to the fall of man, and that is the institution of family (Gen 1:28). The family is the basic building block of society and, by God's design, is to be the primary place of discipleship for children. In the Old Testament, Moses commanded parents to teach their children to love the Lord in all aspects of their life (Deut 6:5-7). This command continues into the New Testament with Paul encouraging fathers to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). Mountain View Community Church (MVCC) has been blessed with a fruitful ministry to families and with leaders who know the value of equipping parents for the task of home discipleship. This project served the gospel-focused ministry at MVCC by providing specific training and encouragement for parents to disciple their children.

#### **Context**

Mountain View Community Church is part of the Evangelical Free Churches of America (EFCA) and is located just outside Frederick, Maryland, along a major thoroughfare into Washington, DC. MVCC has consistently had a strong children and youth ministry that attracts many families from the surrounding communities. The church values evangelism and discipleship. MVCC has experienced significant growth over the past ten years and has seen attendance grow from 300 to 1,500 during this decade. As attendance has grown, assimilation and discipleship have become more difficult. The MVCC elders understand that parents are the primary disciple makers of their children, but the demands of the ministry have made it difficult for the church to encourage and train parents in this role.

In 2012, the elders of MVCC, realizing the need for more intentional family-based discipleship, wrote a position paper that articulated seven principles of family ministry. The personal walk of the parents is a first priority. Then, parents are the spiritual leaders of their children. Specifically, fathers are the spiritual leaders of their family and church is the equipper of parents. The church is a family of families and needs to provide intergenerational ministry to families, especially families that are broken, yet the church should minister to all.<sup>1</sup> This position paper, written by the elders five years ago, provided a vision of where they wanted the family ministry in the future. For several years, the church conducted a national search for a family pastor who shared these same principles and would be able to lead the family ministry and put their vision into practice. In February 2017, I accepted the call to serve as MVCC's Pastor of Family and Care, and implementing these seven principles of family ministry is an important part of my responsibility.

Although the church leaders are committed to the seven principles of family ministry, the vision of family-based discipleship that informs the statement has not yet permeated into all the families at MVCC. Several issues complicate the equipping of parents for home discipleship, including new family growth at MVCC, difficulties finding adequate space, time to conduct such training, a consumerist mindset among some families, and the ever-growing cultural distractions in the community at large. Since MVCC is located in the Washington, DC area, many of the families that attend have become accustomed to a model of ministry in which they drop off their children at the age-appropriate ministries in order to attend church services, effectively relying upon MVCC's volunteers and staff to tend to the spiritual concerns of their children. These parents are not unconcerned with the spiritual development of their children; rather, they have become accustomed to a model of discipleship that prioritizes experts and programs

<sup>1</sup> Mountain View Community Church, "Position on Family Ministry," accessed March 29, 2017, <http://www.mvccfrederick.com>.

over the formative role of believing parents. Sadly, this situation is likely common in many evangelical churches.

Longtime pastor and children's discipleship expert Tedd Tripp argues that parenting is much more than being a caregiver, where one simply provides the food, clothes, bed, and some quality time with the child. Tripp believes that parents should view their position as shepherds who evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their children and instruct them through these areas.<sup>2</sup> Many of the parents at MVCC are first- or second-generation Christians and therefore have not had the benefit of generational teaching regarding biblical, gospel-centered parenting. The church has offered some parenting classes and seminars, but with space limitations and the blessing of continued growth, it is a never-ending task to equip and train parents for home discipleship.

This task is made more complicated by the changing popular culture, which so easily takes charge if parents allow it. In *Age of Opportunity*, Paul David Tripp describes the challenges that parents face in this culture. Culture will quickly set the pace and agenda for life, define and shape relationships, and powerfully influence spiritual life.<sup>3</sup> Although MVCC has great leadership and vision, popular culture has an important distracting influence on many families within the congregation.

Competitive sports have a huge impact and these sports often develop the mentality that true success is found in being a good athlete or receiving a scholarship for a sport, which negatively impacts the family. Academic success, which is certainly desirable, will communicate to the children that value is based on performance and not God's grace if not balanced properly in the family. Perhaps the greatest issue facing parents is the myth that they need to be busy with activities in order to have peace and contentment in life. Many of these activities are good, but the mentality of busyness is

<sup>2</sup> Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), xx-xxi.

<sup>3</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 154-58.

crippling Christian families from developing disciplines in their family in regard to prayer and devotional times with their children. As a result, MVCC parents are distracted from their primary role as the disciple makers of their children. Parents have been accustomed to allowing activities to soothe their consciences and add to the lie that as long as they are spending time with their child they are parenting well. Neither their own family upbringing nor the ministries of the church have taught them how to interact with and communicate to their children's hearts.

Therefore, as MVCC continues to grow and as families face new challenges daily in their faith, MVCC parents must be trained and encouraged to face these obstacles and to disciple their children. The church must continue to adapt to meet these challenges and be vigilant to equip parents for the evangelism and discipleship of their children.

### **Rationale**

While MVCC's leaders subscribe to seven principles of family ministry, for the purpose of this project I focus on two of those principles: parents as spiritual leaders of their children, and the church as equipper of parents. Focusing on these two foundational principles of family ministry provides a starting point for building a long-term family equipping ministry at MVCC.

This project trained parents to withstand the pressures of secular culture. Parents should be trained how to prioritize their time in order to have time for regular biblical instruction and prayer with each of their children. Parents were equipped in how to deal with the issues of their child's heart and encouraged to be confident to confront and encourage their children to live biblical lives. The youth and children ministries administer programs and activities that help the parent, not create more distractions from their greatest role as primary disciple maker of their children. This project included parents who are church members as well as parents who are non-members but whom regularly attend the church.

While the primary audience for this project was families, adopting these principles also represents a change for both families and the children's ministry staff; both staff and families were asked to be involved in this project. Children's ministry leaders learned how to communicate regularly with parents on how the ministry is supporting, equipping, and helping the family.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip parents at the Mountain View Community Church, Frederick, Maryland, to disciple their children at home.

### **Goals**

1. The first goal was to recruit parents and children's ministry staff to participate in a six-week study on family discipleship.
2. The second goal was to assess the knowledge and practices related to family discipleship among these parents and staff.
3. The third goal was to develop a curriculum to train both parents and children's ministry staff on the biblical foundations and practical methods of parents serving as disciple makers of their children.
4. The fourth goal was to increase the knowledge of parents and staff with regard to family discipleship by teaching a six-week study using this curriculum.

### **Research Methodology**

The first goal was to recruit families and children's ministry staff to participate in a six-week study on family discipleship. I recruited families to participate through church announcements, social media, email invitations, and personal invitations; the study was open to all families of MVCC. MVCC staff were asked to attend as part of their responsibilities for their ministry position. An attendance sheet measured participation. This goal was considered successful when at least ten family units, including at least two single-parent or blended-families, along with at least three children's ministry staff, participates in a minimum of five training sessions.

The second goal was to assess the knowledge and practices related to family discipleship among these parents and staff. The Family Discipleship Practices Inventory (FDPI) gathered responses from session participants.<sup>4</sup> The FDPI served as a pre-test to establish a baseline score for participants and was sent to participants prior. The pre-test was emailed to participants through a SurveyMonkey link. This goal was considered successful when at least ten family units and three children's ministry staff completed the FDPI and the inventory was analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the current discipleship practices among MVCC families. Families were encouraged to put their names on the pre-test. However, to ensure privacy, families could be anonymous when taking the pre-test. For families who were anonymous, a four-digit code was used to match with the post-test. Each family unit completed one FDPI, meaning that a husband and wife family unit submitted only one survey, as would a single-parent family.

The third goal was to develop a curriculum to train both parents and children's ministry staff on the biblical foundations and practical methods of parents serving as disciple makers of their children. The curriculum covered basic family discipleship issues, such as consistently modeling character, leading a family worship experience, creating ministry opportunities for the family, and developing a family plan for spiritual development. The curriculum also addressed specific ways in which the children and youth ministry staff could support parents in these various tasks of discipleship. An expert panel measured this goal using a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.<sup>5</sup> The expert panel was comprised of a MVCC elder/leader with a vision for family discipleship, a family ministry veteran, and a college faculty member or pastor with a doctoral degree. This goal was considered successfully met when the average score for each reviewer was at

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 2.

least 2.70 out of 4.00. If any aspect of the curriculum failed to meet this level it was edited and re-evaluated until it met the minimum benchmark.

The fourth goal was to increase the knowledge of parents and staff regarding family discipleship by teaching a six-week study using this curriculum. Parents and staff who attended at least five sessions re-took the FDPI at the conclusion of the final training session, which was a post-test used to measure change in knowledge and practice. Post-tests were matched with names or the self-selected PIN from the pre-test. This goal was considered successful when a two-tailed t-test<sup>6</sup> for dependent samples indicated a positive, significant change between the FDPI sets. The lessons were videotaped to be available for anyone who missed a week.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project to aid in the reader's understanding:

*Family discipleship.* Timothy Paul Jones defines discipleship making as “a personal and intentional process in which one or more Christians guide unbelievers or less-mature believers to embrace and apply the gospel in every part of their lives.”<sup>7</sup> Family discipleship is the process when parents intentionally engage with their children using the disciplines that build maturity in their child's faith.

*Primary disciple makers.* Parents are the ones who are primarily responsible for the spiritual formation of their children.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Neil Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, preface to *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 15.



*Family worship.* A brief but consistent time for a family to gather together for the purpose of reading the Bible, praying, and singing.<sup>9</sup>

There were two delimitations for this project. First, the project was confined to a fifteen-week timeframe. This timeframe gave adequate time to prepare and teach the six-week training sessions and conduct the post-series survey after sessions were completed. Finally, the project was limited to select members and regular attenders at Mountain View Community Church.

### **Conclusion**

Each parent must see their God-given responsibility to disciple their children and the church must equip these parents. The parents of Mountain View Community Church, being influenced by current culture, need to be equipped to be the primary disciple makers of their children. The following chapters will show the need for discipleship in the home. Chapter 2 focuses on the biblical design for discipleship in the home. Chapter 3 focuses on the historic roots of family ministry and the need for discipleship in today's culture.

<sup>9</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 44-48.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR PARENTS TO BE THE PRIMARY DISCIPLE MAKERS OF THEIR CHILDREN

Christian parents are the first and most important influences on their children and must be intentional to teach and model their faith for their children. Such a concept is hardly news, for its foundation rests upon the bedrock of Scripture, even if many parents have never heard or have not heeded this responsibility. Three passages from both Testaments reveal the mind and will of God as it pertains to parents intentionally teaching and modeling their faith to their children. The passages are addressed canonically, revealing God's intention for parents throughout the entirety of His Word.

#### **Deuteronomy 6:1-9: The Foundation of Family Discipleship**

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 commands believing parents to fear, love, and obey God and to model and teach this love to their families. This teaching is not to be a mere formality but rather for parents, out of their own love and fear of God, to teach their children the commands of God. This teaching not only established and guided the Israelites away from the polytheistic culture of their day, but also instructs Christian parents today regarding the means and method of family discipleship.

#### **Fear the Lord**

Moshe Weinfeld, in describing Deuteronomy 6:1-3, makes a correlation to the believer's obedience to God and their direct fear of God. This initial section prior to the Shema (Deut 6:4-5), communicates the need for his people to fear the Lord and to walk

in His way through obedience.<sup>1</sup> Daniel Block remarks that the initial verses in this chapter focus on what Yahweh has commanded Moses to teach the people. The goal of this teaching is not mere memorization but for God's people to have a permanent fear of God, which will inspire them for generations to fear, obey, and yield to God.<sup>2</sup> A vital question to ask is how Matthew 5:17 impacts Christians today in light of Christ's fulfillment of the Law. Block notes that it is not whether Christians should keep Moses' teaching it is how Christians keep his teaching. Christ fulfilling the law does not mean that Christians should abandon the law but rather interpret the law under the fulfillment of Christ and the new covenant. Christ's fulfillment represents the climax of the narrative God gave to Moses. Block makes the strong argument that it was ultimately Christ who spoke and worked in Moses to write Deuteronomy. It was Christ who spoke directly to Moses on Mount Sinai; thus, Jesus is the Yahweh of Deuteronomy and Moses was his prophet.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, parents under the new covenant of Christ are asked to interpret this section of Deuteronomy with Christ being the original author and fulfiller of these teachings. Parents today are still obligated to fear God (Deut 6:2) and to keep and teach the Shema to their children. Köstenberger notes that families should not only teach the Shema but should include all of God's teaching including the Law (Deut 4:1-14), and the ten commandments (Deut 5:6-21).<sup>4</sup> These teachings could be consolidated into one great commandment to love God from a heart that fears Him and is obedient. According to Moses, fearing and loving God is an expected response from His people and most often

<sup>1</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries, vol. 5 (New York: Anchor Bible, 1991), 327.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 177.

<sup>3</sup> Block, *Deuteronomy*, 38.

<sup>4</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 92.

the command to love is directly associated with His command to obey.<sup>5</sup> Parents will not be obedient in fulfilling Deuteronomy 6:4-9 if they are not faithful in following Deuteronomy 6:1-3.

### **The Shema**

Daniel Block notes that Deuteronomy 6:4-5, otherwise known as the Shema, is one of the most important symbols of Judaism. Modern orthodox Jews recite verse 4 and 5 twice daily as part of their prayers. In many ways, the Shema functioned as Israel's pledge of allegiance. By reciting this pledge, Israel acknowledged and confirmed that God was not some amorphous or unknowable god, but was Yahweh, who has called Israel into a covenant relationship with Himself. Block notes that the intended purpose of verses 4 and 5 was to deal with the polytheism of the surrounding nations, specifically the Canaanites. Moses' concern was whether God's people would remain devoted exclusively to Yahweh. To this, the Israelites were to respond emphatically and in unison: "Our God is Yahweh, Yahweh alone!"<sup>6</sup>

In this passage, Moses spoke of a three-fold internal dimension of the believer's love for God. Weinfeld emphasizes that believers should exercise love in three ways: from the heart, from the soul, and from the might. Love from the heart speaks of the engagement of the intellect and mind. It is within the heart that beliefs are formed. The soul, which literally means being, is better understood as the invisible part of a person and can be understood as someone's passions. Finally, the might, or strength, is purely physical and represents the physical body. Moses is encapsulating faith into three areas of

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary, 3rd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 98.

<sup>6</sup> Block, *Deuteronomy*, 181.

life: beliefs, passions, and physical choices. This is an exclusive devotion of the entire being, body, and thinking.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus uses the Shema in all three of the Synoptic Gospels and communicates it as the first and greatest commandment, tying it into the command not to have any other gods before Yahweh. Also, in Luke 10, when a lawyer quotes the Shema to answer a question concerning eternal life, Jesus challenges the popular belief of that time to correlate a love for God to love of neighbor, as He went on to share the story of the good Samaritan. Jesus is stating that a true love for the Lord that extends from a love of God to the love of neighbor, even if that neighbor is your enemy, will be a saving faith. Eugene Merrill shares it this way, “To love God as it commands is to place oneself within the orbit of his saving grace because the Shema, the heart and core of the Old Testament law, was designed, as Paul said, to be “put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith” (Gal 3:24).”<sup>8</sup> The Shema, according to Block, is the correct true religion of the Old Testament, not one that is built solely on animal sacrifices and repetitious religion. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is the Old Testament equal to Paul’s command in Romans 12:1-2 for believers “to be covenantally committed to Him in their inner being, with their entire bodies, and with all their resources. Paul and Moses are on the same page.”<sup>9</sup>

### **The Means of Sharing the Commandment**

The section of Deuteronomy most relevant for the training of children spiritually occurs in the larger unit of chapters 5-11. Here, Moses restates the Decalogue (5:1-21) before calling Israel to a recommitment to loving and obeying God (6:1-11:32). The

<sup>7</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 338.

<sup>8</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 1994), 165.

<sup>9</sup> Block, *Deuteronomy*, 190.

parental and community instruction of 6:1-9 emphasize covenant loyalty, demonstrated through obedience, and transmitted generationally.

God in His Sovereignty could have chosen any means or instrument to accomplish His plan for communicating His greatest commandment from one generation to another, but God chose parents as the primary means for communicating this faith to subsequent generations. This call to know and live for God's love is how the church would describe discipleship today; therefore, according to this passage, it is right to say that parents are the primary disciplers of their children. However, parents today are blessed with additional resources including the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the completed Word of God, and the partnership of the local church.

As previously noted, it is essential for parents to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and might. Parents need to be growing in their love and knowledge of God so that they can effectively teach their children to love God. Peter Craigie writes,

By reflecting on the commandments, they were reflecting on God's Words; and by understanding the path of life set down by the commandments, they would at the same time be discovering the way in which God's love for them was given expression. Having understood the commandments for themselves, the people were then responsible for their children.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Method of Sharing the Commandment**

Moses, in Deuteronomy 6, goes to great lengths to think through the process of that discipleship. Merrill notes that parents are inscribing covenant faith with indelible sharpness and precision. It paints an image of an engraver using his hammer and chisel to sculpt a monument—he is using his hands with painstaking care, with patience he etches into the granite slab, and he understands that once completed with the overwhelming task it will be permanent and beautiful.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), 170.

<sup>11</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

Block notes that Deuteronomy 6:7 implies the combination of indoctrination of children along with the spontaneous discussion of the commands of God. Parents should regularly review and repeat the Word of God to their children, this is what Block calls “indoctrination” and what Moses refers to as “teach them diligently.” Parents should seize every opportunity to instruct their children, not just the formal times, but as the family sit in their homes, walk on the road, lie down, and rise up.<sup>12</sup> Parents today must make sure that technology or the busyness of schedules do not interfere with the formal teaching of God’s Word as well as the informal, as you go, teaching of God’s Word.

Craigie notes that parents are to teach their children both inside and outside the home, from the beginning of the day to the end of the day. The process of the parents teaching the children was to saturate every area of the family’s life.<sup>13</sup> Merrill notes that Moses’ use of the double merism, which is using opposing terms to express and all-encompassing concept, emphasizes to the parent the need for the great commandment to be taught by constant repetition.<sup>14</sup> Moses uses the opposing terms of sitting and walking to communicate that together they encompass all of human activity, so while the family is active, parents can find opportunities to teach their children the love of God. Also, as Moses uses the terms lying down and rising up, he is communicating that the teaching of children encompasses all of time. Teaching children the message of God’s covenant love is so important that it should be done during any activity and during any time of the day.

In the next section, Moses speaks on writing and binding the great commandment on the hand, foreheads, doorposts, and gates. Many followers of the Jewish faith over the centuries have taken this command literally and not metaphorically, as perhaps it is intended by Moses. Jewish followers have placed frontlets on special

<sup>12</sup> Block, *Deuteronomy*, 184.

<sup>13</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

<sup>14</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 168.

occasions in the middle of their foreheads and on their hands, as well as placing a mezuzah along the doorpost of their house.<sup>15</sup> Moses does not seem to be indicating that they must literally tie this command onto their actual forehead or onto their doorposts. Even earlier Moses encourages fathers to impress onto the hearts of their children, therefore this command to impress onto the hearts is obviously metaphorical. Finally, Wright believes that each believer is commanded to personally love God in verse 5, but that love is to be expanded to the family as well as the surrounding community in verses 7-9. Wright believes that the language of binding the Word to hands and foreheads, as well as writing them on the doorposts and gates of the house, speaks of three levels that this commandment is applied. First, to love God fully in their personal life and worship (writing on hands and forehead). Second, writing them on doorposts encourages the family to love God solely. The final level is writing it on the gates, which speaks of the believer's role to influence the greater world and society with the love of God. These three levels of loving God—the individual, family, and in public—show the development of the believer's love for God and desire to live for Him.<sup>16</sup> Fathers specifically, but also both parents, hold the responsibility to teach diligently their children to effectively see this spiritual progression in the lives of their children.

### **Psalm 78:1-8: The Faith Passed on to Future Generations**

As Deuteronomy built upon the foundation of family and provided instruction to parents for the discipleship of their children, Psalm 78 provides vision to God's desire and plan for the faith to pass from generation to generation. Charles Spurgeon comments,

The first lesson for a child should be concerning his mother's God. Teach him what you will, if he learn not the fear of the Lord he will perish for lack of knowledge. Around the fire-side fathers should repeat not only the Bible records, but the deeds of the martyrs and reformers, and moreover the dealings of the Lord with

<sup>15</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 171.

<sup>16</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 100.



themselves both in providence and grace. Children should be taught cheerfully by word of mouth by their own mothers and fathers, as well as by the printed pages of what they too often regard as dull, dry task books.<sup>17</sup>

### **A Didactic Psalm**

Dahood calls Psalm 78 a didactic Psalm that teaches lessons from Israel's history and in the first eight verses emphasizes the handing down of history of God's dealing with His people.<sup>18</sup> Also, VanGemeran refers to Psalm 78 as a didactic Psalm and shows specifically how Ephraimites lost their special status of blessing and prominence in favor of Judah.<sup>19</sup>

In his study on Psalm 78, Broyles believes that the goal of Psalm 78 is to teach on two levels: for the individual to make a personal decision of following the Lord and for the corporate body of Israel to listen and follow the Lord.<sup>20</sup> As the current generation is directed to make a personal commitment to the Lord, they are encouraged to not repeat the mistakes of their forbearers. Broyles notes that memory is the critical factor, with the hope that this current generation will remember the teaching of their fathers (v. 3) and not necessarily their actions (v. 8), which will result in an attitude of trust in God and in the behavior of keeping his commands. In his commentary on this Psalm, Tate connects Psalm 78 with Deuteronomy 6 and the command directed toward Fathers to teach their children diligently the statutes and ordinances that God had commanded. God's instruction is to be the subject of discourse among God's people.<sup>21</sup> This teaching,

<sup>17</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, Alister McGrath, and J. I. Packer, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1993), 329.

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II, 51-100*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Anchor Bible, 1968), 238.

<sup>19</sup> Willem A. VanGemeran, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 505.

<sup>20</sup> Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, New International Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 319.

<sup>21</sup> Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 289.

although it may have been written down, was mostly transmitted and taught by way of oral teaching from father to son through the many generations. The story the fathers are to tell must surround the divine works of redemption and judgement so that they shall never forget what the Lord had done for their people.<sup>22</sup>

### **Instruction and Warning to Fathers**

Kidner provides a strong warning for parents in his commentary when he says that Psalm 78, and Scripture overall, has no room for parental neutrality.<sup>23</sup> Verses 7 and 8, according to Kidner, provide the positive and negative signs of a generation that has accepted the teaching of their fathers. The three positive signs as written in the ESV are “so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.” Kidner says the three aspects of faith are a personal trust in the Lord, an informed and humble thinking, and an obedient will.

As fathers teach their children, Tate also notes that fathers should focus on these three aspects of faith. First, a personal trust in the Lord. While this was a corporate teaching encouraging all fathers to teach their children to set their hope in God, the application of this teaching happens in a household setting. Fathers should exhibit a personal trust in the Lord with the understanding that their faithfulness may produce the right environment whereby their children may also have a personal trust in God and live faithful lives. This is in contrast to the first part of verse 8 where they are encouraged not to be like the generation of their fathers. Obviously, fathers are able to point at their own hypocrisy or the hypocrisy of their generation in order to cast a vision of hope and personal trust for the current generation not to follow in their footsteps. The teachings of

<sup>22</sup> Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *Psalms 51-150*, vol. 2, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 182.

<sup>23</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, Kidner Classic Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 312.

the father must include personal illustrations and challenges to provide encouragement for their sons to develop and live by this hope and faith.

Second, fathers must teach their children to have an informed and humble thinking. This teaching must both instruct this generation on the works of God and remind them of what will happen when God is minimized or ignored. This would include both systematic teaching of the works of God and the practical teaching of how to live a life set apart that glorifies the Lord. Fathers must be proactive, and not reactive, when teaching their children. Children should receive instruction from their fathers as they grow in maturity and understanding. This teaching is to continue throughout childhood, beginning as small children, and continuing until the child is independent. Even after independence is achieved, children may continue to seek their father's wisdom and teaching. This Psalm speaks of fathers neglecting their responsibility to teach their children and warns fathers of the consequences of such neglect. Today, fathers still have this primary responsibility to teach their children about faith and would do well not to neglect and delegate this teaching to the mother or pastor. Fathers must partner with their wives and the local church for the teaching and instruction of their children.

Finally, fathers must not only teach their children, but must encourage their children to be obedient to this teaching and to the commands of God. Children will eventually ask what the meaning of this instruction is, as Moses said in Deuteronomy 6:20. Because understanding the meaning and necessity of the teaching is important, fathers must teach the commandments, practices, and traditions in the bigger picture of God's active love and pursuit of His people.<sup>24</sup> Teaching with the big picture in mind provides his children with the hope and motivation to keep the commandments of God.

Psalm 78:8 provides the contrast of those who do not follow the teachings and traditions passed down by their father. Kidner says this rebellious generation "depict[s]

<sup>24</sup> Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 208.

the rebel against the covenant in his true colours, not a hero but a renegade: perverse, infirm of purpose and unfit for trust.”<sup>25</sup> Briggs calls verse 8 a warning, the hope is that the current and next generation would not be like the previous generations and would live faithful lives that honor God. This warning is a reference to Deuteronomy 21:18-21, where if a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him. The parents can take him to the elders of the city and can have him stoned for his disobedience.<sup>26</sup> In the New Testament, God has provided additional means of grace for parents of stubborn and rebellious children. First, God has provided additional biblical instruction in the New Testament to parents of rebellious children, and second, God has provided the church with instructions for effectively executing church discipline. While God has not changed his hatred of sin, He has provided parents today with better options than stoning to deal with rebellious and stubborn children.

### **Ephesians 5:21-6:4: How Each Member of the Family Participates in Family Discipleship**

Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus addresses the family, and specifically speaks to each role within the family, laying out the expectations of each of those roles. Paul’s words paint a picture of a family that seeks mutual submission to one another all while elevating Christ and desiring Him to be glorified in each member of the family. The goal of this passage is sanctification and how God uses different members of the family in the process of sanctification to aid others in their spiritual maturity.

#### **Mutual Humility**

In his commentary on Ephesians, Hoehner notes that the result of Ephesians 5:21 is mutual humility, which can only be done consciously and continuously under the

<sup>25</sup> Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 312.

<sup>26</sup> Briggs and Briggs, *Psalms 51-150*, 182.

power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 5:15-21 is written to the church and encourages individual believers to mutually submit to one another. Paul provides specific roles where submission is required, but he encourages all to exercise humility by mutually submitting to one another. The reason for this submission is out of the reverence or fear of Christ. Such reverence or fear conveys more than just respect. One could have respect, but not choose to go as far to submit to anybody, let alone Christ. However, Hoehner believes it is doubtful that it is a fear that comprises terror but is otherwise a reverential fear or reverential respect.<sup>28</sup>

While verse 21 and the preceding verses are undoubtedly addressed to the church and not family relationships, it does not negate that mutual humility should happen within the believing family as much as it happens within the church. William Hendriksen notes, “Affection for one another, humility, and a willingness to cooperate with other members of the body are the graces that are implied here.”<sup>29</sup> Each member of a believing family should be submitting out of reverence for Christ to one another; they should be willing to recognize the rights, needs, and wishes of others within the family. Burke provides another perspective concerning verse 21, he notes that the Greek word for submit always indicates authority and submission, but that not all “one another” passages in the New Testament imply a reciprocal action between the two parties. Burke writes, “The context makes it clear that Paul uses “one another” in the non-reciprocal sense, for the very next verse specifies who is to submit to whom.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 779.

<sup>28</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 779.

<sup>29</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 243.

<sup>30</sup> Denny Burke, “Does Ephesians 5 teach mutual submission?” August 21, 2019, <https://chmw.org/2019/08/21/does-ephesians-521-teach-mutual-submission/>.

## **Submission in Marriage**

In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul teaches wives to submit to their husbands while also exhorting husbands to love their wives. Wood states that in Greco-Roman society it was accepted that wives had obligations toward their husbands, but that it was not vice versa.<sup>31</sup> In Paul introducing this concept of a Christ-like love showed to the wife, he levels the ground on which the husband and wife are standing and encourages mutual humility, all while independently performing different and complimentary roles within the marriage. As the love that Christ had for the church was for the church's good, the love that husbands demonstrate toward their wives is for the wife's ultimate good.<sup>32</sup> As leaders of their family, husbands should first lead their wives and demonstrate the same love that Christ showed to the church, a sacrificial and humbling love that resulted in a stronger relationship with God. Therefore, husbands are to think deeply about their wives and love them in such a way that promotes a deeper relationship with both God and the husbands. A husband would find it difficult to apply effectively the next section on raising children while neglecting this command to love his wife.

## **Parenting and Children**

Uprichard remarks that obedience in submission and parenting is as a result of the filling of the Holy Spirit (5:18). Paul shows that gospel transformation happens within family relationships. Part of the obedient Christian life that is filled with the Spirit is one who is willing to submit themselves to one another and honors God in parenting as well.<sup>33</sup>

This section on parenting mirrors to a large part Paul's message about parenting in Colossians 3:20-21 where Paul wrote, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for

<sup>31</sup> A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, 10th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 82.

<sup>32</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 781.

<sup>33</sup> Harry Uprichard, *A Study Commentary on Ephesians* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2004), 324.

this pleases the Lord. Fathers do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Much of the words in these mirror passages are similar except for “lest they become discouraged.” F. F. Bruce, while not ignoring Colossians, believes that the Ephesian injunction is a stronger course of action where parents are encouraged to bring their children up in the training and instruction of the Lord as opposed to discouragement. This training involves following Christ’s example as well as putting into practice His precepts.<sup>34</sup>

In Ephesians 4:1, children are encouraged to obey their parents in the Lord. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones gives two reasons: First is the unique opportunity that Christian parents and their children have to be witnesses to the world in this present time by just being different—by Christian families showing other families the true and desired relationship between parents and their children, one that is focused on discipline, law, and order. Second, Jones notes that this example is not only for non-Christians but for Christians as well because the devil often comes in at the most inopportune time to sidetrack families. Parents were being neglected and Jones goes back to Matthew 15, when the Pharisees were portraying that they were God-honoring by choosing God over honoring parents, but in reality, they were neither honoring God nor their parents.<sup>35</sup>

The children referred to by Paul are still in the home. They would be old enough to understand the instructions from their parents and discern whether they should obey or do their own thing. They are still being taught, receiving instruction and correction from their father, but have not yet gotten married. In 5:31, Paul quotes Genesis 2:24: “A man shall leave his father and mother,” which points to the loyalty change of children as they transition into marriage. Children, after marriage, while still honoring their parents are not required to obey their parents. This would likely place the age range

<sup>34</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 398.

<sup>35</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit: In Marriage, Home, and Work—An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 238-40.

of the children from early elementary age to the late teen years or early twenties. Paul does specifically address them in this passage, which implies that children were present during the public reading of these letters, during the corporate gathering of the church to worship, read the Word, and receive teaching.<sup>36</sup>

Lincoln notes that obedience is the desired intent of 6:1. Paul also dealt with children's obedience elsewhere in his writings. In Romans 1:30, disobedience to parents is a sign of Gentile depravity, or a sign of the evil of the last days (2 Tim 3:2). In the Ephesians 6 passage, obedience is owed to the parents. In comparing Colossians 3:20 with Ephesians 6:1, Colossians asks for obedience in everything without qualifications, while Ephesians calls for an obedience "in the Lord." Obedience is sought not out of obligation but a love and dedication to the Lord.<sup>37</sup> Hoehner notes that there are two possible ways to understand the phrase "in the Lord." First, the injunction to obey parents applies only to children whose parents are "in the Lord," that is, they are believing parents. Second, and most likely, the prepositional phrase is qualifying the verb, thus emphasizing that the children's ultimate obedience is to the Lord.<sup>38</sup>

Lloyd-Jones notices the inclusiveness of Paul's command to contain both the mother and the father.<sup>39</sup> Lincoln agrees with Lloyd-Jones.<sup>40</sup> While the inclusion of mothers in verse 1 may have been counter to the Greco Roman culture, Lincoln notes that Paul's focus on fathers in verse 4 is likely due to the Ephesians conformity to their culture's way of thinking. Bruce notes that in verse 2 children are to honor both their

<sup>36</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 415.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 396.

<sup>38</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 786.

<sup>39</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 251.

<sup>40</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 396.



father and mother. These commandments given in Ephesians are rooted in the fifth commandment from the Decalogue. The commands are found in Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16.

Arnold remarks that honor is one of the key words in this verse. Honor was deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition. Honoring would be an injunction for both the young and the old. For the young, honoring is tied to their need to obey their parents. For older children no longer in the household, it would entail showing respect and taking care of parents in their old age.<sup>41</sup>

Hendriksen highlights that to honor one's father and mother means much more than to just obey. One can simply choose to obey by checking off all the requirements given to them by their parents or being impeccable regarding doing what they were told, but yet not honor; obeying carries the thought of merely outward accomplishment. To honor someone, one must both involve the outward obedience as well as an inward honoring. A child obeying simply out of terror or fear or out of selfish desires should not be considered honoring their parents. Hendriksen says, "Honor implies to love, to regard highly, to show the spirit of respect and consideration."<sup>42</sup> Honor, as obedience, was to be shown to both the parents equally, which shows that the child is to view the parents having equal authority in his life. As children grow, transition into adults, and become independent, the adult children should choose to maintain honor while obedience may not be required. Hoehner explains that throughout Scripture are commands to continue to honor parents long past adulthood has been reached (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16; Matt 15:4, 19:19; Mark 7:10, 10:19; Luke 18:20). While young children are commanded to honor

<sup>41</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 416.

<sup>42</sup> Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 259.

their parents by obedience to them, the present imperative reinforces the idea that children are to honor their parents continually.<sup>43</sup>

Paul writes that this is the first commandment with a promise. Hendriksen gives several proposed solutions to the meaning of Paul's words. The first proposal is that Paul means the first commandment of the second table of the law. Hendriksen notes that many scholars object to this view because the commandments were not always divided up in the same way and many of the Jewish scholars regard the commandment to honor father and mother as belonging to the first set of commandments. A second option is that the first commandment spoken to the heart of a child, which was specifically directed toward the child. The objection to that is the text reads "with a promise," and not "for a child." A third proposal is that the "promise" is a general promise to all who love God and keep his commandments. Hendriksen objects to this third proposal by saying that this commandment to honor their parents was not the first commandment. Fourth, it was the most important commandment of the entire Decalogue. It is the first in rank, not in order. While Hendriksen objects to this view, he believes it is closest to the correct view which is actually tied into Leviticus 19:1-3, which reads, "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God."<sup>44</sup>

In verse 3, Paul gives two promises: that it may go well, and that the child may live long in the land. The initial reading can cause some confusion since, how does God explain for the death of children, or even young adults, who have been faithful in obeying and honoring their parents. Because of this confusion, Arnold notes that many would be quick to over spiritualize the promises and to see them as applying only to one's eternal

<sup>43</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 788.

<sup>44</sup> Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 259.

life with God in heaven and not on earth. However, the command would not have added the phrase “in the land,” if Moses did not intend for it to have some promise to be experienced here during this lifetime. This promise is to be understood in the general sense because exceptions will happen; this promise generally means that children who obey and honor their parents will lead to well-being and long life on earth.<sup>45</sup> Hoehner is even more specific when he says that “it refers to stability and discipline necessary to function well within the family and society. Therefore, generally, obedience and honor foster self-discipline, which in turn bring stability, longevity, and well-being; disobedience and dishonor promote a lack of discipline, which in turn bring instability, a shortened life, and a lack of well-being.”<sup>46</sup>

Ephesians 6:4 also carries some of the strongest language in this section written to parents. The verse begins with the word “fathers” and should contrast with the previous verses where Paul used “parents,” to show that both the mother and father were both to be obeyed and honored and were to have the same designation of authority attributed to them. Hoehner notes that Paul, in this passage, is most likely speaking directly at the fathers of that culture. If both mothers and fathers were the focus of verse 4, then Paul most likely would have said “parents” as he did earlier. Paul is probably reflecting the cultural understanding of that time, where both the Jewish and Roman societies saw the fathers as the ones responsible for the education and discipline of their children.<sup>47</sup>

Hoehner notes that in Roman, Greek, and Jewish culture, families were led by the fathers. Fathers had control over their children. Fathers were able to discipline in most any means necessary which would include beating, degrading, imprisoning, shaming, selling into slavery, and in extreme cases could execute. The father had more power over

<sup>45</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

<sup>46</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 793.

<sup>47</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

his children than a master had over his slaves. Paul, in saying these words, provides a nuance way for the church to view the role of fathers. He does not mention the father's absolute right over the children, but rather exhorts the father to refrain from provoking his children to anger. In Colossians 3:21, Paul says "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." Even though Paul does not include "lest they become discouraged" in Ephesians, it is certainly understood. Hoehner writes, "Logically, the irritation caused by nagging and demeaning fathers in the context of everyday life may in turn cause children to become angry. This anger grows, no doubt, out of the frustration of never being able to please fathers who constantly nag or demean them."<sup>48</sup> Paul is introducing the gospel into the culture and specifically how fathers respond and interact with their children. In a culture where the stronger had no obligation to the weaker, Paul is challenging the fathers, the stronger, to have obligations not to provoke the weaker. Wood explains, "The gospel introduced a fresh element into parental responsibility by insisting that the feeling of the child must be taken into consideration. In a society where the father's authority was absolute, this represented a revolutionary concept."<sup>49</sup>

Paul now changes the emphasis from the negative to the positive and encourages fathers to raise their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Paul uses the same word here to refer to the tender and nourishing care that believing husbands have for their wives, and how they provide for their wives (5:29).<sup>50</sup> There seems to be some differences in how scholars have understood the words of discipline and instruction. Hoehner views the words of Paul in verse 4b as more or less identical and all but redundant. *Discipline* is education emphasizing activity and discipline while *instruction* is education emphasizing the verbal aspect, whether it be encouragement or

<sup>48</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 796.

<sup>49</sup> Wood, *Ephesians*, 81.

<sup>50</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

reproof.<sup>51</sup> Hendriksen notes that the *discipline* refers to chastening, that at first may not be seen as pleasant but will be appreciated afterwards and will produce excellent fruit. *Instruction* is primarily meaning training by the spoken word, whether that be by teaching, warning, or encouragement.<sup>52</sup> This discipline is also similar to the type of instruction found in the book of Proverbs, where the primary focus is on training and teaching of children.”

### **Conclusion**

God has spoken throughout history on the value of parents and their need to disciple their children. God set forth a glorious design where His Name will be glorified and taught throughout the generations and where children will not just be a tag along but will be highlighted and equipped as the next ones to make God’s name great among the nations.

In Deuteronomy 6, God commanded Moses to encourage Fathers to teach the greatest commandment of loving God with their entire being, and that this teaching should be done primarily in the family. Fathers are encouraged to first internally accept (these words I command you today shall be on your heart), and then externally teach them to their children in a diligent manor. The method of this teaching is for fathers to teach their children, all while continuing in the daily pace of life. Father should teach their children while they “sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” This teaching should incorporate the many dimensions of parents as well, which include their thoughts, actions, home and work lives. Parents, and specifically Fathers as mentioned in Deuteronomy 6, have the responsibility to be the primary faith teachers of their children.

<sup>51</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 797.

<sup>52</sup> Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 262.

The next generation is the concern for Asaph as he wrote Psalm 78. God has a vast history of how He has worked in the lives of His people. This story needs to be shared with the next generation. There is a glorious story being told from generation to generation—the story of redemption and the love and faithfulness of God shown to His people. This story needs told to the next generation and it is the responsibility of father not to “hide them from their children.” In verse 7, Asaph shares the purpose of this generational teaching: “So that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep his commandments.”

The final passage studied was Paul’s encouragement to families to fulfill the responsibilities God had given to each role within the family, in order for family discipleship to happen, and so His name may be glorified in the family. First, each member of the household is to live in subjection to one another, a radical thought from the first century. Paul does speak on roles, encouraging women to submit themselves to the leadership of their husbands, while the husbands show humility, love, and self-sacrifice to their wives in the way that Christ showed love and sacrifice for his church. Paul encourages children to honor and obey their parents, and gives a command to fathers, especially, to instruct and discipline their children. Parents, not the church, or any other organization, are given the primary roles of instructing and disciplining their children.

God is actively working in order that His name will continue to be great among the nations. His primary tool to see that children learn and follow God are parents. Parents are the primary disciple makers in their children’s life. Many examples are seen throughout Scripture, with Moses, Asaph, and Paul being examples of God commanding parents to teach with the purpose of passing the faith of God to the next generation.

## CHAPTER 3

### PARENTAL DISCIPLESHIP IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

Parental involvement and leadership in discipleship, though frequently pressured and imperfect, is essential to the spiritual development of children who are believers. Contemporary parents may lack historical grounding in the practice of family discipleship, yet church history provides such models, especially in British and American Puritanism and early evangelicalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Every generation of Christian parents has faced pressures to ignore discipling their children, and twenty-first-century American culture presents its own unique challenges to this task. Yet, many evangelical churches are recognizing the valuable place of equipping parents to disciple their children within the church and supporting them along the way.

#### **Puritan and Early Evangelical Models for Family Discipleship**

It is a common misnomer to perceive that the Puritans did not enjoy the goodness and delights of the material world. This view is inaccurate. Puritans, on the whole, were concerned that the desires of the material world might lead them away from the rightful worship of God and the needed focus on the church, marriage, and family. Like the Reformers, the Puritans exalted marriage amongst a culture that celebrated celibacy.<sup>1</sup> The Puritans applied the teaching of the Reformers by elevating the role of family discipleship within the home, by which they viewed the family as a little church. According

<sup>1</sup> J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (repr., Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2010), 260.

to many Puritans, the family must be the chief preserver of the interest of religion in the world.<sup>2</sup>

### **Early Puritanism**

William Perkins (1558–1602), a Puritan theologian and fellow at Christ’s College, Cambridge, who was known for his preaching, lectures, and writings as a vigorous anti-Catholic theologian and a supporter of Puritan principles.<sup>3</sup> In his book on the Christian home, *Christian Oeconomie*, Perkins writes on all-things family: children, family discipleship, and marriage. Many refer to Perkins as the father to English Puritanism.<sup>4</sup> Perkins sought to influence the puritan home. He elevates the role of parents as primary disciplers of their children and specifically calls fathers to the role of pastor and priest in the home and calls the family a little church.<sup>5</sup> Families, according to Perkins, are to meet together for prayer and Bible reading several times a day. First in the morning before they begin the work of their calling, as well as in the evening, so each person can reflect on God’s goodness and blessings over the day.<sup>6</sup> Perkins believed that parents had two primary duties toward their children: that they may live and that they may live well.<sup>7</sup> The first duty dealt with the needs of the child: milk, food, financial savings, and a work ethic; while the second dealt with the spiritual state of the child: baptism, sowing seeds of

<sup>2</sup> Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 270.

<sup>3</sup> F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford University Press, 2009), s.v. “Perkins, William.”

<sup>4</sup> J. Stephen Yuille, “Conversing with God’s Word: Scripture Meditation in the Piety of George Swinnoek,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 48.

<sup>5</sup> William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 2nd ed. (London: Felix Kyngston, 1609), 8. Original spellings from primary sources have been maintained throughout this chapter.

<sup>6</sup> Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 134.



godliness, and instruction in learning and religion.<sup>8</sup> Perkins set a trajectory that later Puritans followed, aligning church and home. His call for fathers to lead and instruct their families as pastors of this home church resonated among subsequent authors. Above all else, Perkins wished for children to live well in a home that provided both nourishment of food and nourishment of the Word.

William Gouge (1575–1653), was a Hebrew scholar, pastor of St. Anne Blackfriars, London, and author *Of Domestic Duties*, an important work on the Christian family. In this exhaustive description of the Christian Family, Gouge wrote eight treatises on the family particularly focusing on the duties of each member of the family. Gouge’s work on the family is thorough and exhaustive. Drawing on Ephesians 5:22-6:9 to provide guidance and wisdom to all in the family, including servants and masters, Gouge, in painstaking detail, challenges parents to love their children through providing for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs: “For great is that paine, paines, and care, which parents must vndergoe for their children.”<sup>9</sup> About prayer, Gouge says, “There is no one thing wherein and whereby parents may doe more good for their children, then in and by true praier.”<sup>10</sup> Gouge charged his congregation and readers to take seriously the role of parenting and to make family discipleship a priority. Believing that parents should extend great effort and personal sacrifice, he challenged them to fulfill their God-given tasks to disciple their children. His practical exposition of Ephesians 5:22-6:9 gives parents counsel in family discipleship.

George Swinnock (1627–1673), graduated with a B.A. from Cambridge University, and a M.A. from Oxford University. Swinnock was a nonconformist and left the Church of England in 1662, when parliament passed the Act of Uniformity. He served

<sup>8</sup> Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 141.

<sup>9</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domestic Duties*, 2nd ed. (London: Iohn Haviland for William Bladen, 1622), 498-99.

<sup>10</sup> Gouge, *Of Domestic Duties*, 501.

the rest of his life as a family chaplain and a pastor.<sup>11</sup> Not as well-known as some of his counterparts, Swinnock offers an in-depth look at family and how the gospel impacts every aspect of daily life in *The Christian Man's Calling*. Swinnock offers a helpful description of the family: "A family is the epitome of a kingdom and a common-wealth in a little volume. The way to make godly Parishes, and godly Countries, and godly Kingdoms, is to make godly Families."<sup>12</sup> Swinnock describes godliness as the goal of a Christian, and at the heart of godliness is worship.<sup>13</sup> The Christian's entire life should strive to be religious, and religion and worship being the primary focus in this life. The religious life of the children and the family should be the primary concern of parents. Among early puritan writers, these works offer overlapping reflection on the primary role parents play in guiding the faith of their children. The similarities and subject matter indicate that this theme was common among the Puritans. Swinnock, who was not as well-known as his predecessors, provided richly to family discipleship through his writings.

### **Later Puritans**

Hercules Collins (1647–1702) was an influential pastor among seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists. Collins was a contributor to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith and was an ardent supporter of believer's baptism over infant baptism. Collins, valuing family instruction, wrote a book of hymns and poems called *The Marrow of Gospel-History*.<sup>14</sup> Many of the hymns and poems were originally written to be sung by his Wapping congregation around the Lord's Table, yet Collins saw another use for them—in family instruction and discipleship—and compiled them in this book, which he

<sup>11</sup> Yuille, "Conversing with God's Word," 36.

<sup>12</sup> George Swinnock, *The Christian Man's Calling* (London: R. W. for Dorman Newman, 1668), 379.

<sup>13</sup> Swinnock, *The Christian Man's Calling*, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Hercules Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History* (London, 1696).

subtitled, “A Diversion for Youth at their Spare Hours.” This work, just over one hundred pages, was a tool to teach children theology and the stories of the Bible. It showed the movement of redemption throughout the Scriptures and how Collins saw all of Scripture pointing to Christ.<sup>15</sup> One poem from this work, teaching children about the birth of Christ and the shepherds’ visit, reads,

The Angels great, much Speed do make  
To Shepherds keeping sheep,  
And fay, Fear not, a Savior great  
Is born, O do not weep.  
Rejoice, be glad, come joy in God,  
In David’s city Strong  
This day is born, for Man folorn,  
A Savior God and Man.

The Heavenly host do join their force,  
And give Encomilums high,  
To God above, who in much love,  
Hath sent his Son to die,  
Glory to God, the Highest Good,  
Who sends Peace on Earth.  
Man hath that Bliss, the Devil miss,  
An object for his Faith.<sup>16</sup>

This work served a catechistic purpose in providing parents a resource to teach theology to their children. Collins’ value to family discipleship comes primarily from his work within the Baptist churches in England. His writing and contribution to the London Baptist Confession provided a focus on fathers as pastors in their home.

Matthew Henry (1662–1714) began to study law before deciding to devote himself to theology. Henry became a prominent Presbyterian minister in Chester, England.<sup>17</sup> Henry was influenced greatly by his father, Philip, who was ejected by the Church of England in 1662, during the Act of Uniformity. Henry spoke of his father

<sup>15</sup> Garry Stephen Weaver, Jr., *Hercules Collins: Orthodox, Puritan, Baptist* (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Reprecht, 2015), 116.

<sup>16</sup> Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Cross and Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. “Henry, Matthew.”

saying, “He led a life of Evangelical Perfection, most worthy to be honourably preserved, in the memory of future times.”<sup>18</sup> Henry was greatly influenced by his father’s example and instruction, most notably was how Philip would lead the family in morning and evening times of family worship. Young Matthew Henry, witnessing his father’s spiritual leadership, devoted much time to the discipleship of his own family and encouraged his congregations to do the same. Matthew Henry, who is well known for his commentary on the Bible, also wrote a book on family discipleship called *A Church in the House*, named from the reference in 1 Corinthians 16:19, where Aquila and Pricilla have a meeting of Christians in their house. In both his commentary and this book, Henry holds to the view that Paul is referring to the family of Aquila and Pricilla and the family worship happening within their house.<sup>19</sup> Although this view, even acknowledged by Henry, may be secondary to the predominant view that Aquila and Pricilla’s gathering consisted of many different families meeting at their house for public worship, Henry strongly encourages families to practice family religion:

Masters of families, who preside in the other affairs of the house, must go before their households in the things of God. They must be as Prophets, Priests, and Kings in their own families, and as such they must keep up family-doctrine, family-worship, and family-discipline. Then is there a church in the house, and this is the family-religion that I am persuading you to.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the greatest impact that Matthew Henry had on family worship is the challenge for fathers to take seriously the task of family religion. In *A Church in the House*, Henry summarizes this challenge to fathers:

I beseech you sirs, make a business of your family religion, and not a by-business. Let it be your pleasure and delight, and not a task and drudgery. Contrive your affairs so that the most convenient time may be allotted both morning and evening for your family worship, so that you may not be unfit for it or disturbed and straitened in it;

<sup>18</sup> Matthew Henry, *An Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Philip Henry*, 2nd ed. (London: n.p., 1698), 6.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1780), 11.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew Henry, *A Church in the House* (Peterborough, Ontario: H & E Publishing, 2018), 11.

herein wisdom is profitable to direct. Address yourselves to it with reverence and seriousness, and a solemn pause; that those who join with you may see and say that God is truly with you, and may be stuck thereby into a like holy awe. You need not be long in the service, but you ought to be lively in it; not slothful in this business, because it is the business for God and your souls, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.<sup>21</sup>

### **Early Evangelical**

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), considered by many as the greatest American theologian, was a puritan pastor in a New England Congregationalist church. Known for his preaching and leadership during the Great Awakening, he was also a great proponent for child instruction and family discipleship. Edwards, along with all puritans, grew up in a time when the child mortality rate was high, and parents knew not if their children would grow into adulthood. Children were made aware of their own precariousness and were led in prayers by parents and the church that spoke of this uncertainty of life. Often in preaching and education, the Puritan culture emphasized the fragility of life, especially young lives.<sup>22</sup> Edwards, who experienced the death of children, taught his children at an early age by saying, “Nothing is more certain than death. Take no delay in the great work of preparing for death.”<sup>23</sup> Edwards’ biographer George Marsden says that while most of the care of the children fell on Edward’s wife, Sarah, he was concerned with discipline and most concerned with the spiritual care of his children’s souls. In discipline, he showed the greatest calmness while being firm and not striking a blow. He brought their wills to submit to his discipline in all reverence, esteem, and love.<sup>24</sup> Care for his children’s souls was his preeminent concern. Each morning he would quiz them with questions appropriate to their age, on Saturday evenings, he would teach them the Westminster Shorter

<sup>21</sup> Henry, *A Church in the House*, 55

<sup>22</sup> George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, new ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 27.

<sup>23</sup> Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 251.

Catechism, making sure that they understood the doctrinal teaching and memorized the questions. He did not shy away from teaching about hell fire and eternal damnation, for he feared that sentimental tenderness that protected children from knowing the true dangers of a life lived apart from Christ would lead to an undesirable judgement day for the parents.<sup>25</sup> Edwards continued the Puritan belief of the family as a little church: “The household represented a parallel outworking of the life of the local congregation, with the father functioning as pastor within this model of the church in miniature.”<sup>26</sup> In a sermon titled “Don’t Lead Others to Sin,” Jonathan Edwards challenges parents to take their responsibility of parenting seriously:

Let everyone who has children, or others whom they have brought up, examine how it is in their families. What impressions have been made upon your children by your influence, by what they have seen in you or heard from you? Haven’t you set such an example? Hasn’t your way of communicating been such in their sight, your way of ordering and regulating yourself and your family been such that your children’s minds have naturally been depraved?<sup>27</sup>

Edwards also encouraged youth to gather in peer groups, whereby they could be taught and challenged together.

Another evangelical advocate for family worship was John Wesley (1703–1791), a contemporary of Edwards, and an influential evangelist and leader of the Methodist Movement.<sup>28</sup> Lorinda Roberts, in her thesis on John Wesley, believes his notes of the Old and New Testament provided a model of reading the Bible that would help parents in the practice of family worship: “It is an applicable model through its simplicity and rootedness in the Word. Christian parents can use Wesley’s method on the formative reading of Scripture as a viable resource for training their children spiritually and leading

<sup>25</sup> Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 321.

<sup>26</sup> C. Jeffrey Robinson, Sr., “The Home Is an Earthly Kingdom,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 126.

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *To the Rising Generation* (Orlando: Soli Deo Gloria, 2005), 128.

<sup>28</sup> Cross and Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. “Wesley, John.”

as primary disciple-makers.”<sup>29</sup> However, Wesley had his critics concerning family religion. First, Wesley had a failed marriage to Molly Vazeille, who was a widow with four children. Many issues contributed to the failed marriage: lack of communication, itinerant schedule, and jealousy to name a few. Also, although Molly had children from another marriage, Wesley had no biological children. Wesley’s failed marriage and lack of biological children brought him criticism when he would teach on family religion. Although he did not personally apply his parenting principles, he believed he was following in the path of the apostle Paul, who instructed parents besides having no children.<sup>30</sup>

Philip Doddridge (1702–1751) was the twentieth child of his parents, and a contemporary of Edwards. Doddridge was offered a position within the Anglican church if he would only conform. He did not accept and instead became a minister in the dissenting Church of England. He was a well-known author and pastor.<sup>31</sup> He wrote the *Family Expositor* as a commentary for families to use during their family worship time. Doddridge writes, “The title I have given to this work sufficiently explains its original design, which was chiefly to promote family religion”<sup>32</sup> In chapter 2, Ephesians 5:21-6:4 was a primary text evaluating the biblical need for family discipleship, Doddridge directs children in the family directly in his section on chapter 6:

Having spoken of the relative duties of husbands and wives, I now proceed to mention other relations arising from them, and particularly that between parents and children. And here I would exhort you that are children, that with becoming duty and respect ye obey your parents, attending to the instructions of your father, and not forsaking the law of your mother (Proverbs 1:8), out of regard to the subjection that you owe them in the Lord, and in compliance with the authority of Christ for this is right and

<sup>29</sup> Lorinda Lewis Roberts, “John Wesley’s Formative Reading of Scripture as an Applicable Model for Family Discipleship” (DEdMin thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 2.

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, “John Wesley’s Formative Reading,” 75-78.

<sup>31</sup> Cross and Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. “Doddridge, Philip.”

<sup>32</sup> Philip Doddridge, *Family Expositor* (London: J. G. Barnard, 1811), vii.

reasonable in itself, as a just debt to those who are the instruments of your being, and to whose care and kindness you are so much obligated, and will be also beneficial in its consequences, as it is certain that parents in general are more capable of directing their children than they are of governing themselves.<sup>33</sup>

Doddridge's commentary for family religion is comprehensive and of academic standards that would challenge the strongest of Christian families today, and his emphasis on Scripture as the primary tool for parents in the discipleship of their children stands the test of time. This work will remain Doddridge's greatest contribution to family worship and family discipleship.

Samuel Davies (1723–1761) served both as a Presbyterian minister in Hanover, Virginia, and the president of the College of New Jersey (1759–1761).<sup>34</sup> Although nothing exists as to how Davies disciplined his own children, his sermons and writings spoke of the necessity of regular times of family worship. He may have first witnessed family worship on a trip to Great Britain where he observed families reviewing a sermon, Scripture, and singing and praying together.<sup>35</sup> Harrod said that, according to Davies, “Regular family devotion was the only reliable help that families could utilize to keep the gospel ever before their precious children and dependable servants; thus Davies pleaded, ‘I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of our lives.’”<sup>36</sup> Perhaps nothing is stronger than Davies sermon entitled “The Necessity and Excellence of Family Religion,” where he uses 1 Timothy 5:8 to judge fathers who neglect regular family worship times. Timothy, in this passage, calls out those who do not provide for his own, especially those in his own home, and doubts their faith by calling them infidels. Davies makes the argument that neglecting to provide

<sup>33</sup> Doddridge, *Family Expositor*, 5:171.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Charles Harrod, “‘The Divine Life in the Soul Considered’: Theology and Spirituality in the Works of Samuel Davies” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 60-62.

<sup>35</sup> Harrod, “‘The Divine Life in the Soul Considered,’” 199.

<sup>36</sup> Harrod, “‘The Divine Life in the Soul Considered,’” 201.



spiritual instruction through family worship is comparable to neglecting nutritional provision to children: “If family religion tends to the greatest advantage of our families, then it is our duty; and to neglect it is wickedly to rob ourselves and ours of the greatest advantage.”<sup>37</sup> Davies encouraged families during his time, and for many years through his sermons and books, to gather regularly for family worship, and strongly encouraged families to gather twice during the day, preferably morning and evening, as per the example of the Israelites sacrificing daily and the many Psalms that encourage this practice as well.<sup>38</sup>

### **Cultural Considerations**

The pressures reviewed in this section emphasize the need and importance for parents to be the primary disciplers of their children. Parents must emphasize family religion, while also encouraging their children in cultural expectations, such as pursuing educational and athletic achievements. The educational and athletic pursuit of children is important, and offers many positive qualities; however, religion is often not a priority due to the influence and time of these other focuses. Martha Peace and Stuart Scott in their book, *The Faithful Parent*, write, “The teen years are typically filled with activities. There are school and sports and parties and movies and video games, and part-time jobs for some. It often seems that every minute of every day is taken up with something other than the Lord.”<sup>39</sup> After reviewing the Puritan family, and their emphasis on family worship and religion, one would assume that these Puritans would offer strong warning to today’s parents not to neglect family religion. In *Almost Christian*, Kenda Creasy Dean explains, “Religion doesn’t claim teenagers’ time or attention, compared to other social institutions,

<sup>37</sup> Samuel Davies, *Sermon on Important Subjects* (New York: Robert Carter, 1845), 2:51.

<sup>38</sup> Harrod, “The Divine Life in the Soul Considered,” 203.

<sup>39</sup> Martha Peace, *The Faithful Parent: A Biblical Guide to Raising a Family* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 106.

activities and organizations.”<sup>40</sup> Many teenagers view their involvement in religion as optional, it is simply an add-on, something that can fill an empty slot in the midst of important priorities, such as school, sports, peers, and media. These pressures shape the worldview of children today as opposed to biblical teaching and community taught by the family and church.<sup>41</sup> The misplacement and prioritization of athletic and academic pursuits over family and church religious worship is akin to idol worship. In *Time Out*, John Perritt challenges parents to realize the potential of youth sports to become a god for the family, not worshiped in a sanctuary, but worshiped on Sundays spent traveling to sports games instead of church, shown in the money spent in these traveling sport teams, and exhibited in the focus diverted away from a focus on God and church.<sup>42</sup>

The modern family’s schedule has consistently gotten busier in contemporary culture, and as their schedule tightened, less and less time has been devoted to the role of family discipleship. Adolescence also becomes a time of independence. Walt Mueller, in *The Space Between*, writes, “Adolescence is a time when teenagers begin to disengage from the family while building extensive and meaningful relationships with their peers. This shift in social orientation from parents to peers is normal.”<sup>43</sup> Parents who feel this disengagement will tend to neglect the spiritual discipleship of their children over the pursuit of cultural and society ideas. Christian Smith, who was the lead researcher in the ground breaking National Study of Youth and Religion said in his book *Souls in Transition*, “Oddly, this withdrawal of parental influence on adolescents seems most

<sup>40</sup> Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 205.

<sup>41</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 205.

<sup>42</sup> John Perritt, *Time Out! The Gift or God of Youth Sports*, rev. ed. (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2018), 35.

<sup>43</sup> Walt Mueller, *The Space Between: A Parent’s Guide to Teenage Development* (Grand Rapid: Zondervan, 2009), 48.

especially evident when it comes to religious commitment and practices.”<sup>44</sup> Smith expounds on this parental disengagement further: “In the name of individual autonomy—informed here by a cultural myth that is socially erroneous—the usually most crucial players in teenagers’ lives disengage from them precisely when they most need conversation partners to help sort through these weighty matters.”<sup>45</sup> This religious disengagement from parents has led to a shift in general worldview for American teenagers and families away from orthodox Christianity. This longitudinal study exposes a belief system of the typical American Teenager. Smith called this belief system Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD). Smith summarizes their belief in these five points:

The creed of this religion, as codified from what emerged from our interviews, sounds something like this: 1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth. 2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions. 3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. 4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem. 5. Good people go to heaven when they die.<sup>46</sup>

Kendra Creasy Dean, who was a part of the research team for the National Study of Youth and Religion, summarizes the role of parents in *Almost Christian*: “Research is nearly unanimous on this point: parents matter most in shaping the religious lives of their children.”<sup>47</sup> Parents may not determine their children’s spiritual beliefs; however, they are the most important influence in the religious formation of their children. Dean continues, “Proximity matters. Teenagers’ ability to imitate Christ depends, to a daunting degree, on whether we (parents) do.”<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 284.

<sup>45</sup> Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 283.

<sup>46</sup> Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 162-63.

<sup>47</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 112.

<sup>48</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 112.

## Educational Pressures

Parents prioritize time with their children in the areas where the parents wish for their children to succeed. While prioritizing academics is important, one will see that Christian parents miss this balance in three ways. First, parents neglect family religion and discipleship because their focus on academics trumps any other influence in their child's life. Tedd Tripp in his book *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, explains,

In my years as a school administrator, I have met scores of parents whose goal for their children was a good education. These parents are driven. They will work with Suzie for hours each night. They coach and prod, they encourage and warn, they will stop at nothing to have their child succeed. Their goal is seeing their child achieve academic awards and scholarly recognition. They are persuaded that education brings success. Unfortunately, scores of disillusioned and broken people are thoroughly educated. It is possible to be well-educated and still not understand life.<sup>49</sup>

Second, parents make their children's academic success their idol. Academic pursuit, which is a worthy endeavor, can often become an idol. Tim Keller expounds on this point in *Counterfeit Gods*: "The greater the good, the more likely we are to expect that it can satisfy our deepest needs and hopes. Anything can serve as a counterfeit god, especially the very best things in life."<sup>50</sup> Third, parents need to teach their children to assimilate their faith into all aspects of their life. The gospel translates and encompasses all areas of life, and parents must encourage balance and evaluate the pressure they place on their children in academics. Tim Kimmel says, "A good education is obviously important to your children's future, but it will not play the deciding factor when it comes to their having a great mission in life."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), 44.

<sup>50</sup> Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters*, 6th ed. (New York: Viking, 2009), xvii.

<sup>51</sup> Tim Kimmel, *Raising Kids for True Greatness: Redefine Success for You and Your Child* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 161.

## Athletic Pressures

During the great awakening in the eighteenth century, George Whitefield, considered America's first celebrity, would attract crowds of incredible numbers.<sup>52</sup> Ben Franklin said of George Whitefield, "I computed that he might well be heard by more than thirty thousand. This reconciled me to the newspaper accounts of his having preached to twenty-five thousand people in the fields."<sup>53</sup> What a contrast to today's secular environment where God's Word and the preaching of God's Word does not command such crowds. Rather, crowds of that size are most often seen within the sports realm. In 2017, consumers spent fifty-six billion attending sporting events.<sup>54</sup> Sports have dominated Americans' time and money for many years, and like education, athletics can provide great encouragement, enjoyment, exercise, and fun, all while being a deadly potential idol that will distract families away from family religion: evangelism and discipleship. Andreas Köstenberger in *God, Marriage, and Family* warns parents when they do not effectively prepare their teenagers and establish them in the faith: "To send our young people into the world without adequate spiritual preparation will most likely yield disastrous results. The spiritual warfare they face is real, and casualties are high; only the soldier who is prepared will be victorious in the battle."<sup>55</sup>

Sports are not inherently sinful or wicked, but must be acknowledged within one's stewardship, which recognizes that talents and gifts, even the natural ones, are from the Lord and can be used for His Glory. However, sports become an idol when this good

<sup>52</sup> Steven J. Lawson, *The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield* (Orlando: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2014), 2.

<sup>53</sup> Lawson, *The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield*, 17.

<sup>54</sup> Sarah O'Brien, "Americans Spend \$56 Billion on Sporting Events," September 11, 2017, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/11/americans-spend-56-billion-on-sporting-events.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 153.

thing becomes the ultimate thing from the standpoint of worshipping sports over God.<sup>56</sup> Families do not decide over night to make sports an idol; rather, it is a slow fade. Many times, it happens when parents make their children's success in sports the ultimate purpose for their involvement. Timothy Jones, in his family ministry book *The Family Ministry Field Guide*, notes that for many families, family time is trumped by sport schedules. A third of the parents studied were willing at any level to do whatever it takes for their children to succeed in sports.<sup>57</sup> Later in his book Jones asks what a Christian parent gains if the child is rewarded a sports scholarship only to be neglected in discipleship.<sup>58</sup> Kevin DeYoung challenges families to make sure that their focus of Sundays are not their teens sports, or Sunday afternoon football, but rather worship and rest: "We spend so much in soul shriveling activities and God says, 'Here is a day for your soul to breath and to grow and to be nourished.'"<sup>59</sup> Finally, Jones encourages parents to have an eternal mindset when navigating the balance of sports and discipleship: "If children were a gift for this life only, maybe it would make sense to raise them with calendars that are full but souls that are empty, captives of the deadly delusion that their value depends on what they accomplish here and now."<sup>60</sup>

## **Ecclesiological Considerations**

### **The Models of Family Ministry**

During the past century, ministry to families has evolved and churches have developed different models with variant degrees of family involvement into church life.

<sup>56</sup> Perritt, *Time Out!*, 36.

<sup>57</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011), 101.

<sup>58</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 103.

<sup>59</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 132.

<sup>60</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 102.

Four main models have gained popularity in the recent years: segmented-programmatic, family-based, family-integrated, and family-equipping models.

**Segmented-programmatic model.** In many ways, this is the traditional view of youth ministry.<sup>61</sup> This role does not emphasize parents as having the primary role of discipleship with their children. While children in this model may be trained, taught, and ministered to, it fails to realize the disproportionate amount of time that children are at home and not at church. In its failure to not see the parent's role as primary disciple-makers of their children, the church pours its time into the discipleship of children and teens, and neglects to regularly equip and invest in parents. Youth ministries under this model are often disconnected from other aspects of the church and this disconnection does not infuse the children with a love and appreciation for other areas of the church. This disconnection often results in children who at best are ignorant and often do not appreciate the ministry of the larger church, repeatedly leading to lack of engagement as they transition into adulthood.

**Family-based model.** To the observer, the family-based model would look similar to the segmented-programmatic model with one major difference, as Brandon Shields explains, “We are not suggesting a radical change in programming. What we are suggesting is a fresh mindset: Parents and family are crucial to faith development in every area of a ministry's program.”<sup>62</sup> Mark Devries says that this move is more of a ministry philosophical change and not a radical change in programming—it is repurposing the event to include family. Devries refers to this as “exfamining,” which he

<sup>61</sup> Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, preface to Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 20.

<sup>62</sup> Brandon Shields, “Family-Based Ministry: Separated Contexts, Shared Focus,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B &H, 2009), 98.

says is “taking current activities and turning them into family events.”<sup>63</sup> As well as including families, this model seeks to encourage intergenerational relationship into the ministry. Jay Strother offers three potential problems with the family-based model. First, it is not a churchwide focus but instead a focus that is isolated to the children or youth ministries and led specifically to children and youth pastors/directors. Families are interconnected into all ministries of the church, which are, but not limited to, children, youth, college, women’s, men’s, discipleship, care, outreach, and missions. Ministries outside of children and youth, although they minister to parents, do not consider a vision for equipping these parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children. Second, family ministry in the family-based model often becomes a shotgun approach, providing many events to encourage the family, but neglecting a churchwide, strategic, and intentional ministry.<sup>64</sup> Finally, family-based models, as Jay Strother suggests, “have a tendency to hold on to the idea that ministry events are what have the greatest significant impact on teenagers’ lives.”<sup>65</sup> Teenagers’ discipleship becomes codependent on the emotional moments of events rather than day-to-day discipleship from parents and serving alongside their family in ministry contexts.<sup>66</sup>

**Family-integrated model.** This model, championed by Vodie Baucham, Jr., is rather different from the other models represented in this section. Paul Renfro explains that this model “rejects the church’s implementation of modern individualism by fragmenting the family through age-graded, peer-oriented, and special-interest classes,

<sup>63</sup> Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 179-80. See also Shields “Family-Based Ministry,” 99.

<sup>64</sup> Jay Strother, “Response by Jay Strother,” 131.

<sup>65</sup> Strother, “Response by Jay Strother,” 131.

<sup>66</sup> Strother, “Response by Jay Strother,” 132.



thus preventing rather than promoting family unity.”<sup>67</sup> Because there is not children or youth ministry, including the nursery, the entire congregation is included in the worship service.<sup>68</sup> Allowing children to witness and engage in the worship service has many benefits, including the child’s ability to soak up and internalize worship, prayer, and doctrinal teaching.<sup>69</sup> This model heavily depends on the equipping of fathers as leaders, as well as family worship to maintain consistent discipleship among the generations.

**Family-equipping model.** The final model of family ministry was articulated by Timothy Paul Jones in *Family Ministry Field Guide* when he defined family-equipping ministry as “the process of intentionally and persistently coordinating a ministry’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives.”<sup>70</sup> Family-equipping ministry agrees with family-integrated and family-based ministry models in their desire for parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their children. However, it does not abandon age-organized activities for youth and children, realizing the need for peer influence, and additional adult, non-parental influences. This model restructures the congregation to not only partner with parents at every level of ministry, but also to disciple them. The levels include children, youth, college, women’s, men’s, discipleship, care, outreach and missions, and most importantly, the pulpit. The goal of this intentional restructuring is to acknowledge, equip, and hold parents accountable as the primary disciple-makers of their

<sup>67</sup> Vision Forum Ministries, “A Biblical Confession for Uniting Church and Family,” cited in Paul Renfro, “Family-Integrated Ministry: Family-Driven Faith,” in Jones, *Perspectives in Family Ministry*, 55.

<sup>68</sup> Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 195.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Renfro, “Family-Integrated Ministry: Family-Driven Faith,” in Jones, *Perspectives in Family Ministry*, 57.

<sup>70</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 33.

children.<sup>71</sup> In *Practical Family Ministry*, Timothy Paul Jones and John David Trentham develop a M.A.S.T.E.R. plan for equipping parents to disciple their children. This acronym provides a simple process that might be used in a church to equip parents. It directs churches to Model what you expect parents to do, Articulate expected changes with key leaders, Schedule key checkpoints, Train every teacher to be a parent equipper, Empathize with parents who are struggling, and Recruit families to share testimonies.<sup>72</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Intentional equipping of parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children was the intention of the puritans and early evangelical leaders in America. It also has been shown to be the best model in light of cultural considerations, such as academic and athletic pressures. The family-equipping model maintains biblical accuracy all while providing the best means for creating a churchwide intentional strategy for equipping parents. Jones refers to a study conducted where 81 percent of parents said that no church leader had ever spoken to them about a discipleship plan for their children. Also, 77 percent of church-involved parents mentioned their desire to know how better to help their children grow spiritually.<sup>73</sup> It is not that parents have resigned their role, it is that the church has neglected to be faithful in equipping parents. The church needs to acknowledge Scripture, history, and the cultural pressures of families, quit lowering expectations, and begin equipping parents to disciple their children.

<sup>71</sup> Jay Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry: Church and Home as CoChampions," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 144.

<sup>72</sup> Timothy Paul Jones and John David Trentham, *Practical Family Ministry: A Collection of Ideas for Your Church* (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 75-76.

<sup>73</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 108.

## CHAPTER 4

### MINISTRY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter describes the implementation of the ministry project from beginning to the end. The ministry project focused on equipping parents at Mountain View Community Church (MVCC) in Frederick, Maryland, to disciple their children at home. This chapter focuses on the goals of the project, including the formation and preparation for the class, the development of the class curriculum and the use of an expert panel, the survey used to assess the knowledge and practices of the participants, and implementation and teaching of the curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

#### **History of the Ministry Project**

This project was first considered early in my doctoral program while I was still an associate pastor at Church of the Living Christ in Loysville, Pennsylvania. It was two years into my doctoral program when I decided to leave Church of the Living Christ after eighteen years and serve at MVCC. Mountain View Community Church is part of the Evangelical Free Churches of America (EFCA). While serving at the Church of the Living Christ I first developed the basic structure for this project. Upon arriving at MVCC and consulting with church leaders, the structure was deemed appropriate for MVCC.

<sup>1</sup> In preparation for writing this chapter, I read several doctoral projects. One of those projects was Nathaniel Justin Magloughlin, “Equipping Members of the Trinity Baptist Church in Amarillo, Texas, for Personal Evangelism” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018). I appreciated his work and patterned much of this chapter after his.

## **Formation of the Ministry Project**

When this project was originally planned at Church of the Living Christ, it was to be taught as part of a regular Sunday School teaching schedule that focused each spring on a parenting class. Upon my arrival at MVCC, the church was in transition in its strategy for adult education. Over the previous two years, the church leadership had designed Mountain View University, an adult education time for two hours on Tuesday evenings at the church. Mountain View University has sessions in the spring and fall that run for ten weeks. I desired a shorter period for my doctoral project and began constructing a six-week curriculum for the project; the final four weeks of the session did not focus on family discipleship and were not included into the project. The pre-survey was distributed one week prior to the first class, which still allowed changes to the curriculum based upon the surveys. The post-survey was distributed immediately after the sixth and final ministry project class. The class for promotional purposes was called “Intentional Parenting: The Art of Family Discipleship.”

The first goal of this project was to recruit parents and children’s ministry staff to participate in a six-week study on family discipleship. The recruitment for and promotion of the class was done on multiple levels within the church. The class was first promoted in the church email news and through the weekend announcements as part of Mountain View University. The online components consisted of an informational webpage for Mountain View University and a weekly email newsletter, both of which described the classes being offered during Mountain View University. Two classes were included in Mountain View University for the fall 2019: “Bible Study Methods” and “Intentional Parenting: The Art of Family Discipleship.” While being promoted online and in the weekend announcements, the Executive Pastor also promoted the two classes during a sermon he preached at the end of August. The majority of church promotion took place from mid-August through mid-September 2019. The class was also promoted through an email that was drafted using the databases for the youth and children’s ministries, plus parents who attended a Fall 2018 parenting seminar held at the church by

the Center for Parent and Youth Understanding. The online, church, and email promotions all led parents to a jot-form where they registered for the class. The church provided childcare for those participating in the class for a small donation.

The children's ministry staff was encouraged to participate in the class in conjunction with their ministry duties at MVCC. The children ministry staff were not able to fully participate in the survey since a majority of the staff had adult children and the remaining staff had no children. When this project was first developed, two workers had school-aged children, but those staff members had left their positions by the start of the project. One staff member with children in the youth ministry participated in the project. The rest of the staff attended and participated in the class.

### **Development of the Curriculum**

The third goal of the project was to develop a curriculum to train both parents and children's ministry staff on the biblical foundations and practical methods of parents serving as disciple makers of their children. The curriculum was developed during summer 2019. First, the outline of the curriculum was developed and shared with project supervisor. He provided recommendations to the curriculum prior to any further development of the curriculum. The curriculum was written and finished by September 1.

Class 1, titled "What Is Family Discipleship?" introduced the parents to the concept of family discipleship. The primary goal of this class was to explain the purpose of family discipleship and introduce the concept that parents are the primary disciplers for their children.

Class 2, titled "What Does the Bible Say about Family Discipleship?" helped parents to know what Scripture says about family discipleship. This class focused on four passages: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 78:1-8, several passages from the Proverbs, and Ephesians 6:1-4.

Class 3, titled "What Is My Role?" was designed to equip parents as the primary disciplers of their children. The guiding principle of this class was reviewing the

passages from the previous week and establishing a conviction for the role of the parents as the primary disciplers in the lives of their children. The class also evaluated the role of the church and the need to partner with the church in the discipleship of children.

Class 4, titled “Practical Development of your Family’s Discipleship, Develop Your Vision” guided parents in helping to develop a biblical vision for family discipleship. This class encouraged and taught parents how to write a vision statement for their family, which included areas such as spiritual, physical, character, relationships and service, and educational. This class also encouraged parents to examine the rhythm of their family to best establish family discipleship practices.

Class 5, titled “Practical Development of Your Family’s Discipleship, Make Your Plans” practically equipped parents with developing manageable family discipleship goals for their family. This class consisted of allowing parents to review many of the resources available for family discipleship. During this class, representatives from both the children’s and youth ministries presented how parents could utilize their resources and associated parent guides to cultivate conversations surrounding the lessons being taught to their children.

Class 6, titled “Practical Development of Your Family’s Discipleship, Fulfill the Mission” emphasized the necessity for parents to keep their focus on the bigger picture of family discipleship and the greater purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission. The overarching principle of this class was to realize that family discipleship is not just for one’s family but is for the benefit of other families and for those who have not yet heard the gospel.

An expert panel was developed, and this panel used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, scope, methodology, and practicality of each of the lessons. I wanted a variety of people to be represented on the expert panel, including someone with a PhD, both male and female experts, someone with knowledge of MVCC, and a professor for youth and family ministries.

The first person on the expert panel was a local senior pastor of an EFCA church. He attended Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, receiving an M.A. in theology. He received an M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, before returning to England for a PhD in New Testament from Cambridge University. He was an adjunct professor in New Testament for the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Washington, DC, Extension Program. He currently serves as a Senior Fellow with the C. S. Lewis Institute and on a number of boards of the EFCA and other Christian organizations, including The Gospel Coalition. He is a respected father of four sons and could often be seen coaching his sons on the football field.

The second person on the expert panel was a founding elder for MVCC with a vision and heart toward family discipleship. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of South Carolina. He has been faithfully involved in the life and ministry of MVCC with a special interest in children and youth ministries. He is a well-respected parent at MVCC, the father of two sons and three daughters.

The third person on the expert panel is a female who serves as an assistant professor of youth and family ministry at Lee University. She holds her DEdMin in family ministry from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. She is great mother of two sons.

The second and third people on the expert panel gave the curriculum high and sufficient marks while the first person on my expert panel scored it only a 2.625 out of 4. He provided a helpful evaluation and assisted me in improving the curriculum. After completing his evaluation, he and I met for a long lunch, which was pivotal in improving several areas of my curriculum. Through his evaluation, I increased my definition of the family, included Proverbs in lesson 2, and improved the methodology of the curriculum. Upon making changes, he evaluated the curriculum again and the second rubric evaluation had high and sufficient marks. The score for his second rubric was 3.5 out of 4. In his evaluation of the curriculum, the first person on my expert panel questioned the simplicity

of the curriculum, suggesting that the material was not deep enough. While his concern was valid, as I reviewed the pre-study survey and specifically the demographic questions, I concluded that many of the families in the class were new to our church and had little knowledge and needed basic teaching on family discipleship. Tables 1 and 2 display this lack of knowledge and frequency of family engagement with family worship or devotionals.

Table 1. Pre-study participant response concerning prioritizing of family discipleship

Survey Question (14 responses)		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Q13	Our family prioritizes consistent family devotional or worship times in its schedule.	2	4	0	3	4	1
Q14	I would like to have regular family devotionals 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.	1	2	1	5	5	0

Though many of the families who participated stated that they prioritized family devotional or worship times, when asked the frequency question concerning family worship times, it painted a much different picture.

Table 2. Pre-study participant response concerning frequency of family discipleship

Survey Question (14 responses)		0 times	1x	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7x+
Q27	How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship times in our home?	10	0	0	2	1	1

As a result of the feedback from expert 1, I expanded my description of the family and the definition of the family in lesson 1. He felt that it was important for the purpose of the family to be expanded to include not just family discipleship, but also to emphasize that family was ultimately designed to glorify God, to provide for procreation, and to reveal God’s character and love for mankind. Many of the terms that reflect the character of God and his relationship with mankind originate within the family



relationship. Terms such as *father, children, son, daughter, adoption, and bridegroom* express deep aspects of God’s commitment and love for those who are redeemed.

Table 3. Pre-study participant response concerning interaction with church leadership

Survey Question (14 responses)		0 times	1x	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7x+
Q32	How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child’s spiritual development?	7	3	4	0	0	0

Based on question 32, I wanted a truly discussion-oriented class. It was my desire that each participant would sense the church’s support and engagement with them personally as parents and that discussion would facilitate an ongoing conversation between the parents and the leadership concerning the discipleship of their children. Each class began with participants having an opportunity to share how they have begun to implement aspects of family discipleship into their family routine. This quickly became a highlight of the weekly class, and most parents shared at least one time during the class with many of the participants sharing each week.

### **Class Formation**

Roughly 1,500 people would consider MVCC their church home. Considering that Mountain View University was a new concept and required parents to come to the church for a second time during the week, my desire was to have twenty to thirty parents participate in the class. Also, childcare was essential for the class since most of these families have young children, and there would not be any children’s class or ministry for these children. Childcare was coordinated and organized to care for around 25 children. I allowed for anyone to sign up for the class, and I did not have to recruit anyone to sign up for the class. The class was held in the worship center. The chairs on one end of the worship center were disassembled, and tables and chairs were set up along with a black

curtain to section off the area from the rest of the worship center. The room was intended to accommodate 25 to 40 participants.

In addition to the families who signed up online and participated fully in the study, several families initially signed up online for the class, but their attendance was too sporadic to be included in the study. Of the families who participated fully, 3 of them were parents of teenagers and 11 were parents of preschool-age and elementary-age children. Two of the families with elementary children were single parents; one was a single mother and the second a single father. The single father's fiancée also attended the class with him. One grandparent took the class with a desire to minister to his grandchildren. While he participated fully in the class, he was not able to participate in the study due to the frequency questions on the survey.

### **Pre-Class Survey**

The participants agreed to participate in a pre- and post-survey for this class. The survey was first developed during my project methodology class in the summer of 2015, but was primarily taken from Timothy Paul Jones' survey in his book *Family Ministry Field Guide*.<sup>2</sup> After I made revisions to fit MVCC, I took the survey to our church's youth pastor, who has been employed by the church for nearly twenty years and has a firm grasp on the theological and scriptural understanding of the families of the church. The survey was also given to the children's ministry directors, who also have longevity at the church and a good understanding of the families with younger children. Both the youth pastor and the children's ministry directors provided suggestions that helped shape the survey to best fit the families at MVCC. The survey was also submitted to and approved by the Ethics Committee at Southern Seminary prior to conducting the

<sup>2</sup> Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011), 215-18.

survey and implementing the project. I received notification that the project was approved by the Ethics Committee by email on July 16, 2019.

The responses from statements 16 and 26 indicate that parents desired to have these conversations, but did not necessarily prioritize the initiation of these conversations at the same intensity as their desire (see tables 4-5). As a result, I initially planned to emphasize Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and then review and discuss those verses throughout the class. It was my desire to challenge the parents to initiate opportunities to discuss biblical or spiritual matters on a regular basis in day-to-day activities. The pre-study showed that parents desired to personally have these conversations rather than church leaders having them. Parents only needed to prioritize this time in their daily schedule.

Table 4. Pre-study participant response concerning the desire to have spiritual conversations with their children

Survey Question (14 responses)		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Q16	When my child/teen spontaneously asks a question about God or the Bible, I really wish that my child would have asked a pastor or other church leader instead of me.	4	8	2	0	0	0

Table 5. Pre-study participant response concerning frequency of discussion over spiritual matters with their children

Survey Question (14 responses)		0 times	1x	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7x+
Q26	How many times in the past month have I discussed biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	1	0	5	3	4	1

### Implementing the Class

Mountain View University was scheduled to begin on Tuesday, September 17, 2019, and to finish on Tuesday, November 19, 2019. Although the length of Mountain View University is ten classes, the doctoral project classes only ran for the first six weeks, running from September 17 through October 22. The pre-study survey was given prior to September 17 and the post-study survey was given immediately after October 22. The

final four classes of the schedule discussed parenting issues requested by the parents. From the onset of the class, I decided to record visually each class and to put the class on a closed YouTube page, created for this class. The videos were only accessed by a link and available to anyone who missed a class so that they could review and learn the material that was presented. On each Wednesday, the video was uploaded to YouTube and the link was shared in an email along with class notes.

After the class roster was finalized, a welcome email was sent out. This email thanked them for signing up and expressed the desired intent for the class was to equip them as the primary disciplers of their children. The email provided details for childcare and for snacks, along with details of how to take the survey on SurveyMonkey. A signup sheet went around during the first class for parents to sign up for snacks for the rest of the classes. This provided a relaxed atmosphere for the class.

The class met from 6:30-8:30 p.m. each Tuesday. It was encouraged for all the teachers of Mountain View University to divide each evening into two sessions with a break in between. However, the first week I asked the parents if it would be alright to start at 6:30 p.m. and run until 8:00 p.m. without a break. The class would finish close to 8:00 p.m., which would be easier for families with younger children. Round tables were used to enhance and encourage group interaction at each table. Most participants in the class did not arrive until right at 6:30 p.m. or shortly after because of dropping children off for childcare. Participants were encouraged to grab some food and drink and then to find a seat. Once everyone got their children in childcare, got some food and drink, and found their seat, it was about 6:40 p.m. when we got started with the class.

Week 1 of the class was titled “What Is Family Discipleship?” The class began with my personal testimony; I shared how I began to take responsibility for the discipleship of my children. Next, participants introduced themselves and briefly described their families. The topics for the first class dealt with origins of the family, the purpose of the family, and defining family discipleship. I introduced the overall path of

family discipleship that was created for the class. The path toward family discipleship encouraged participants to first know their role then develop their vision, followed by making their plan and fulfilling their mission. First, I encouraged parents to know their role by evaluating Scripture's teaching of the role of the parent. then to own their responsibility in family discipleship. In the section on developing vision, I challenged parents to draft up a vision based on their convictions and to use their vision to formulate goals for family discipleship. Next, parents were encouraged to take their goals and make plans for how to accomplish their vision. Finally, parents were to realize that they are a small part of the bigger work of God in the world and that ultimately their work in family discipleship was striving to fulfill the mission of the Great Commission.

During each session, parents were provided with an article or blog post that dealt with family discipleship. In the first session, I provided parents with a blog post by Tim Challies called "Why Satan Is No Friend of the Family."<sup>3</sup> Also during the class I sought to use videos to highlight family discipleship and to further equip parents for the discipleship of their children. The first week included a video by the Village Church called "Family Discipleship."<sup>4</sup> Finally, each class finished with homework for the parents. During the first class, parents were asked to review the notes from the class, begin to pray for God's direction for their family, and write out what they were currently doing that spiritually impacts their children. Finally, they were encouraged to read Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, and Ephesians 5 and 6 in preparation for the next week.

Session 2 focused on what the Bible says about family discipleship. Participants were introduced to Christian Smith's teaching on Moralistic Therapeutic

<sup>3</sup> Tim Challies, "Why Satan Is No Friend of the Family," August 12, 2019, <https://www.challies.com/articles/why-satan-is-no-friend-of-the-family/>.

<sup>4</sup> The Village Church, "Family Discipleship," September 17, 2019, <https://www.tvresources.net/resource-library/stories/family-discipleship>.

Deism,<sup>5</sup> and the class discussed this creed, which according to Smith's research, resonates with many American teenagers. The class then focused on the four passages of Scripture that best explore the role of parents in family discipleship. Those passages were Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, sections from Proverbs, and Ephesians 5 and 6. The heart of the child was also a focus, explaining to parents the need to not only focus on externals and behavior, but to primarily focus on the heart and the root of behavior. Two articles were given to the participants: Tim Challies article called "7 Things a Good Dad Says,"<sup>6</sup> and "6 Ways to Teach Your Kids the Bible" by Jon Nielson and the Gospel Coalition.<sup>7</sup> Two videos were shown during the class as well, one from David Platt on teaching children,<sup>8</sup> and one from Ligon Duncan on catechism.<sup>9</sup>

Session 3 taught parents about their role as the primary disciplers of their children. This class reviewed the previous passages and participants gleaned from those passages the role for parents in the lives of their children. This class also reviewed the models for family ministry and explained the premise behind a family-equipping model, which has been adopted by MVCC. The handout for this class was the Family Ministry position paper from MVCC, and we watched a video by Donald Whitney on family worship.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162-63.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Challies, "7 Things a Good Dad Says, March 31, 2014, [https://www.challies.com/christian-living/7-things-a-good-dad-says/?fbclid=IwAR1E4fX-Ah2ZDLPcgTKA29UV06oYH1pAdX4\\_c-o5m1Z\\_aXE4bZX0TicyAKA](https://www.challies.com/christian-living/7-things-a-good-dad-says/?fbclid=IwAR1E4fX-Ah2ZDLPcgTKA29UV06oYH1pAdX4_c-o5m1Z_aXE4bZX0TicyAKA).

<sup>7</sup> Jon Nielson, "6 Ways to Teach Your Kids the Bible," The Gospel Coalition, July 26, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/6-ways-to-teach-your-kids-the-bible/>.

<sup>8</sup> David Platt, "Parents, This Is What Your Children Need Most," accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1440613172713903>.

<sup>9</sup> Ligon Duncan, "Catechize Your Children," accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2169602019827603>.

<sup>10</sup> Don Whitney, "How Do Your Do Family Worship," accessed October 1, 2019], <https://equip.sbts.edu/video/how-do-you-do-family-worship/>.

Session 4 began to lay out practical steps for family discipleship beginning with developing a vision for the family. Participants were encouraged to develop a vision for their children in five key areas in their lives: spiritual, physical, character, relational, and academic. Participants reviewed the first three steps in the practical development of their family's discipleship. These first steps were to own the family discipleship in their family, write their vision and specific goals for their family's discipleship, and examine their family rhythm for ideal family discipleship moments. Participants read an article by Shelly Wildman titled "Where Are We Going? Leading Your Family with a Gospel-Centered Vision."<sup>11</sup>

Session 5 covered resources for family discipleship and dealt with making a practical plan for family discipleship. Participants were encouraged to keep a journal of resources they have used for their family. The class focused on how to teach children using some of the resources provided for parents today. Parents were encouraged to research resources and teach their children on doctrine, Christian living, and service, in addition to what is taught in children and youth ministry. A member of the youth and children's ministry staff came to the class to explain and help parents know how best to reinforce at home what is being taught in church. Many resources were brought to the class and parents were encouraged at the end of the class to review the catechisms, books, and curriculum. Because of the time of the class and its proximity to Christmas, we watched a video on teaching children on Advent as encouragement for parents to take advantage of the opportunity to teach their children about Christ over Christmas.<sup>12</sup>

Session 6 dealt with the final four practical steps of family discipleship. Participants were advised that they would need to adjust their plans based on the age of

<sup>11</sup> Shelly Wildman, "Where Are We Going? Leading Your Family with a Gospel-Centered Vision," July 30, 2018, <https://www.risenmotherhood.com/blog/where-are-we-going-leading-your-family-with-a-gospel-centered-vision>.

<sup>12</sup> Matt Chandler, "Using Advent for Family Discipleship," December 12, 2018, <https://www.tvresources.net/resource-library/videos/using-advent-for-family-discipleship>.

their children. Also, as this was the first class taught at MVCC on family discipleship, families were encouraged to share their journey and seek to help and equip other families beginning family discipleship. Parents were also encouraged to acquire a big picture of their family and their family discipleship, trusting God to launch their children to fulfill the great commission.

### **Post-Class Survey**

After the final class on October 22, 2019, participants were sent a link for the post-class survey that they completed on SurveyMonkey. The survey was identical to the first survey, and participants were given instructions to use the same PIN number that they used for the first survey. The email with the link was sent out on Wednesday, October 22. Participants who were regulars in the class were quick to complete the survey.

### **Processing Surveys**

Two weeks after the participants completed the second survey, I began to process the surveys. Thirty-one participants took the first survey; however, only 17 took the second survey. Of those 17 surveys, one person did not fill out an initial survey, one person did not attend all the classes, and one participant took the class as a grandparent, and while the latter provided great insight to the class, I removed his survey because he was not able to answer each part of the survey due to not having children in his home. I removed those three surveys, leaving 14 surveys to process. One participant did not answer several of the questions and, when asked, she expressed that it must have been a mistake. She was able to provide the answers later, and her survey was processed.

### **Conclusion**

The chapter reviewed how this project met the four goals which were the formation and preparation for the class, development of the class curriculum and use of an expert panel, the survey used to assess the knowledge and practices of the participants, and implementation and teaching of the curriculum. It was a blessing to lead this project



for God's glory, for the families of MVCC, and to strive to equip parents for the discipleship of their children.

## CHAPTER 5

### MINISTRY PROJECT EVALUATION

This chapter evaluates the project's purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. In addition, it assesses the effectiveness of the project and describes what would be done differently the project were repeated at Mountain View Community Church. This chapter also includes my theological and personal reflections from this project.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip parents at Mountain View Community Church in Frederick, Maryland, to disciple their children at home. This goal was derived from many commands in both the Old and New Testament to teach children to love and follow the Lord. The most prominent of Old Testament commands to parents to teach is found in Deuteronomy 6 where Moses commands parents to teach diligently the commandments of God. In the New Testament, Paul in Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. God will continue to use other people in the discipleship of children, but it is clear that parents are the primary disciplers of their children.

This project also served to meet the mission of the MVCC. MVCC exists to make fully devoted followers of Jesus who call on God's power to boldly and lovingly reach our neighbors, the next generation, and the nations for Christ. MVCC desires to reach the next generation with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that task must first begin with parents as the primary disciplers of their children and then flow into our youth and

children ministries respectively. MVCC has developed a position paper on family ministry that describes its mission and its practices regarding family ministry.<sup>1</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

This project needed specific goals which helped guide and serve as a checklist of things to do to accomplish the purpose of this project. The goals of this project were to (1) recruit parents and children's ministry staff to participate in a six-week study on family discipleship, (2) assess the knowledge and practices related to family discipleship among these parents and staff, (3) develop a curriculum to train both parents and children's ministry staff on the biblical foundations and practical methods of parents serving as disciple makers of their children, and (4) increase the knowledge of parents and staff with regard to family discipleship by teaching a six-week study using the curriculum.

#### **Goal 1**

The first goal was to recruit parents and children's ministry staff to participate in a six-week study on family discipleship. To best represent MVCC, at least ten family units would participate, including at least two single-parent or blended families, along with at least three children's ministry staff. The recruitment process included promoting the class through online promotions, weekend announcements, bulletin, and sending an email to the youth and children's databases. At first, twenty-eight participants signed up for the class, but at the time of the first class that number was down to about twenty, with about fifteen completing the entire class. One participant took the class as a grandparent, and while he provided great insight to the class, he was not able to answer each part of the survey due to not having children in his home. Of those who participated in the study, there was one blended family and one single mother. The children's ministry staff participated in the class, but due to how the survey was designed, they were not able to

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 5 for Mountain View Community Church Family Ministry Position Paper.

participate in the study. The lack of children's ministry staff participation in the survey is discussed more in the weaknesses section of this chapter. This goal was successfully met because parents and children's ministry staff were recruited to participate in a six-week study on family discipleship.

## **Goal 2**

The second goal was to assess the knowledge and practices related to family discipleship among these parents and staff. A Family Discipleship Practices Inventory (FDPI) was administered electronically through SurveyMonkey to fourteen participants. The survey led to identifying the current knowledge and practices of these participants, which aided in the writing and teaching of the curriculum. Identifying weaknesses in the family discipleship of the participants gave me a greater understanding of the family discipleship practices of those in the study and quite possibly how that might correlate into the larger body of MVCC.

The survey consisted of three sections: a section pertaining to demographics and church involvement, a section pertaining to family discipleship knowledge, and a section pertaining to family discipleship frequency. The first section included general demographic questions that helped me understand more about the individuals who completed the surveys. The questions ranged from general demographic questions to questions regarding church involvement and service. I was encouraged by the diversity of the class. Many were relatively new to the church and to the idea of family discipleship, others had attended the church for many years but were not committed to family discipleship, and others were both involved in the church and committed to family discipleship at the beginning of the class.

The second section used a Likert scale to evaluate participants' knowledge of family discipleship. The nine statements used in this section ranged from prioritizing family time to how the church has helped them prepare for family discipleship in their home. The statements using the Likert scale in the survey were measured by the two-

tailed t-test in the rest of this chapter. The final section pertained to family discipleship frequency, which was helpful to see how each family prioritized family discipleship prior to the class. Upon finishing the class, it would have been better to reword this section using the Likert scale to better measure the knowledge gained through the class. Because of the frequency questions asked in the survey and the inability to measure, and also the lack of participation by the children’s ministry staff, this goal was partially successful.

### Goal 3

The third goal was to develop a curriculum to train both parents and children’s ministry staff on the biblical foundations and practical methods of parents serving as disciple makers of their children. This goal was considered successfully met when each member of the expert panel reviewed the curriculum and gave an average score of least 2.70 out of 4.00. At first, one member of the expert panel scored only a 2.65, but after changes were made to the curriculum based on his recommendations, his score increased to 3.5. With a score of 3.5, this goal was successfully met.

Next, in examining the results of the survey, improved knowledge was indicated in several of the post survey statements. The class showed improvement in knowledge in question 15 (see table 6). The responses to question 15 show a directional change in the participants’ understanding that the church is not where children should receive most of their teaching. It is encouraging to see that a majority of the class disagreed, but not strongly disagreed, as I do desire that parents have some Bible teaching happening at the church, even though the majority should occur at home.

Table 6. Pre-study and post-study participant responses concerning where children/teens ought to receive most of their Bible teaching

Survey Question 15 (14 responses)		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre	The church is where children/teens ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	4	4	0	3	2	1
Post	The church is where children/teens ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	3	10	1	0	0	0

Again, this pre-study and post-study response shows a directional change in how the church has helped the participants develop a clear plan for spiritual growth in their child or teen (see table 7). It also speaks specifically to the effectiveness of the class curriculum, which was a primary tool to help develop that plan. It was my desire to encourage participants to turn to the church and the church’s leadership for insight and help in the discipleship process of their families. Although not documented in the survey, the many conversations after the class and emails from the participants asking me specific questions about their family’s discipleship were also encouraging and reflected their desire for the church to help them shape their family’s discipleship.

Table 7. Pre-study and post-study participant responses concerning the church helping parents to develop a clear plan for their child/teen’s spiritual growth

Survey Question 21 (14 responses)		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre	The church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child/teen’s spiritual growth.	0	2	2	6	4	0
Post	The church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child/teen’s spiritual growth.	0	2	0	1	8	3

One of the areas that the curriculum focused on was family worship time. In the responses concerning the frequency of family worship or devotional time, there is clearly an increase in frequency (see table 8). Since this was a focus of the curriculum, I contribute much of this increase to the participants’ interaction with the class and the curriculum.

Table 8. Pre-study and post-study frequency of home-based family worship among participants

Survey Question 27 (14 responses)		0x	1x	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7x+
Pre	How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	10	0	0	2	1	1
Post	How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	3	2	0	1	2	6

#### **Goal 4**

The final goal was to increase the knowledge of parents and staff regarding family discipleship by teaching a six-week study using this curriculum. Parents and staff who attended at least five sessions and watched any sessions they missed by video re-took the FDPI at the conclusion of the final training session, which was a post-test used to measure change in knowledge and practice. This goal was considered successful when a two-tailed t-test for dependent samples indicated a positive, significant change between the FDPI sets. Upon completing the curriculum and pre-study and post-study surveys, it was determined that I had frequency statements along with statements in the Likert scale for knowledge. While the frequency analysis does not have statistical significance, it can report the frequency of conversations parents were having before the training with the frequency of conversations parents were having after the training. This might indicate that parents are taking a more active role in talking to their children about spiritual matters. The frequency statements were analyzed after the t-test.

I was able to match surveys for fourteen class participants. While 28 people took the pre-study survey, many failed to complete the entire class, so their surveys were not matched. To run the statistical analysis, I inverted the responses to several questions depending on if the question expected a negative answer as opposed to a positive answer. In running the data analysis, I determined that the Family Discipleship classes did help to increase knowledge in family discipleship at MVCC (see table 9). The measure of this goal included a post-study survey, and the goal was met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre-study and post-study survey scores:  $t_{(13)} = -4.521$ ,  $p = .0002$ .

Table 9. T-test: Paired two sample for means

	Pre-Study total	Post-Study total
Mean	45.642	49.714
Variance	31.478	16.065
Observations	14	14
Pearson Correlation	.665	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	13	
t Stat	-4.521	
P (t<=t) one-tail	0.00028	
t Critical one-tail	1.770	
P (T<=t) two-tail	0.0005	
t Critical two-tail	2.160	

The frequency questions on the survey all showed increased frequency of family discipleship. Three specific questions showed marked improvement in the frequency. The first was regarding family worship times and is shown in table 8. The other two are shown in tables 10 and 11.

Table 10. Pre-study and post-study participant responses concerning spiritual discussions with children

Survey Question #26 (14 responses)		0x	1x	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7x+
Pre	How many times in the past month have I discussed biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	1	0	5	3	4	1
Post	How many times in the past month have I discussed biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0	0	0	5	4	6

Table 11. Pre-study and post-study participant responses concerning conversations with spouse or close friend about spiritual development of my child

Survey Question 29 (14 responses)		0x	1x	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7x+
Pre	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?	5	1	3	1	2	2
Post	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?	0	1	2	5	4	2



In both questions 26 and 29, the frequency increased for intentional conversations between parent and child, and also parent to a spouse or close friend. The increase in intentional conversations may not show an increase in knowledge, however, one can infer an increase in desire to have these biblical or spiritual conversations with their children and with others concerning their child's spiritual development.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The greatest strength of this project was the increase in knowledge for the participants in this class. As the one who taught this class and interacted with many of the participants week to week, I witnessed elements of growth for many. At the start of each of the classes I asked the participants to share one thing they did in the past week for family discipleship. Over the entirety of the class, it was a blessing to see each participant share at least one; most shared multiple times what they were currently doing as a family to implement family discipleship.

Another strength was how the church equipped parents for the discipleship of their children at home. The church is commanded to equip the saints in Ephesians 4:11-13: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Equipping parents not only fulfills Ephesians 4 but also seeks to fulfill the Great Commission, along with the mission of MVCC to make fully devoted followers of Christ by reaching the next generation. As the last class finished, it was encouraging that several parents asked when it would be taught again and if the videos would be made public for them to share. Hearing from the participants on the value of the class and their desire to have others from the church experience what they experienced was possibly the greatest compliment and validation for me. I was pleased that I kept the curriculum simple because participants were not bored and found the curriculum challenging.

A final strength that came from this class was the fellowship and community formed. Few participants knew one another prior to participating in the class. As the weeks went on, I witnessed mothers begin to sit together and fellowship with one another. I heard one conversation about grabbing coffee outside of class. As participants shared at the beginning of the class each week about how they were personally implementing family discipleship, others would often verbally encourage them or offer helpful suggestions. Also, since teaching the class, at least three participants have asked for follow up meetings with me to discuss the topic further for their family, building our fellowship, and relationship.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

As I reflect on the project in its entirety, there are two specific weaknesses in this project. The first weakness was not fully thinking through how to include the children's ministry staff from MVCC or how to measure their increase in knowledge. Many of the children's ministry staff have adult children or are single, and the survey was meant for a parent with children still at home. In reflection, it would have been good to create a secondary instrument to measure the increase in knowledge for children's ministry staff. That research would have been helpful as they are often the ones interacting with parents first and are the ones teaching the children. Knowing that they fully understand family discipleship, scripture pertaining to family discipleship, the roles of parents and the church, and the process of developing vision and goals for family discipleship would have been helpful in my position of authority over them.

Another weakness was the use of the frequency questions for the survey. The Likert scale is the best way to measure knowledge. The frequency questions did not measure knowledge, which was my main measurement in goal 4. The frequency questions could have been reworded in such a way to use the Likert scale and could have been measured with the t-test. While I still determined that the Family Discipleship classes did

help to increase knowledge in family discipleship at MVCC, rewording the frequency questions into the Likert scale may have made the results all the more notable.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

As mentioned in the weaknesses section of this chapter, if doing this project again, I would create a separate instrument to measure the increase in knowledge of the children's ministry staff. The staff were asked to participate in the class but were not able to effectively participate in the survey because most of them do not have children in the home or are single. Second, I would change the survey by rewording the frequency questions to effectively measure for knowledge; I would change them to a Likert scale.

In addition to those two areas expressed in the weaknesses section, I also would change how I assigned homework for each of the classes. I wanted to provide homework so that the parents would engage with the class material throughout the week. Homework was provided and listed at the bottom of their notes each week. While many parents reviewed and did some aspects of the homework week to week, others did not. While busy schedules may be guilty, it would have been good for me to simplify the homework and provide time each week for the class to discuss the homework. Several blogs and articles were handed out, and it would have been effective to have discussion questions on these articles and discuss them briefly at the next class.

In class 5 I showed many of the resources available to parents to help them in family discipleship. I collected all my parenting books, family discipleship books, catechism curriculums, and many more resources, and laid them out before the class on three tables, which were six feet long. While many parents appreciated this show of resources, for some parents it was a bit overwhelming. It may have been better to have one or two books or resources for each topic of family discipleship instead of showing a plethora of options. I put all the resources on an Amazon wish list and shared that wish list with the class.

## **Theological Reflections**

God in his graciousness has revealed through His Word the biblical role for parents in the discipleship of their children. God intends for parents to be stewards of the gifts He gives to Christian parents. Stewardship requires reliance on God and the understanding that children ultimately belong to Him and are entrusted to His hands. Psalm 127:3 says, “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.” As parents mature they realize that they are not the ones ultimately in control. Children’s salvation, sanctification, and hearts are outside of parents’ earthly bounds to change. God saves, sanctifies, and changes the hearts of children. Parents commit themselves to prayer and to following the commands of God in obedience; parents trust God that as they honor Him and obey His plan for family discipleship that He will produce a work of the Spirit in the lives of their children.

The church is God’s instrument for discipleship. In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul says,

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the Whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Family discipleship is a process, and the church is a key element in that process. The church must be prepared and equipped with godly, trained, and humble servants of God that fulfill their role to disciple all in their church. Family discipleship, while beginning with a discipleship-minded church, requires parents who are striving for the unity of the faith, knowledge of Christ, and maturity and fullness in Christ. While discipling their children, parents must be growing in their relationship with Christ and work to be students of the Word. Parents are to “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” This growth and life will produce fruit in the parent and believer, and this

fruit will serve as a foundation for family discipleship. Parents must keep Christ as their focus and not the success of family discipleship. Parents may be prone to do the work of family discipleship from a prideful heart, more concerned with the outward obedience than the inward faithfulness of their children. This behavior was warned by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:4, which says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” My heart is blessed by my church, MVCC, and their commitment to family discipleship. Their support for parents and for this class was encouraging and motivated me in the leadership of this project. This church is committed to discipling and partnering with parents for the discipleship of their children. MVCC parents are not alone in this process but are knit together in a community of faith that is seeking their maturity and the spiritual maturity of their children for generations to come.

Finally, God’s Word is a key in the process of family discipleship. First, God uses His Word to bring maturity to church leaders and parents. Second, God’s Word provides direction for parents and to the process of family discipleship. In passages such as Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 78:1-8, sections of the Proverbs, and Ephesians 6:1-4, the roles of parents are clearly demonstrated, and parents are commanded to teach their children to love, follow, and live for the Lord. During the second class the participants were working through these passages on family discipleship, and many commented publicly that they were unaware that Scripture spoke so clearly on this issue. The predominant view of the participants prior to the class was that the church was the main teacher of their children in spiritual matters. During this second class Scripture spoke and impressed onto their hearts the need for their involvement in the spiritual teaching of their children.

### **Personal Reflections**

Family discipleship, while being the focus of this project, is also a focus in my personal life and family. As the father of three young men under the age of fifteen, this

project equipped me to lead, teach, and be the father God has called me to be. My preparation for this class and project led me to many resources and concepts for family discipleship that not only benefited the families that participated in the study, but also benefited my family. I have learned and benefited the most from this project. During the writing of this project and these formative years in my children's lives, this project and class served as a tool of accountability for me to pursue the discipleship of each of my children.

I grew up in a loving and good family, but my family did not attend church together. My parents disagreed about the degree of religious involvement for our family, and as a result our home discipleship was reduced to saying the traditional prayer of "God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food, Amen." When I became a believer at the age of sixteen, I remember spending the night at a church friend's home. After supper, this family gathered in their living room, opened up the Scriptures, read, and closed the time in prayer. Before this first exposure to family devotions, I thought this practice happened only at church. I remember being curious that evening as to the significance of what I had just witnessed in this family. This first interaction led to others, which ultimately led to my focus on this topic for my project.

I am convinced that family discipleship needs to be a priority for every Christian family and that parents need to integrate discipleship into the daily rhythms of their family schedule. Family discipleship will look different based upon the age, spiritual maturity, and needs of the family members. Picture a church where families are equipped and are fulfilling their role as the primary disciplers of their children. Imagine how this would reshape the church and strengthen the work of the Great Commission.

### **Conclusion**

This project served to equip the parents who participated in the class and study. While the goals for the class were met with three out of the four goals successfully achieved, the impact of this class will hopefully be seen for generations to come. My

hope is this project and class will be reproducible not only in Mountain View Community Church, but also in other churches for the glory of God and for the equipping of parents as disciplers. The weaknesses and strengths of this project will continue to be evaluated to best maintain the focus on family discipleship. May God in his goodness provide the promised measure of grace, mercy, and peace as the parents of Mountain View Community Church are obedient to God's Word with dependence on the Holy Spirit and commit to teach diligently and shepherd the hearts of their children.

## APPENDIX 1

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY

The following instrument is the Family Discipleship Practices Inventory (FDPI). Some general questions are followed by a sixteen-question survey with a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose was to assess each parent's understanding and confidence in home discipleship. The survey is adapted from Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011). Used by permission.



## FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY

### Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the parent's current competency to disciple their children. This research is being conducted by Adam Williams for purposes of collecting data for a doctoral ministry project. In this research, you will be asked to attend 6 classes and complete this survey at the beginning and end of those classes. 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.*

Name or 4 digit code: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### General Questions

What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_ male \_\_\_\_\_ female

What is your age?

_____ 18-24	_____ 55-64
_____ 25-34	_____ 65-74
_____ 35-44	_____ 75 or older
_____ 45-54	

How many children are you parent or guardian for and live in your household (aged 17 or younger only)?

_____ None	_____ 3
_____ 1	_____ 4
_____ 2	_____ More than 4

What best describes the age range of your children?

_____ Nursery	_____ Middle School
_____ Preschool	_____ High School
_____ Elementary	

How many years have you been a Christian?

_____ Less than 1 year	_____ 10 years to less than 20 years
_____ 1 year to less than 5 years	_____ 20 years to less than 30 years
_____ 5 years to less than 10 years	_____ 30 years or more

Level of Education

_____ graduated high school	_____ bachelors degree
_____ 1 year of college	_____ some graduate school
_____ 2 years of college	_____ masters degree
_____ 3 years of college	_____ doctoral degree

Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?

- married     separated     divorced  
 widowed     domestic partnership or civil union  
 single, but cohabitating with a significant other  
 single, never married

How often do you attend worship service at MVCC?

- not regular  
 once a month  
 two or three times a month  
 four or more times a month

What areas do you serve within MVCC? (check each one that applies to you)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> elder/deacon      | <input type="checkbox"/> homegroup participant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> student ministry  | <input type="checkbox"/> First impression team |
| <input type="checkbox"/> children ministry | <input type="checkbox"/> other area            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> homegroup leader  |  |

Are you a member of MVCC?     yes     no     Planning on becoming one

How many hours a week do you read your Bible for personal study or devotions? \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Mark your agreement with each statement using the following scale.

SD = strongly disagree

D = disagree

DS = disagree somewhat

AS = agree somewhat

A = agree

SA = strongly agree

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. Our family prioritizes consistent family devotional or worship times in its schedule.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. I would like to have regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. When my child asks a biblical or theological question, I wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.                             | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I want my child/teen to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if it means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.                       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in the spiritual development with each of their children.                                   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. Other activities such as sports, academics, and music often take precedent over our attendance at church.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for spiritual development of my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.                           | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

**Directions:** Please mark the appropriate answer. Some questions may ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

- 0 = Never
- 1x = Once
- 2x = A Couple of Times
- 3-4x= three or four times
- 5-6x = Five or Six Times
- 7+ = Seven or More Times

10. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+
11. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+
12. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+
13. 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?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+
14. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+
15. How many times in the past month have I discussed with my child how they can improve in sports, academics, or music?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+
16. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+
17. 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?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+
18. How many times in the past two months has my family missed a worship service due to a child's extra-curricular activity?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+
19. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+
20. How often in the past year has any church leader made contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	0	1	2x	3-4x	5-6x	7+

## APPENDIX 2

### EQUIPPING PARENT TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN SUNDAY SCHOOL SERIES

The following evaluation rubric was sent to an expert panel. This panel evaluated the course material to ensure it was biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practically applicable.

Name of evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Equipping Parents to Disciple their Children Sunday School Series</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Biblical Faithfulness</b>					
The content of the curriculum is hermeneutically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the basics of home discipleship.					
<b>Methodology</b>					
The curriculum sufficiently addresses home discipleship methodology.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, case studies, role-play, and homework.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum includes opportunities for application in the home.					
After completion of these lessons, the participant would have been introduced to practical skills to disciple their own children.					

**Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:**

## APPENDIX 3

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM

#### Lesson 1: What Is Family Discipleship?

##### **Personal Illustration:**

My personal story of conviction of the need for family discipleship in my own family.

These lessons are meant to equip you as parents, to encourage you to not just delegate the discipleship of your children to the church, but partner with the church. The church's task is to equip you as parents for leading your family in four ways: know your role as a parent which was established by God, develop a Biblical vision for each of your children, make a plan for the discipleship of each of your children, and fulfill the mission.

So in summary, these lessons are meant for you to:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill The **Mission**.

*“The best plan parents can have to help develop their children spiritually is to realize the distinctiveness of their role and the church's role, respectively. Spiritual growth and learning necessitates a shared effort put forth within a community. God designed the community of faith to work alongside the family to cultivate children's spiritual growth – but the home will always tend to have the greater impact.”<sup>1</sup>*

##### **Illustration:**

What gets the best<sup>2</sup> – Talks about the 5 Priorities of the Christian Man: God, Wife, Children, Brothers/Sisters in Christ, Job/Ministry.

- In an emergency, these priorities might hold true.
- But what if there is no crisis (normal month, week, day), what gets the best of my heart, best of my passion, energy, ministry, calling.
- When asked that way, those 5 priorities completely flipped to: Job/Ministry, Brother/sisters in Christ, Children, Wife, and then God.

<sup>1</sup> John Ellis Steen, *Practical Family Ministry: A Collection of Ideas for Your Church* (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 41

<sup>2</sup> Rob Reinow and Amy Reinow, “Visionary Parenting,” DVD, 2013.

## What is Family?

\*Get feedback and write on board.

This definition by Tim Challies<sup>3</sup>, adapted from Andreas Kostenberger is a great one: *A family is one man and one woman united in marriage plus primarily their children by birth or adoption; and secondarily, other persons related by blood.*

Children don't make a family, they join a family, which means that the most basic level is a man and woman united in a marriage covenant.

Some important points to notice concerning family in Genesis:

- God ordained family
  - Marriage: Genesis 1:27
  - Family: Genesis 1:28
- Family is the first earthly institution created by God, followed by the church and government. The family is the fundamental building block for all of human life in all places for all times.
- However, family is the only one of these earthly institutions that were created prior to Genesis 3: the sin of Adam/Eve and the ramification of the sin.

## What is the purpose of Family?

\*Get feedback and write on board.

When I asked you that question, how many of you were searching for a churchy kind of answer? This is an important question, because if you don't know the purpose for it, the chances of you being successful with it is slim. We have to know the purpose before we can accomplish God's vision.

Purposes include:

- Ultimately to glorify God
- Procreation - "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (reestablished in Gen. 9:1)
  - This helps in exercise of dominion "subdue it and have dominion".
- Family and marriage reveal God's character and love for mankind.
  - Language in Scripture: adoption, children, father, bridegroom, etc.
- The evangelism and discipleship of children which maintains a legacy and transfer of faith through the generations. Let's spend some time on this last point.

Deuteronomy 6 – We will cover more extensively next week.

Focus for now on a few words at the beginning of Deut. 6:7 "Teach them diligently" – "Impress them on your children"

Next week, we will spend our time primarily exploring texts from the Bible and what they say about family, parents, and children. Many of these texts focuses on the parent's role for discipling their children. **As we look at these passages, it will become apparent that God designed the family as a discipleship center.**

## What is Family Discipleship?

Family discipleship is an intentional process where believing parents guide their unbelieving or less-mature believing children to embrace and apply the gospel in every

<sup>3</sup> Tim Challies, "Where Did Family Come From," July 22, 2019, [www.challies.com/articles/where-did-family-come-from/](http://www.challies.com/articles/where-did-family-come-from/)



part of their lives. Family discipleship is a process that includes personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ by the children as He has been revealed in scripture. Family discipleship involves developing perspectives and practices that reflect the mind of Christ. The gospel, expressed and applied in the context of the community of faith, is the center point of discipleship; conformity to Jesus Christ is the goal of discipleship; “spiritual development” and “Christian formation” describe progress toward this goal.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Path towards Family Discipleship.**

As said earlier, these lessons are meant to show you a path forward in Family discipleship and to help you:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill The **Mission**.

**Know Your Role:** Over the next 2 weeks we will look several passages of scripture that show the role of parents in family discipleship, and in week 3 we will specifically look at the role of parents and the church.

**Develop Your Vision:** Vision always comes from conviction. My hope is that while you study your role, you will form convictions that will lead to vision. This vision will lead to you setting goals for your children.

Vision is about the goal, but it is also about being honest about your present location. I shared with you earlier about my story. I wish I could tell you that I have done it perfectly, but that is not the case. However, while my plans have changed as life has changed, my vision and goals have not and continue to serve as directional anchors pointing me where I want to go.

### **Make Your Plan:**

View your plans as a tasklist for the day, week, or month. After reviewing your vision and goals, you make plans to accomplish the vision.

So maybe you determine that as parents, you are away from where God wants you to be (maybe 100 steps away).

- So what are 3 steps you can take in family discipleship in the next year to close that gap. So that next year, you will be 100 steps away minus 3. Praise the Lord.

### **Fulfill The Mission.**

Realize that God has given you the task of family discipleship as a parent. He is on your side. You are part of the bigger picture of the Great Commission.

### **Limiting your Expectations**

So that will be the plan while we are working through these lessons, especially the first six lessons. Equipping parents to know their role, develop their vision, and make their plans for family discipleship.

- I want this time to be an encouraging time.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, ed., *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011), 17

- Boogie Board surfing.
  - o 3 Kind of waves:
    - 1<sup>st</sup> wave – Huge wave comes and knocks you all around, disorients you and you go up on the beach done with surfing that day. Not my plan.
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> wave – Is a little wave you might find on a calm day, or on the gulf or bay. It is actually does not have enough momentum to carry you in on the board.
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> wave is that perfect wave, not huge to crash you, and not too small, but just right to lead you all the way to the top of the shore.
  - o I want this time to be like that 3<sup>rd</sup> wave that has enough push to get you up and going, but not too little and definitely not too much that you crash, burn, and quit.

### **Why Family Discipleship?**

Catechesis: Small and incremental teaching that overtime will establish a foundation for faith.

- Introduce this word and speak of its historical significance.
- Show Videos from Tim Keller
- Walt Mueller uses the word “Cultural Catechesis” to represent the small cultural teaching that your child will receive from culture. You may do your best to protect and isolate your children from culture, but it is unavoidable.
- The answer is not isolation from culture, the answer is equipping in light of culture.

This world doesn’t need more smart kids, more musical kids, more athletic kids (although all those things are good and useful); it needs kids who love Jesus and will live for Him. That is why he created your family, as a Faith Discipleship Center.

- Be ready for opposition from the Enemy
  - o Tim Challies “Why Satan is no friend for the family”<sup>5</sup> – Print off.
- God never calls us to do things that he does not empower us to accomplish.

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

It starts in your heart! Daddy Adam’s heart needed to change that many years ago.

- o God had to change my heart through repentance and correction.
- o If God changes your hearts as parents, your family will change.

Show Video from Village Church

Ask for questions for discussion.

### **In-Class Discussion:**

- As we close, I would like to spend the remaining time to encourage you as a couple to discuss the family discipleship of your children. If you are a mother

<sup>5</sup> Tim Challies, “Why Satan Is No Friend of the Family,” August 12, 2019, <https://www.challies.com/articles/why-satan-is-no-friend-of-the-family/>.

here by yourself, please find another mother, and if you are a father, please find another father to discuss these questions with.

**Homework:**

- Review these notes again during the week.
- Begin to pray for God's direction for you and your family.
- Write out what you are currently doing that spiritually impacts your children.
- Read Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, and Ephesians 5 & 6.

## Lesson 2: What Does the Bible Say about Family Discipleship?

Lets Review the purpose of these lessons:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill The **Mission**.

### **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism**

Use Prezi Presentation on MVCC Family Ministry

If teenagers wrote out the creed of this religious outlook, it would look something like this:

- A god exists who created and orders the world and watches over life on earth.
- God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
- The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about yourself.
- God is not involved in my life except when I need God to solve a problem.
- Good people go to heaven when they die.

I will teach these passages in a classroom with Discussion.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

- Israel's primary belief (v4) – The Shema
  - God is one
  - God is the true and only God!
  - “Our God is Yahweh, Yahweh alone!” – Daniel Block (as opposed to a verse that teaches against the trinity).<sup>6</sup>
- Play video that explains shema - <https://thebibleproject.com/blog/what-is-the-shema/>
- Action Verbs
  - Hear Him
  - Obey Him
  - Love Him
- Focus on the Heart
  - Show verses throughout the bible that also emphasize the heart.
  - Proverbs 4:23, Psalm 26:2, Hebrews 4:12, Luke 6:45, Jeremiah 17:9-10, Psalm 19:14, Matthew 15:18, Matthew 6:21, Psalm 139:23.
- “teach them diligently”
  - Jewish Fathers (parents) were the primary influence and teachers of their children. Jewish fathers (parents) were meant to teach diligently the faith to their children.
    - Emphasize the role of fathers, without diminishing role of mothers.
  - Purpose of parenting is to impress the hearts of children with the love of God.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 177.

- Every day small and incremental teaching.
  - They were to teach their children while they sat, walked, laid down, and rose up.
  - This is all the time and done daily (regularly).
  - The shema was a regular part of life, repeated twice daily in the home.
  - Shema (hear, obey, and love) was to initially be..
    - In the heart (v8) “shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” – Beliefs, feelings, choices.
    - In your home (v9) “doorposts of your home”
    - In your work/community (v9) “gates”

#### Psalm 78:1-8

- It was Israel’s responsibility to pass the faith on to the next generation.
  - V1-3 – How were you taught the faith.
  - V4-5 – Don’t give up this responsibility to teach your children.
    - “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation.”
    - Deuteronomy 6:20-21
      - Tell your children/grandchildren about the Lord and His work in History (Scripture/current culture)
      - We need to be ready for when our children come to us. We should not delegate that responsibility to someone else.
  - V5-8 – God’s plan for discipleship – the family!
  - V8 – Don’t be like their fathers who were stubborn and rebellious.
    - Whose heart was not steadfast
    - Whose spirit was not faithful to God
    - Therefore, a sign of faith is that they will teach their children.

#### Proverbs: To teach wisdom and the fear of the Lord.

- Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it”.
- Proverbs 1:7 – “The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”
- Proverbs 23:24-25, 29:3, 17: Wise children bring gladness and joy
- Proverbs 10:1, 19:13, 28:7: Foolish children bring demise
- Proverbs 9:16: Vulnerable to wrong influences
- Proverbs 14:18: If uncorrected, will lead to full-grown folly.
- Proverbs 4:23: Need to guard heart
- Proverbs 3:11-12: Wisdom leads to parental discipline and correction
- Proverbs 3:11-12, 13:1: Need for discipline
- Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14: Verses on types of discipline (corporal punishment)

#### Ephesians 6:1-4 (very similar to Col 3:20-21)

A challenge for both children and parents.

- Children:
  - Obey
    - “in the Lord for this right”

- Col 3:20 – in all things.
    - Connection to Deuteronomy 6:4-5
  - Honor
    - It may go well with you
    - May live long in the land
- Father:
  - Do not provoke your children to anger.
    - Read (Shepherding a child’s heart – pg. 28-29)
    - Counter culture to the Roman male-dominated culture
    - Anger is a result of prideful control
      - This anger is a sin (Eph 4:26)
    - Tim Challies. 7 Things a good dad says  
[https://www.challies.com/christian-living/7-things-a-good-dad-says/?fbclid=IwAR1E4fX-Ah2ZDLPcgTKA29UV06oYH1pAdX4\\_c-o5m1Z\\_aXE4bZX0TicyAKA](https://www.challies.com/christian-living/7-things-a-good-dad-says/?fbclid=IwAR1E4fX-Ah2ZDLPcgTKA29UV06oYH1pAdX4_c-o5m1Z_aXE4bZX0TicyAKA)
  - Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
    - The tendency to focus on “not provoking” and ignore “instruction / discipline”
    - Connected to first 2 previous passages.
    - Discipline
    - Instruction of the Lord
      - Teaching your children (video by David Platt)
        - <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1440613172713903>
      - Catechism (video by Ligon Duncan)
        - <https://www.facebook.com/thegospelcoalition/videos/2169602019827603/?v=2169602019827603>
      - We will talk more about this in weeks to come, providing practical helps, but for those who are impatient, here are 6 ways to teach your kids the Bible.
        - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/6-ways-to-teach-your-kids-the-bible/>

What do these 4 passages tell us about your role as parents? Church’s role?

Review: These lessons are meant for you to:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill The **Mission**.

### Homework:

- Read these four passages at home during the week
- Begin to list the parental expectations and roles from these passages.
- Pray for you and your family to understand and apply these passages.

### Lesson 3: What Is My Role?

As we begin lets review:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill The **Mission**.

Parent Role Discussion and Review:

- Review passages from last week and list out specific roles that belong to parents and the church. What are those responsibilities based upon those verses?
  - Deuteronomy: “Teach them diligently”
  - Psalm 78: “teach to their children”
  - Proverbs: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it”
  - Ephesians 6:”Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”

Biblical Parenthood:

- Note: Husbands need to be challenged specifically because they are mentioned by name in Psalm 78, and Ephesians 6. While the wife’s role is very important, and in some homes they may have a bigger role in discipleship, we must emphasize the role of the father in home discipleship. Fathers, generally, tend to relinquish their role to their wife and the church for the discipleship of his family.
- Husband’s role towards wife. (Ephesians 5:25-33)
  - Love
  - Serve
  - Lead
  - Sanctify

Marriage focus MVCC Marriage Ministry Marriage mentoring at MVCC. Marriage Seminar in October.
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- Role with Children (Deuteronomy 6:7, Psalm 78:4-5, Ephesians 6:4)
  - God given influence over the heart of your children
  - “Teach Diligently”
  - “We will not hide them from their children”
  - “Do not provoke your children to anger”
  - “Discipline”
  - “Instruction”
- Personal Need for Discipleship
  - Refer back to M.T.D. study and highlight Kenda Creasy Dean’s (research assistant to Christian Smith) book *Almost Christian*.
    - “Luther would not have been surprised by the National Study of Youth and Religion’s conclusion that they best way for youth to

*become more serious about religious faith is for parents to become more serious about theirs.”*

- *“Research is nearly unanimous on this point: parents matter most in shaping the religious lives of their children.*
- *“Herein lies the rub. Many adults lack confidence in articulating much less teaching, their own faith.”*
- Take Home from *Almost Christian*.
  - Parents Matter!
- Parents are the biggest influence in the lives of their children, therefore...
  - Your discipleship matters most!
  - Who you are is greater than what you say!
  - Don’t choose a church based on a great children’s ministry; choose a church that will disciple you first. Your personal discipleship will be the greatest tool for discipling your own children.
    - MVU, Bible Studies, Books, Triads, one on one discipleship.
  - What are you listening to, reading, studying?  
[www.risenmotherhood.com](http://www.risenmotherhood.com)
- Words and Parenting
  - Words in Scripture
  - Words come from the heart
  - Words as primary in parenting
  - Heart diagram
  - Need to redeem your heart in order to effectively use words in parenting.

If I have never done family discipleship, where can I start?

- Repentance (Remember my testimony)
- Simple obedience
- Gather other parents/support around you to encourage you.

As we look at the Church’s role in the discipleship of your children, let’s watch this comical video that pokes fun at this dynamic and relationship.

Lutheran Satire – The Gilbert and Sullivan Mass<sup>7</sup>

## **Church’s Role**

### **Models of Family Ministry:**

During the past century, ministry to families has evolved and churches have developed different models with variant degrees of family involvement into church life. Four main models have gained popularity in recent years: segmented-programmatic, family-based, family-integrated, and family-equipping models.

<sup>7</sup> LutheranSatire, “The Gilbert and Sullivan Mass,” March 2, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MP8fTXKzObc&t=181s>



Explain briefly the fragmentation of the family after WW2 (industrialization, suburbs, automobile, mom working) and increase of para-church organizations which lead churches to create age specific ministries. While this is not all bad, it did help cultivate a church-focused approach of child/teen discipleship as opposed to family-focused discipleship.

Briefly mention each of these models

- Segmented-programmatic model  
In many ways, this is the traditional view of youth ministry.<sup>8</sup> This role does not emphasize parents as having the primary role of discipleship with their children. While children in this model may be trained, taught, and ministered to, it fails to realize the disproportionate amount of time that children are at home and not at church. In its failure to see the parent's role as primary disciple-makers of their children, the church pours its time into the discipleship of children and teens, and neglects to regularly equip and invest in parents.  
Explain with making individual circles for Youth, children, adult ministry, elderly
- Family-based model  
To the observer, the family-based model would look similar to the segmented-programmatic model with one major difference. As Brandon Shields explains, "We are not suggesting a radical change in programming. What we are suggesting is a fresh mindset: Parents and family are crucial to faith development in every area of a ministry's program."<sup>9</sup> Mark Devries says that this move is more of a ministry philosophical change and not a radical change in programming—it is repurposing the event to include family.  
Explain with making one big circle – church and then another circle inside of Family (children and youth are small circles inside the family circle)
- Family-equipping model  
The final model of family ministry was articulated by Timothy Paul Jones in *Family Ministry Field Guide* when he defined family-equipping ministry as "the process of intentionally and persistently coordinating a ministry's proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives."<sup>10</sup> Family-equipping ministry agrees with family-integrated and family-based ministry models in their desire for parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their children. However, it does not abandon age-organized activities for youth and children, realizing the need for peer influence, and additional adult, non-parental influences. This model restructures the congregation to not only partner with parents at every level of ministry, but also to disciple them.  
Same as family based but remove circle around family
- Family-integrated model

<sup>8</sup> Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, preface to *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 20.

<sup>9</sup> Brandon Shields, "Family-Based Ministry: Separated Contexts, Shared Focus," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B &H, 2009), 98.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 33.

This model, championed by Vodie Baucham, Jr., is rather different from the other models represented in this section. This model does not have ministries focused on children or youth ministry, including the nursery. The entire congregation is included in the worship service.<sup>11</sup> Allowing children to witness and engage in the worship service has many benefits, including the child's ability to soak up and internalize worship, prayer, and doctrinal teaching.<sup>12</sup> This model heavily depends on the equipping of fathers as leaders, as well as family worship to maintain consistent discipleship among the generations. Just one big circle of Church – no other circles.

Emphasize that MVCC strives to uphold a Family-Equipping model.

### **In-Class Discussion**

- Review Position Paper of “Family Ministry at Mountain View Community Church.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Homework:**

- Do you see yourself as the primary discipler of your children or do you see that as the church's role?
- Revisit the question above. In reality, if the church spends 1-2 hours a week with your child, how much time are you spending with your child in spiritual development?

<sup>11</sup> Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 195.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Renfro, “Family-Integrated Ministry: Family-Driven Faith,” in Jones, *Perspectives in Family Ministry*, 57.

<sup>13</sup> Family Ministry at Mountain View Community Church – attached document.

## Lesson 4: Practical Development of your Family's Discipleship Develop Your Vision

As we begin lets review:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill the **Mission**.

As we have seen, the Bible clearly commands parents to be the primary disciplers of their children. However, many parents, like me, were not raised in a family where this was a priority and may have difficulty setting these practices in place. We will take this slowly, and as we look at the next several sessions, we will step through several steps as we develop a practical plan for family discipleship.<sup>14</sup>

### 1. Own Family Discipleship for your Family.

You may not have a Bible degree from a college or seminary. Chances are you do not. However, God has blessed you with children who are looking to you for spiritual teaching and discipleship.

\*Remember: You don't have to know everything about your Bible to teach your children. You only need to know a little bit more than they do. You can learn while you go.

Here are 4 steps to help you own your family's discipleship

1. Read and Study key biblical texts related to family discipleship (lesson #2)
  - a. Memorize key passages related to family discipleship
2. Develop a theology for family discipleship
  - a. Based on those scripture, what is your role and the church's role?
3. Read what others have written on family discipleship and talk to other parents, who you admire, who have also strived to disciple their children. Talk to Pastor Adam about books and resources he may have.
4. Continue to strive to be a life-long learner.

### 2. Write your Vision and Specific Goals for your Family's Discipleship.

Family discipleship should include multiple areas of focus:

Any Teachers in the classroom:

- What goes into developing a curriculum
- Show Scope and Sequence for MVU, youth ministry, etc.

<sup>14</sup> Several of these points were adapted from Ben Phillips article on Family Discipleship. <https://www.mabtsne.edu/sites/all/themes/midamerica/uploads/Phillips%20Ben%2C%20Family%20Discipleship%20eVersion.pdf>.

### **Developing Your Vision in six areas of life:**

- Spiritual: Bible reading, Scripture memory, prayer, heart condition.
- Physical: Exercise routine, sports activities, health.
- Character: Two character qualities were focused on.
- Relational/loving others: Selflessness vs. selfishness, how they handle offenses, discernment in friendships, and ministry involvement. for the next step of education and/or career.
- Educational/academic: Course of study, curriculum, who is teaching what? Life skills: Listening, typing, finances, service skills, leadership, etc.

### **This will drive our plan: (next week)**

What would you want to teach your children?

- Doctrinally: Gospel understanding, basic understanding of theology (systematic theology).
- Christian Living
  - Disciplines (QT, prayer, etc.)
  - Obedience
  - Discipline
  - Purity
  - Relationships
  - Church
  - Use of time
- Reinforce what is taught in Children and Youth lessons at MVCC.
  - This practically partners the church and family together.
- Service: model for your children service to church, to neighbors, and to each other.
- Practical everyday aspects of life
  - For Pastor Adam: Outdoor living, hunting, fishing, sports, mechanical work, home repair, blacksmithing.

Pastor Adam's Vision for his children: (share this in humility acknowledging failure and trust)

I desire and envision for my three boys to glorify God, be spiritually mature and independent young men, while being:

1. Devoted to the Lord, learning, reading and applying God's scriptures to their lives daily.
2. Committed and equipped to the evangelism and discipleship of others for the purpose of fulfilling the great commission upon leaving the family/youth group.
3. Equipped to serve God in a local church, using their talents as service to the body.
4. Prepared for the next step of education and/or career.
5. Able to duplicate family discipleship in their own family.

Provide time for parents to write goals for their children. Use blank sheet provided.

### **3. Examine Your Family Rhythm for Ideal Discipleship Moments.**

Your family is busy. However, are you able to accurately assess where your time goes? I am sure that if you examine every hour of your day and discover ways to redeem your time, you will find time for family discipleship.

Time is our greatest commodity.

The Value of Time in Family Discipleship: Creating intentional time built into the rhythm of the family's life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about, and living out the gospel.

Try to set apart time for Bible reading as a family.

The need for Family Worship times. Family worship is the regular use of the Bible, prayer, and singing by the family to glorify God.

Family Worship: 2 books

Watch Family Worship video

This is the reason why Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is such a great passage, especially verse 7. Moses encouraged dads to teach their children diligently as they are at home, on the road, when they rise up, and when they go to bed. Look at your daily routine (travel, meals, morning, evening, etc.). God has given your family natural times to learn about and celebrate Him. While I encourage families to create at least one weekly timeslot for family discipleship, if at first families simply sought to utilize these natural times, that would be wonderful.

Identify times and brainstorm ideas for your family and for the age of your children which will provide you the best faith interactions. Choose one goal to implement at a specific time in your family rhythm. It's easiest to start at the beginning of a school year or the beginning of a new year. Summer and holidays are a struggle for most families because of chaotic rhythms. Don't throw in the towel just because of a slump in that season.

Identify resources you will use that are appropriate for the age of your children. Start with one time slot in applying Deuteronomy 6 and strive for consistency before you add additional times to disciple your children.

#### **In Class Discussion:**

- Begin to discuss what your vision/goals for your children are or should be.
- Begin to formulate the specific wording for your vision.

#### **Homework:**

- Write up your vision/goals for your children.
- Review the section "What would you want to teach your children?" and begin to make your list of important teaching topics for them that reflect your vision/goals.
- Try to have a Family Worship Time where you read the Bible, pray, and sing.

## **Lesson 5: Practical Development of Your Family's Discipleship Make Your Plans**

**Share something that you did this week for Family Discipleship (or since the start of class)**

**Review last week's lesson (points 1-3)**

**Does anyone else want to read their vision?**

**Again lets review:**

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill the **Mission**.

### **4. Implement Your Vision/Goals and Make a Plan for Family Discipleship.**

Writing goals and developing your vision are worthless if you don't implement them. Focus on shorter, more consistent times rather than longer, more sporadic times. Evaluate your progress at the end of a semester to learn from the past and make future family discipleship plans. Know that you will have times of success and times of struggle. A faithful and consistent strategy will help you disciple for the long haul. Journal and record your favorite faith interaction moments with your children and regularly share them for posterity.

Accountability: Do you know one of the greatest motivations for me to continuing family discipleship this fall (besides the Lord)? It is needing to prepare and teach this class, in order to stand before you and teach this class, I need to live it out.

**Practically step through resources and tools for each of these areas:**

#### **Keep a Record**

Keep a record (notebook) of what resources you use and when you use them. You and your children will have a tendency to forget, but a record of your discipleship journey will benefit your family greatly as you age and reflect on the spiritual growth of your family. There are enough times, tools, and tactics for a diversity of families. Discover what and when works best for family discipleship in your home. Look at some of these resources for "teaching diligently" your children.

**\*\*This will be very interactive with showing examples, opportunities for questions/discussion etc.**

#### **Write these on the board (big topics)**

It is my guess (this based on my own life and family), that as I would list the above in priority, it may look similar to what is above. But when I compare to reality, it is probably switched with practical aspects of life playing a much larger role than doctrine and Christian living. (Remember lesson #1 – my testimony of the 5 important things in my life)

- Teaching Doctrine to your children
  - Catechism (basically questions to teach and to ask your children)
  - Bible survey for kids (Mike Faberez)
  - Family devotionals
  - Videos
  - Gospel storybooks
  - Salvation books and resources (Gospel Glove from CEF)
  - Other resources based on age, interest, etc.
  - For teens: <http://disciple6.com>
  - Reading the same Bible passage together and discussing together or reading the same Bible passage separately and then discussing together
  
- Teaching Christian Living
  - Doing a QT with your children.
    - Word of Life
    - S.O.A.P.
    - Awanas
    - Scripture memory
  - Parenting books and Resources
    - The Tripp brothers
    - Grace-Based Parenting
    - Raising Men not boys
    - Many more... (have available)
  - For older children (teens)
    - They can read a book.
      - “This changes everything” and many more like it.
    - They can do a study
    - Read a Christian book together as a family.
  - Purity
    - Jim Burns books
    - Passport to Purity
    - Dannah Gresh Books
  - Identity – Passport to Identity
  
- Reinforce what is taught in children and youth lessons at MVCC.
  - Know what the Student Ministry is learning and follow through with this material. Many times Steve and Danny will provide follow-up questions for parents through the View’s facebook page. The Student Ministry also sends a monthly email.
  - Know what the Children’s Ministry is learning. They provide family discussion points for families to discuss the lessons being taught monthly.
  - This practically partners the church and family together.
  
- Teaching Service
  - Serve in church as a family
  - Are you intentional in how you communicate your love for the church?  
Are you critical of your church and church leadership around your

children? One of the greatest ways to serve your children as well as the church is to intentionally speak well about your love and passion for the church and the leadership.

- Serve in your community as a family
  - Encourage your child to serve independently from the family
  - Partner with the church: Encourage your child to serve with their peers in Youth Group.
  - Have them attend a mission trip.
    - There are lots of options: as a family, with peers in youth, or as an individual.
  - Utilize prayer guides for countries of the world (Operation World)
  - Encourage and train your child in evangelism.
    - Practice gospel presentations
- Practical Everyday Aspects of Life
    - Whether it be your local sports team, Boy Scouts, or dance class, there is not a shortage of options. The biggest question is not what is available, the question is if you will be able to limit in order to not neglect teaching your children the above aspects.
    - Many parents begin with this one and often focus primarily on this one.

Pastor Adam will list out what resources he has used over the past 10 years for his children. I will include it in the Handout for the parents to use as a resource. Provide my list of resources is for the purpose of providing ideas only. Each family is different.

I have gotten feedback about our lessons after Family Discipleship, thank you – keep them coming.

**In-Class Discussion:**

- Begin to discuss your plan and the implementation of your vision/goals. What resources would you want to use?

**Homework:**

- Write out your plans.
- What resources would you want to use?



## **Lesson 6: Practical Development of Your Family's Discipleship Fulfill the Mission**

### **Review last 2 weeks of lessons (points 1-4)**

Again lets review:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill the **Mission**.

### **5. Keep your Vision in Focus, which may require you to Adjust your Plans based on the Age of your Children.**

When children are small, reading short passages of the Bible to them is great. As they grow, they are able to identify key words. When they learn to read, let them take their turn to read scripture, eventually they will be able to read the Bible entirely on their own. Some seasons of family discipleship are easier than others. Many parents will be consistent when their children are young, but struggle in the chaos and uncertainty of the teenage years. Remain faithful in discipling your children through the teen years and adjust your strategy and content.

### **6. Share your Family Discipleship Journey with other Families from Church.**

Your church family is made up of many smaller families. Share, learn from, and encourage one another in your family discipleship journey. If you are part of a small group, maybe ask each week, "Who wants to share a story of a faith interaction inside or outside your home this week?" It is important to share victories, struggles, and failures in this journey. Sharing struggles and successes in family discipleship encourages, challenges, comforts, and builds up the church body.

### **7. Utilize Family Discipleship to Launch Your Children to Fulfill the Great Commission.**

Review Dr. Wilder's section on missions from Trained in the Fear of God.

We briefly mentioned the emphasis on missions last week. I want to speak to a trend I see in families who most often participate in family discipleship. Families who are most open to family discipleship tend to be families who may homeschool or private school their children. From a homeschool dad, I know that often times homeschool is done from fear and a desire for protection. While each person is free to make these decisions for their family and while there are legitimate influences in school, remember Walt Mueller's term cultural catechesis.

It has been my experience that many of these same families have over-protected their children to their detriment especially in the realm of missions and evangelism. Each child's development and maturity is different, and there are obvious times to keep a child home because of their maturity. However, do not keep a child from serving God in missions because of fear. I have had the opportunity to take almost 80 teenagers all over the world, one trip was to Communist-closed China. God worked mightily in those trips, and I saw teens and parents trust God through those times like never before.

Finally, there is a reason why I said “fulfill **THE** Mission”, and not “Fulfill **YOUR** Mission”. Family discipleship is not about you, or your children. It’s about God! It is His Mission! The Mission! We are called to be obedient to God’s word and fulfill the Great Commission. Family discipleship does not just influence the children in the home, but it should influence people beyond our home with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **8. Help and Equip other Parents to begin Family Discipleship.**

Remember our first week. We evaluated what the family is: the basic building block of our society. God established the family even prior to establishing the church. The church should equip families. Church leaders should also examine everything they do (church calendar, sermon, worship service, children and student ministries, Love Frederick, mission trips, and special events) with how these help and equip families to disciple their children.

What is the greatest evangelistic relationship? The greatest evangelistic relationship is not peers in school, nor the one who works beside you. The greatest evangelistic relationship is from a parent to a child.<sup>15</sup> (on next page)

#### **Means to Salvation Vary By Age of Commitment**

The precipitating event for someone to accept Christ as his or her Savior varied by the age of the individual making that spiritual commitment.

For instance, among Christians who embraced Christ before their teen years, half were led to Christ by their parents, with another one in five led by some other friend or relative. Comparatively few accepted Jesus in response to a minister’s personal prompting (7%), and only one out of eight cited a special event as the turning point in their journey. Among those who mentioned events, about half identified a church service. Just 1% mentioned media evangelism or other special situations as being responsible for their conversion.

Among people who accepted Christ when they were age 13 through 21, the process was much more diverse. One out of five credited a friend with bringing them to Christ, and a similar proportion said their parents were responsible for their decision. One-fifth also recalled an event as the trigger for their commitment. One-sixth of the people saved as teens (16%) listed a relative other than their parent as the primary influencer. Ministers were cited by one out of every ten Christians who accepted Christ during the 13-to-21-age bracket, while media and special personal situations were listed by only 1%.

Adults who accepted Christ as their savior generally responded to different stimuli than did younger people. The most common precipitant was a friend (19%), followed by mass media experiences (14%), a live event (14%) or a relative (13%). Ministers were responsible for leading one out of every ten adult converts to Christ while parents of adults were named as the evangelistic influence by one in twelve (8%) of these believers.

<sup>15</sup> Barna Group, “Evangelism Is Most Effective among Kids,” October 11, 2004, <https://www.barna.com/research/evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids/>.

If the church is a lighthouse, so also is the believing family. I am reminded of the book called *The Gospel comes with a Housekey* by Rosario Butterfield, where she emphasizes Christian families show themselves as lighthouses by opening up their homes for the hospitality of guests, even guests who are very different than you and your family (Rosario was saved from the LGBTQ lifestyle through the faithful ministering of a pastor in her area of Syracuse, NY).<sup>16</sup>

Family discipleship in a family (especially my family) will never be perfect. However, I hope that families who have learned, adapted, and grown as a result of family discipleship can begin to equip and help other families find footing on the family discipleship journey. It would be great to create a community of help, encouragement, resource sharing, and much more for the advancement of family discipleship, for the equipping of parents, and for the discipleship of children.

If time allows watch this video especially 3:25-to the end. (or watch the entire video – it is a 6 minute video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9SUYzSLmrE>

Ask for Questions.

<sup>16</sup> Rosario Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

## APPENDIX 4

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP HANDOUTS

#### **Handout Lesson 1: What Is Family Discipleship?**

These lessons are meant to equip you as parents, to encourage you to not just delegate the discipleship of your children to the church, but partner with the church. The church's task is to equip you as parents for leading your family in four ways: know your role as a parent which was established by God, develop a Biblical vision for each of your children, make a plan for the discipleship of each of your children, and fulfill the mission.

So in summary, these lessons are meant for you to:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill The **Mission**.

*“The best plan parents can have to help develop their children spiritually is to realize the distinctiveness of their role and the church's role, respectively. Spiritual growth and learning necessitates a shared effort put forth within a community. God designed the community of faith to work alongside the family to cultivate children's spiritual growth – but the home will always tend to have the greater impact.”<sup>1</sup>*

**Illustration:** “What gets the best”

#### **What is Family?**

***A family is one \_\_\_\_\_ and one \_\_\_\_\_ united in \_\_\_\_\_ plus primarily their children by birth or adoption; and secondarily, other persons related by blood.***

Children don't make a family, they join a family, which means that the most basic level is a man and woman united in a marriage covenant.

#### **What is the purpose of Family?**

- Ultimately to \_\_\_\_\_ God
- \_\_\_\_\_ - “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”

<sup>1</sup> John Ellis Steen, *Practical Family Ministry: A Collection of Ideas for Your Church* (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 41.

- Family and marriage reveal God’s \_\_\_\_\_ and love for mankind.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of children which maintains a legacy and transfer of faith through the generations.

**As we look at the passages next week, it will become apparent that God designed the family as a discipleship center.**

### **What is Family Discipleship?**

Family discipleship is an intentional process where believing parents guide their unbelieving or less-mature believing children to embrace and apply the gospel in every part of their lives. Family discipleship is a process that includes personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ by the children as He has been revealed in scripture. Family discipleship involves developing perspectives and practices that reflect the mind of Christ. The gospel, expressed and applied in the context of the community of faith, is the center point of discipleship; conformity to Jesus Christ is the goal of discipleship; “spiritual development” and “Christian formation” describe progress toward this goal.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Path towards Family Discipleship.**

As said earlier, these lessons are meant to show you a path forward in Family discipleship and to help you:

5. Know Your **Role**.
6. Develop Your **Vision**.
7. Make Your **Plan**.
8. Fulfill The **Mission**.

### **Limiting your Expectations**

#### **Why Family Discipleship?**

What does Catechesis mean?

#### **In-Class Discussion:**

- As we close, I would like to spend the remaining time to encourage you as a couple to discuss the family discipleship of your children. If you are a mother here by yourself, please find another mother, and if you are a father, please find another father to discuss these questions with.

#### **Homework:**

- Review these notes again during the week.
- Begin to pray for God’s direction for you and your family.
- Write out what you are currently doing that spiritually impacts your children.
- Read Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, and Ephesians 5 & 6.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, ed., *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011), 17.

## Handout Lesson 2: What Does the Bible Say about Family Discipleship?

Review Homework from last week

Lets Review the purpose of these lessons:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill The **Mission**.

### **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism**

If teenagers wrote out the creed of this religious outlook, it would look something like this:

- A god exists who \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the world and watches over life on earth.
- God wants people to be \_\_\_\_\_, nice and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
- The central goal of life is to be \_\_\_\_\_ and feel good about yourself.
- God is \_\_\_\_\_ in my life except when I need God to solve a problem.
- Good people go to \_\_\_\_\_ when they \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

- The Shema
- Action Verbs: Hear Him, Obey Him, Love Him
- Focus on the Heart of your child
  - Proverbs 4:23, Psalm 26:2, Hebrews 4:12, Luke 6:45, Jeremiah 17:9-10, Psalm 19:14, Matthew 15:18, Matthew 6:21, Psalm 139:23.
- “teach them diligently”
- Every day small and incremental teaching

### **Psalms 78:1-8**

- It was Israel’s responsibility to pass the faith on to the next generation.

**Proverbs:** To teach wisdom and the fear of the Lord.

- Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it”.
- Proverbs 1:7 – “The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”

- Proverbs 23:24-25, 29:3, 17: Wise children bring gladness and joy
- Proverbs 10:1, 19:13, 28:7: Foolish children bring demise
- Proverbs 9:16: Vulnerable to wrong influences
- Proverbs 14:18: If uncorrected, will lead to full-grown folly.
- Proverbs 4:23: Need to guard heart
- Proverbs 3:11-12: Wisdom leads to parental discipline and correction
- Proverbs 3:11-12, 13:1: Need for discipline
- Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14: Verses on types of discipline

### **Ephesians 6:1-4**

(very similar to Col 3:20-21)

A challenge for both children and parents.

- Children:
  - Obey
  - Honor
- Father:
  - Do not provoke your children to anger.
  - Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

What do these 4 passages tell us about your role as parents? Church's role?

### **Homework:**

- Read these four passages at home during the week
- Begin to list the parental expectations and roles from these passages.
- Pray for you and your family to understand and apply these passages.

## Handout Lesson 3: What Is My Role?

As we begin lets review:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill The **Mission**.

### **Biblical Parenthood**

- Strong Marriage
  
- Role with Children (Deuteronomy 6:7, Psalm 78:4-5, Proverbs, Ephesians 6:4)
  
- Personal Need for Discipleship
  - Parenting, Words, and the Heart

### **Church's Role**

#### **Models of Family Ministry:**

- Segmented-programmatic model
  
- Family-based model



- Family-equipping model

- Family-integrated model

### **In-Class Discussion**

- Review Position Paper of “Family Ministry at Mountain View Community Church.”

### **Homework:**

- Do you see yourself as the primary discipler of your children or do you see that as the church’s role?
- If the church spends 1-2 hours a week with your child, how much time are you spending with your child in spiritual development?

## Handout Lesson 4: Practical Development of Your Family's Discipleship Develop Your Vision

As we begin lets review:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill the **Mission**.

As we have seen, the Bible clearly commands parents to be the primary disciplers of their children. However, many parents, like me (Pastor Adam), were not raised in a family where this was a priority and may have difficulty setting these practices in place. We will take this slowly, and as we look at the next several sessions, we will step through several steps as we develop a practical plan for family discipleship.

### 1. Own Family Discipleship for your Family.

You may not have a Bible degree from a college or seminary. Chances are you do not. However, God has blessed you with children who are looking to you for spiritual teaching and discipleship.

\*Remember: You don't have to know everything about your Bible to teach your children. You only need to know a little bit more than they do. You can learn while you go.

Here are 4 steps to help you own your family's discipleship

1. Read and Study key biblical texts related to family discipleship
  - a. Memorize key passages related to family discipleship
2. Develop a theology for family discipleship
  - a. Based on those scripture, what is your role and the church's role?
3. Read what others have written on family discipleship and talk to other parents, who you admire, who have also strived to disciple their children. Talk to Pastor Adam about books and resources he may have.
4. Continue to strive to be a life-long learner and a theologian.

### 2. Write your Vision and Specific Goals for your Family's Discipleship.

Family discipleship should include multiple areas of focus:

Any Teachers in the classroom:

- What goes into developing a curriculum
- Show Scope and Sequence for MVU, youth ministry, etc.

### Developing Your Vision in six areas of life:

- Spiritual: Bible reading, Scripture memory, prayer, heart condition.
- Physical: Exercise routine, sports activities, health.
- Character: Two character qualities were focused on.
- Relational/loving others: Selflessness vs. selfishness, how they handle offenses, discernment in friendships, and ministry involvement. for the next step of education and/or career.

- Educational/academic: Course of study, curriculum, who is teaching what? Life skills: Listening, typing, finances, service skills, leadership, etc.

**This will drive our plan: (next week)**

What would you want to teach your children?

- Doctrinally: Gospel understanding, basic understanding of theology (systematic theology).
- Christian Living
  - Disciplines (QT, prayer, etc.)
  - Obedience
  - Discipline
  - Purity
  - Relationships
  - Church
  - Use of time
- Reinforce what is taught in Children and Youth lessons at MVCC.
  - This practically partners the church and family together.
- Service: model for your children service to church, to neighbors, and to each other.
- Practical everyday aspects of life
  - For Pastor Adam: Outdoor living, hunting, fishing, sports, mechanical work, home repair, blacksmithing.

**3. Examine Your Family Rhythm for Ideal Discipleship Moments.**

Your family is busy. However, are you able to accurately assess where your time goes? I am sure that if you examine every hour of your day and discover ways to redeem your time, you will find time for family discipleship.

*Time is our greatest commodity.*

The Value of Time in Family Discipleship: Creating intentional time built into the rhythm of the family's life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about, and living out the gospel.

The need for Family Worship times.

This is the reason why Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is such a great passage, especially verse 7. Identify times and brainstorm ideas for your family and for the age of your children which will provide you the best faith interactions. Choose one goal to implement at a specific time in your family rhythm. It's easiest to start at the beginning of a school year or the beginning of a new year. Summer and holidays are a struggle for most families because of chaotic rhythms. Don't throw in the towel just because of a slump in that season.

**4. Implement Your Vision/Goals and Make a Plan for Family Discipleship. (next week)**

**5. Keep your Vision in Focus, which may require you to Adjust your Plans based on the Age of your Children. (in two weeks)**

**6. Share your Family Discipleship Journey with other Families from Church.** (in two weeks)

**7. Utilize Family Discipleship to Launch Your Children to Fulfill the Great Commission.** (in two weeks)

**8. Help and Equip other Parents to begin Family Discipleship.** (in two weeks)

**In Class Discussion:**

- Begin to discuss what your vision/goals for your children are or should be.
- Begin to formulate the specific wording for your vision.

**Homework:**

- Write up, finish or modify your vision/goals for your children.
- Review the section “What would you want to teach your children?” and begin to make your list of important teaching topics for them that reflect your vision/goals.
- Try to have a Family Worship Time where you read the Bible, pray, and sing.

## Handout Lesson 5: Practical Development of Your Family's Discipleship Make Your Plans

### Review last week's lesson (points 1-3)

Again lets review:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill the **Mission**.

### 4. Implement Your Vision/Goals and Make a Plan for Family Discipleship.

Writing goals and developing your vision are worthless if you don't implement them. Focus on shorter, more consistent times rather than longer, more sporadic times. Evaluate your progress at the end of a semester to learn from the past and make future family discipleship plans. Know that you will have times of success and times of struggle. A faithful and consistent strategy will help you disciple for the long haul. Journal and record your favorite faith interaction moments with your children and regularly share them for posterity.

### Keep a record

Keep a record of what resources you use and when you use them. You and your children will have a tendency to forget, but a record of your discipleship journey will benefit your family greatly as you age and reflect on the spiritual growth of your family. There are enough times, tools, and tactics for a diversity of families. Discover what and when works best for family discipleship in your home.

- Teaching Doctrine to your children
  - Catechism (basically questions to teach and to ask your children)
  - Bible survey for kids (Mike Faberez)
  - Family devotionals
  - Videos
  - Gospel storybooks
  - Salvation books and resources (Gospel Glove from CEF)
  - Other resources based on age, interest, etc.
  - For teens: <http://disciple6.com>
  - Reading the same Bible passage together and discussing together or reading the same Bible passage separately and then discussing together
- Teaching Christian Living
  - Doing a QT with your children.
    - Word of Life
    - S.O.A.P.
    - Awanas
    - Scripture memory
  - Parenting books and Resources
    - The Tripp brothers
    - Grace-Based Parenting

- Raising Men not boys
    - Many more...
  - For older children (teens)
    - They can read a book.
      - “This changes everything” and many more like it.
    - They can do a study
    - Read a Christian book together as a family.
  - Purity – Passport to Purity
  - Identity – Passport to Identity
- Reinforce what is taught in children and youth lessons at MVCC.
  - Know what the Student Ministry is learning and follow through with this material. Many times Steve and Danny will provide follow-up questions for parents through the View’s facebook page. The Student Ministry also sends a monthly email.
  - Know what the Children’s Ministry is learning. They provide family discussion points for families to discuss the lessons being taught monthly.
- Teaching Service
  - Serve in church as a family
  - Are you intentional in how you communicate your love for the church? Are you critical of your church and church leadership around your children? One of the greatest ways to serve your children as well as the church is to intentionally speak well about your love and passion for the church and the leadership.
  - Serve in your community as a family
  - Encourage your child to serve independently from the family
  - Partner with the church: Encourage your child to serve with their peers in Youth Group.
  - Have them attend a mission trip.
    - There are lots of options: as a family, with peers in youth, or as an individual.
  - Utilize prayer guides for countries of the world (Operation World)
  - Encourage and train your child in evangelism.
    - Practice gospel presentations
- Practical Everyday Aspects of Life
  - Whether it be your local sports team, Boy Scouts, or dance class, there is not a shortage of options. The biggest question is not what is available, the question is if you will be able to limit in order to not neglect teaching your children the above aspects.
  - Many parents begin with this one and often focus primarily on this one.

**In-Class Discussion:**

- Begin to discuss your plan and fill out the Family Discipleship Plan for your family. What resources would you want to use?

**Homework:**

- Review your vision.
- Finish writing out your plans.
- What resources would you want to use?

**Family Discipleship Plan for 2019-2020**

As a Family, we plan to use for our Family Worship time:

**Child #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

Age:

Are there any significant milestones in this child's life?

Are there any significant heart issues in this child's life?

Are there any aspects of service available for my child? (Mission trip, Day Camp, etc.)

Is there any specific topic I would like to review/teach this child?

Course of Action for this year / Resources to use:

**Child #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Age:

Are there any significant milestones in this child's life?

Are there any significant heart issues in this child's life?

Are there any aspects of service available for my child? (Mission trip, Day Camp, etc.)

Is there any specific topic I would like to review/teach this child?

Course of Action for this year / Resources to use:

**Child #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Age:

Are there any significant milestones in this child's life?

Are there any significant heart issues in this child's life?

Are there any aspects of service available for my child? (Mission trip, Day Camp, etc.)

Is there any specific topic I would like to review/teach this child?

Course of Action for this year / Resources to use:



## Handout Lesson 6: Practical Development of Your Family's Discipleship Fulfill the Mission

Again lets review:

1. Know Your **Role**.
2. Develop Your **Vision**.
3. Make Your **Plan**.
4. Fulfill the **Mission**.

**Review last 2 weeks of lessons (points 1-4)**

### 1. Own Family Discipleship for your Family.

You may not have a Bible degree from a college or seminary. Chances are you do not. However, God has blessed you with children who are looking to you for spiritual teaching and discipleship.

### 2. Write your Vision and Specific Goals for your Family's Discipleship.

Developing Your Vision in six areas of life:

- Spiritual: Bible reading, Scripture memory, prayer, heart condition.
- Physical: Exercise routine, sports activities, health.
- Character: Two character qualities were focused on.
- Relational/loving others: Selflessness vs. selfishness, how they handle offenses, discernment in friendships, and ministry involvement. for the next step of education and/or career.
- Educational/academic: Course of study, curriculum, who is teaching what? Life skills: Listening, typing, finances, service skills, leadership, etc.

My Vision for the children God has entrusted with me:

I desire and envision for my children to

---

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1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **3. Examine Your Family Rhythm for Ideal Discipleship Moments.**

Your family is busy. However, are you able to accurately assess where your time goes? I am sure that if you examine every hour of your day and discover ways to redeem your time, you will find time for family discipleship.

### **4. Implement Your Vision/Goals and Make a Plan for Family Discipleship.**

Writing goals and developing your vision are worthless if you don't implement them. Focus on shorter, more consistent times rather than longer, more sporadic times. Evaluate your progress at the end of a season to learn from the past and make future family discipleship plans. Know that you will have times of success and times of struggle. A faithful and consistent strategy will help you disciple for the long haul. Journal and record your favorite faith interaction moments with your children and regularly share them for posterity.

- Teaching Doctrine to your children
- Teaching Christian Living
- Reinforce what is taught in children and youth lessons at MVCC.
- Teaching Service
- Practical Everyday Aspects of Life
- 

### **Family Discipleship Plan for 2019-2020**

As a Family, we plan to use for our Family Worship time:

**Child #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

Age:

Are there any significant milestones in this child's life?

Are there any significant heart issues in this child's life?

Are there any aspects of service available for my child? (Mission trip, Day Camp, etc.)

Is there any specific topic I would like to review/teach this child?

Course of Action for this year / Resources to use:

**5. Keep your Vision in Focus, which may require you to Adjust your Plans based on the Age of your Children.**

When children are small, reading short passages of the Bible to them is great. As they grow, they are able to identify key words. When they learn to read, let them take their turn to read scripture, eventually they will be able to read the Bible entirely on their own. Some seasons of family discipleship are easier than others. Many parents will be consistent when their children are young, but struggle in the chaos and uncertainty of the teenage years. Remain faithful in discipling your children through the teen years and adjust your strategy and content.

**6. Share your Family Discipleship Journey with other Families from Church.**

Your church family is made up of many smaller families. Share, learn from, and encourage one another in your family discipleship journey. If you are part of a small group, maybe ask each week, “Who wants to share a story of a faith interaction inside or outside your home this week?” It is important to share victories, struggles, and failures in this journey. Sharing struggles and successes in family discipleship encourages, challenges, comforts, and builds up the church body.

**7. Utilize Family Discipleship to Launch Your Children to Fulfill the Great Commission.**

Finally, there is a reason why I said “fulfill **THE** Mission”, and not “Fulfill **YOUR** Mission”. Family discipleship is not about you, or your children. It’s about God! It is His Mission! The Mission! We are called to be obedient to God’s word and fulfill the Great Commission. Family discipleship does not just influence the children in the home, but it should influence people beyond our home with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**8. Help and Equip other Parents to begin Family Discipleship.**

Remember our first week. We evaluated what the family is: the basic building block of our society. God established the family even prior to establishing the church. The church should equip families. Church leaders should also examine everything they do (church calendar, sermon, worship service, children and student ministries, Love Frederick, mission trips, and special events) with how these help and equip families to disciple their children.

If the church is a lighthouse, so also is the believing family. I am reminded of the book called *The Gospel comes with a Housekey* by Rosario Butterfield, where she emphasizes Christian families show themselves as lighthouses by opening up their homes for the hospitality of guests, even guests who are very different than you and your family (Rosario was saved from the LGBTQ lifestyle through the faithful ministering of a pastor in her area of Syracuse, NY).<sup>3</sup>

Family discipleship in a family (especially my family) will never be perfect. However, I hope that families who have learned, adapted, and grown as a result of family discipleship can begin to equip and help other families find footing on the family

<sup>3</sup> Rosario Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018)

discipleship journey. It would be great to create a community of help, encouragement, resource sharing, and much more for the advancement of family discipleship, for the equipping of parents, and for the discipleship of children.

## APPENDIX 5

### MVCC FAMILY MINISTRY POSITION PAPER

#### **Family Ministry at Mountain View Community Church**

At Mountain View Community Church, we believe that we are called by God to be a loving and caring community of brothers and sisters in Christ who humbly serve, help, mentor, and minister to one another for the glory of God.

Based on the precepts taught in the Old Testament (e.g. Deuteronomy 6) and reiterated in the New Testament (e.g. Romans 12, Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3), we believe that as a spiritual family of families, we are called to first and foremost seek God individually and together with all our hearts so that we might raise the next generation to know, love, and serve Christ fully as spiritually healthy children. We are committed to equipping parents to spiritually lead their children (and specifically equip fathers, where possible, to be the spiritual leaders of their homes), and we desire to offer mentoring relationships across generations so that all types of families are ministered to, encouraged, and pointed to the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

#### **MVCC's 7 Principles for Family Ministry:**

- 1. Personal Walk is First Priority** -- Our personal walk with God is first and foremost, before we can spiritually lead anyone else - our children or others.
  - Serving God is to be a parent's first priority, serving their spouses second, and leading their families third, although these are not mutually exclusive from one another.
  - We should disciple parents as believers to know God's Word, develop spiritual disciplines, and learn how to be in the world, but not of the world.
  - Parents must be disciples before they can make disciples.
  - "Our kids are impacted by who we are, not just what we say. The way children view their parents is the starting point for the way they view God. Our character, on display at home, is literally constructing our children's framework for understanding who God is."
  - Luke 6:39-40 <sup>39</sup> He also told them this parable: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? <sup>40</sup> The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.
  - Deut. 6:4-5 <sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The *LORD* our God, the *LORD* is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the *LORD* your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
- 2. Parents as Spiritual Leaders of their Children** -- Parents are called by God to be the primary spiritual leaders of their children, and that should be of a higher priority than almost anything other than our relationships with God and our spouses.

- “The goal is a gospel-centered, Scripture-grounded, Spirit-compelled partnership that equips fathers and mothers to participate personally in the discipleship of their children.”
  - Deut. 6:6-9 <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.
  - Deuteronomy 11:18-21 <sup>18</sup> Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>19</sup> Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>20</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, <sup>21</sup> so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the *LORD* swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.
  - Deuteronomy 16:11 <sup>11</sup> And rejoice before the *LORD* your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites in your towns, and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows living among you.
  - Psalm 78:5-8 <sup>5</sup> He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, <sup>6</sup> so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. <sup>7</sup> Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. <sup>8</sup> They would not be like their ancestors—a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.
  - Eph. 6 <sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— <sup>3</sup> “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” <sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord....
  - 2 Timothy 3:14-17 <sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
  - Parents are responsible for the training and discipline of their children - Proverbs 3:11-12; 13:1, 24; 19:18; 23:12-14; 29:15-17
3. **Fathers as Spiritual Leaders of the Family** -- Fathers are called to be spiritual leaders of their families.
- We want to cast a vision for Biblical fatherhood.
  - We must teach fathers that they are to be the spiritual leaders in our families by blessing them, teaching them and protecting them.

- We recognize that many families may not have a father who is able to lead, due to death, divorce, or other reasons, so mothers, grandparents, and other men and women in the church may need to serve as their spiritual leaders.
  - God passed on precise instructions regarding how the people should preserve His precepts: “You shall teach them diligently to your children” (Deut. 6:6-7). Moses commanded fathers to be prepared to instruct their children about the Lord’s mighty deeds (Ex. 12:26-27, Deut. 6:20-25, Josh 4:5-7).
  - Genesis 18:17-20 <sup>17</sup> Then the *LORD* said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? <sup>18</sup> Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. <sup>19</sup> For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the *LORD* by doing what is right and just, so that the *LORD* will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”
  - Joshua 24:15 <sup>15</sup> But if serving the *LORD* seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the *LORD*.”
  - Ephesians 6:4 <sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
  - I Timothy 3:4-5, 12 <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. <sup>5</sup> (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) <sup>12</sup> A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well.
  - Titus 1:6 <sup>6</sup> An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.
4. **Church as Equipper of Parents** -- The church needs to teach, train, equip, provide role models, protect and encourage parents.
- We should educate parents on their responsibility to disciple their children (Eph. 6).
  - We should equip parents with age appropriate tools for their use in discipling their children, and spur parents on to actively follow through with this responsibility.
  - We desire to teach families to worship in the home together (e.g., read the bible, worship, and pray).
  - We are responsible to teach all the children who come to our church.
  - Parents need to have tools to engage their kids in conversations about what’s happening at church and in our culture.
  - Deut. 6:4-9 <sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The *LORD* our God, the *LORD* is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the *LORD* your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.
  - Psalm 78:5-6 <sup>5</sup> He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, <sup>6</sup> so the next

generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.

5. **Church as a Family of Families** -- Synergy of Church and Family -- Parents Working Together with the Church -- Parents are most effective in the raising of their children when they receive the support, accountability, and help of the church, including its leaders, other parents, adults, and youth.
- We want to be a church that prays for each other's children and families.
  - We want our church to be a family of families. (e.g., Col. 1:2 To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.)
  - We see great synergy in the life of a child that has both Spirit-led parents who are godly, biblically minded, intentional disciple makers and a church family full of Christians with the same spiritual goals.
  - Parents greatly benefit from the help and support of the church family in most effectively helping their children to grow spiritually.
  - The church is to use its resources to support the parents and create a family of families' approach where the professional staff, volunteers, and parents are all rowing in the same direction toward God.
  - We want MVCC to be a place where families connect - not just where they separate (into their various ministries and classes).
  - We want to together acknowledge and celebrate rites of passage, spiritual transitions, and milestones.
  - While we believe that parents have the primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of their children, we believe the best result for the spiritual growth of our children will occur when they have strong training both at home and through the church. Therefore, MVCC is committed to train parents to disciple their children in the family setting, directly train our children through the various ministries of the church, and provide opportunities for these forces in our children's lives to come together.
  - We desire to be a community in which parents are equipped and encouraged in their efforts to raise spiritually healthy children, and where they find a loving community to come alongside them and provide and expended spiritual family as we follow Christ together.
  - "Deuteronomy 6:4-9 gave the people of Israel cues as to what is expected of them in the spiritual formation of their biological children as well as the children of their community. Parents and the surrounding community of adults are expected to exemplify what it means to be fully devoted followers of God."
  - Deuteronomy 16:11 And rejoice before the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites in your towns, and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows living among you.
  - Deuteronomy 21:18-19 If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town.



6. **Intergenerational Ministry to Families** -- Intergenerational relationships are greatly beneficial to the Christian community and should be fostered by the church by offering mentoring, discipleship, and other opportunities for interaction.
- We should provide opportunities for intergenerational interaction/relationships outside of Sunday morning worship (i.e. Godly example of a grandfather).
  - We should seek opportunities to follow the Titus 2 model where older teach younger, so we connect the generations.
  - Children learn best by seeing real life examples of godly men and women, so intergenerational activities, discipleship, etc. are vitally important.
  - Deuteronomy 4:9 9 Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.
7. **Families Are Often Broken; The Church Should Minister to All** -- Family in our time, place, and culture is generally broken, so the church must provide grace to all and be a family to physical and spiritual “orphans and widows.”
- We desire to teach and reach all who enter our doors – children, youth, and adults – regardless of their family relationships.
  - The nuclear family, as designed by God, is generally broken, disconnected, and dysfunctional.
  - The local community is characterized by many splintered and blended families, and we will most effectively reach and support them by helping fill in the gaps that they cannot easily meet in the spiritual raising of their children.
  - We must extend grace for parents and families, because no one’s family is perfect, and God extends much grace to us.
  - We desire to provide support and leadership for families without believing mothers and fathers.
  - We are called to reach out as spiritual mentors (e.g., blessing, teaching, and protecting) to the “orphans and widows” in situations where fathers or mothers are not there or do not lead their children spiritually.
  - We shouldn’t over-emphasize a culture of families to the degree that someone with a small family, with no kids, or who is unmarried would feel left out or less important.
  - James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.
  - Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.
  - Psalm 68:5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.
  - Psalm 82:3 Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

The Elders of Mountain View Community Church  
October 5, 2012

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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING PARENTS AT MOUNTAIN VIEW COMMUNITY CHURCH IN FREDERICK, MARYLAND, TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020  
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This project was designed to equip parents at Mountain View Community Church to lead in the discipleship of their children at home. The project involved administering a pre- and post-series survey assess the understanding of the biblical role of parents as primary disciplers of their children and the level of discipleship participants were doing in their home. A six-week curriculum was developed and taught.

Chapter 1 introduces the ministry context of Mountain View Community Church, along with the rationale, purpose, goals, research methodologies, definitions, limitations, and delimitations of the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis for parents as the primary disciplers of their children. Foundational scriptures in this chapter include Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, and Ephesians 5:21-6:4. Chapter 3 addresses the historical grounding for the practice of family discipleship focusing on the Puritans and early American evangelicals, as well as addressing the current cultural considerations for family discipleship. Chapter 4 details the curriculum, including the administration of a pre- and post-series survey to measure any increase in the biblical knowledge and practices of parents who attended the teaching lessons. Chapter 5 concludes with an overall evaluation of the project, suggestions for improvement, and further development.

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