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EQUIPPING PARENTS AT BEVERLY HILLS BAPTIST  
CHURCH IN ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA,  
TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

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A Project  
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the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by  
Aaron Mishler  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

EQUIPPING PARENTS AT BEVERLY HILLS BAPTIST  
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For the glory of God

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## PREFACE

This project was completed largely because of the support and encouragement of the many godly influences the Lord placed providentially around me. I thank the Lord for his goodness, guidance, and help to this point in working on this project. His Word is the authoritative bedrock on which everything in this project moves.

I cannot but mention my wife, Lauren, who has been everything a godly wife should be. Through twelve years of marriage, many years of schooling, and two young boys, she has been a wonderful source of love, support, and help in the ministry and in the home. This project would not have been possible without her by my side.

I am also grateful for those at Beverly Hills Baptist Church who have been so gracious and kind in encouraging me to continue education and carry out this project in their midst. The church leadership partnered with me in brainstorming areas of ministry in need of attention. I owe a debt of gratitude to them for their partnership. Further, the insight and partnership of my doctoral supervisor, John Morrison, enhanced my project significantly. Many others encouraged me through prayer and words of support; for that, I am also forever grateful.

To my parents, who have served as wonderful examples of what it looks like to bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, I am also indebted. Many of the practical implications of this project have been lived out faithfully by my own parents. Their forty years of marriage, raising of five children, and thirty-five years of ministry in the church have been nothing short of exemplary. I have been divinely blessed to be able to walk in their long shadow.



My prayer is that with the Lord's help, this ministry project will equip parents to disciple their children more faithfully and that God will be glorified in the raising of the next generation of believers at Beverly Hills Baptist Church.

Aaron Mishler

Asheville, North Carolina

December 2023

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Beverly Hills Baptist Church (BHBC) exists for the glory of God and to foster the love for God amongst his people as they serve and love each other and reach their community. BHBC seeks to fulfill its mission by making disciples of all nations as commanded by Christ in Matthew 28:18-20. The mission of BHBC to make disciples occurs in the church, surrounding community, and abroad. Making disciples locally and abroad requires significant involvement by the next generation, ensuring the Great Commission will continue for years ahead. The Lord has established that parents are the primary disciple-makers of the home (Eph 6:1-4). While the church certainly participates in the discipleship of children, the church is not the primary method of teaching and instructing children in the way of the Lord. Parents must understand the urgency with which to engage in discipleship in their home, and the church must be active in equipping parents for doing this important task. BHBC has had a long tradition of proclaiming the gospel, doing outreach in its local community, and taking the Great Commission seriously. In this light, BHBC is undertaking an initiative to help parents understand their role as primary disciple-maker and help equip them to be active in the process of discipling their children.

#### **Context**

Beverly Hills Baptist Church of Asheville, North Carolina, has a rich history in the community of East Asheville. Founded in 1954, BHBC has been known as a gospel preaching church and as a church which brings in families from the community to be led to Christ and discipled. Part of its DNA through the years has been biblical preaching, missional outreach, and a vital Sunday school ministry. However, in recent decades the

church has declined in membership and has seen many of the younger families leave for other churches or simply fall away from attendance altogether. Within the last decade, the church faced a variety of challenges that led to a decline in young families attending. This decline worsened over the last few years as COVID-19 struck and shut down children's ministries. The previous senior pastor recently retired, and the church has endeavored to intentionally build back the young families and children's ministries, which had largely diminished.

Since the start of 2022, church attendance has been down significantly as has young family attendance. Currently only a few families with children regularly attend. The need for a nursery and children's ministry has evaporated since most Sundays few, if any, children are present. Although there are many faithful older members, the silent and dark children's wing has caused great concern among many within the church.

As of December of 2022, BHBC began preparing to re-build the family ministry at BHBC. Church attendance has steadily increased from an average of 110 to about 140 with the appearance of several young families with children as well. BHBC has several ready volunteers who had previously led the children's ministry. These volunteers are eager to re-build the children's and family ministry with the leadership of the senior pastor, and once again fill the church with youth and excitement.

The student ministry at BHBC is similarly dwindling. The church currently employs a part-time youth director who leads student ministry on Sunday nights. An effort to reach a nearby community has brought several students into the ministry, but the students are not currently attending morning services because of a significant generational gap in ages during morning worship. Another contributing issue is related to worship style. The church has historically been traditional, but desires to move toward a more blended style of worship. Many are concerned that the current worship style does not minister to and foster worship for younger families who might otherwise be present in the church.

The structure of BHBC provides for the children's ministry to meet on Sunday mornings during Sunday school and worship as well as on Wednesday nights. The children's ministry follows a curriculum that is gospel-centered and volunteer friendly. However, there is not currently a broad vision or philosophy of children's ministry in the church. The church has yet to teach parents that they are the primary disciple-makers in the home. This philosophy will drive the re-building of the children's ministry and require teaching and equipping of parents to assume their critical role in leading their children. Equipping parents and building the children's ministry are high priorities at BHBC.

### **Rationale**

In the history of BHBC, the current pastoral and lay leaders are not aware of any time that the church championed the role of parents as primary disciple-makers of children. While certainly discipleship ministries exist in the church, those ministries are not targeted toward the idiosyncrasies of raising a family. Throughout recent years of church ministry, the staff of BHBC has witnessed a lack of central emphasis on leading and discipling parents and families. Families who have been with the church and have regularly brought their entire family to church do not currently have any formal discipleship in the home and lack the knowledge of how to implement such an activity. An equipping class for parents is an important element that BHBC needs to create as parents are either experimenting on their own with raising and discipling their children or, worse yet, not participating in any form of discipleship in the home at all.

The biblical rationale for seeing parents as primary disciple-makers can be seen from God's design for the family from the beginning. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7, God's plan for family discipleship in the Old Testament is explicitly stated: "These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way,

and when you lie down, and when you rise.”<sup>1</sup> In Ephesians 6:4, Paul commands fathers to bring up their children “in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Parents must see themselves as the primary disciple-makers in the home, and the church needs to be prepared to come alongside parents and equip them for engaging in such discipleship efforts.

BHBC does not currently have any method of training or equipping parents to disciple their children and raise them up for the Lord. In addition, the lack of emphasis on family ministry has contributed to families feeling they need to seek ministries elsewhere in the community. Some parents who have attended also admit to relying heavily on Sunday school teachers or pastors to lead their children to a salvation decision in the church rather than taking on this important responsibility themselves. BHBC needs to equip parents to be the primary disciple-makers in the home, to lead family worship, and to lead their children to follow Jesus through every walk of life.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip parents of Beverly Hills Baptist Church in Asheville, North Carolina, to disciple their children.

### **Goals**

The overarching aim of this project was to equip parents at Beverly Hills Baptist Church to disciple their children. The goals of this project indicated the necessary successive steps to accomplish the purpose.

1. The first goal was to assess the current methods of discipleship in the home among families with children between the ages of 0 and 18 at Beverly Hills Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to develop an eight-lesson teaching series to lay the biblical framework for seeing parents as primary disciple-makers in the home and teaching them how to assume that role.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

3. The third goal was to increase the frequency and number of parents leading family worship and having discipleship-related conversations with their children in their homes.

For these three goals, a specific methodology was followed to ensure successful implementation and measurement of the goals. This methodology is described in the next section, which details the goals' layout, measurement, and execution.

### **Research Methodology**

The first goal was to assess the current methods of discipleship in the home among families with children between the ages of 0 and 18 at Beverly Hills Baptist Church. This goal was measured by distributing a Family Discipleship Practices Survey<sup>2</sup> to at least four attending parental units with children between the ages of 0-18 to assess current discipleship practices in the home. This goal was considered successful after 75 percent of the surveys administered were returned complete, providing a clearer picture of current discipleship practices amongst families at BHBC.<sup>3</sup>

The second goal was to develop an eight-lesson teaching series to lay the biblical framework for understanding parents as primary disciple-makers in the home and teaching them how to assume that role. An expert panel was identified to evaluate the teaching series using a Teaching Series Evaluation form.<sup>4</sup> This goal was considered successful if 90 percent of scores received met or exceeded the "sufficient" level.

The third goal was to increase the frequency and number of parents leading family worship and having discipleship-related conversations with their children in their homes. This goal was measured by administering the Family Discipleship Practices Survey as a post-survey to parents with children between the ages of 0 and 18 to assess the number

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 125.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 1 for the Family Discipleship Practices Survey. All the research tools used in this project were used in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 2 for the Teaching Series Evaluation form.

of times family worship and discipleship conversations occur. This goal was considered successful if family worship and discipleship conversations occur more consistently when compared to pre-survey results.

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

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

*Discipleship.* Discipleship/disciple-making is the process by which one invites another to hear and obey Jesus' teaching. Making disciples is most clearly commanded by Christ in Matthew 28:18-20 to his eleven disciples, but the command is binding on all who claim to follow Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

*Family-equipping.* Family-equipping is a model of ministry that views parents as the primary disciple-makers in the home and the church as a partner in helping to equip parents to do this task.<sup>6</sup> This model of ministry seeks to emphasize the biblical mandate of parents raising children in spiritual instruction while de-emphasizing the notion that parents can expect their children to be properly disciplined simply by dropping them off at the children's ministry or youth group.

*Family worship.* Family worship is an intentional time set-aside from the family's regular schedule to discuss, read, and live-out the gospel.<sup>7</sup> Family worship may also be referred to as "family altar" or "family devotions" and can include elements of prayer, Bible reading, and singing as a whole family.

*Discipleship conversations.* Discipleship conversations are informal moments in the everyday life of the family that can be turned toward gospel-centered

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<sup>5</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 595-96.

<sup>6</sup> Jay Strother, "Making the Transition to Family-Equipping Ministry," in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 255.

<sup>7</sup> Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Times, Moments and Milestones* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 43.

communication.<sup>8</sup> These conversations may happen in the car, at the dinner table, or anywhere the family might be with an opportunity to point attention to the reality of the gospel.

Two limitations existed with the current methodology. First, the information from the Family Discipleship Practices Survey used for assessing current family discipleship practices was only accurate to the extent that individuals completed the inventories truthfully. To encourage as much accuracy as possible, participants were allowed to complete the inventories anonymously. Second, for evaluating the effectiveness of the eight-lesson teaching series in increasing the knowledge of participants, each participant ideally needed to be present for every session. To encourage as much participation as possible, the series took place during the regular Sunday school hour in which childcare was already factored in and many parents were already present. Sessions were also recorded for those who missed a week throughout the duration of the teaching series.

Two delimitations existed for purposes of this project. First, the project intentionally targeted homes with children ages 0 to 18. These ages were selected because of the critical nature of these developmental stages in children's upbringing in the home. While parents with infants may not necessarily have a fully implemented discipleship model, they will need to have one eventually. Parents with infants are considered part of the target audience for this reason. Further, it follows logically that parents will continue some level of discipleship with their children after the age of 18, and some parents may continue to have children in the home after the age of 18. A follow-up teaching series may be developed outside the scope of this project to address family discipleship in the years following high school.

Second, intergenerational discipleship is a critical piece of the overall ministry model of the church in order to equip parents to disciple their children. In Titus 2, older

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<sup>8</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 43.



women teach younger women, and older men lead and show exemplary living to younger men. Additional teaching series outside the scope of this project may be developed to further address this important aspect of family discipleship.

### **Conclusion**

Going into the world, preaching the gospel, and making disciples of all nations are clear mandates from Christ in Matthew 28:18-20. Few, if any, believers would question the urgency with which the church engages in the Great Commission abroad. Accordingly, the effort to disciple those within the life of the local church must not be neglected. Scripture lays a strong burden on parents to play the primary role of bringing up the next generation of disciples. The church's ministry structure must include a means of equipping parents and teaching them how to do this vital task. BHBC must develop a class to help parents assume the important role of primary disciple-maker. In this light, BHBC will begin a fresh initiative to help parents understand their role as primary disciple-makers in the home and to equip them for this task. Chapter 2 will establish the biblical foundation for this ministry endeavor.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR PARENTS AS PRIMARY DISCIPLE MAKERS OF THE FAMILY

Scripture clearly demonstrates that parents are the primary disciple makers of their children. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, when spiritual nurture of the family is addressed, parents are always seen as the teachers of godliness and to be the models of Christian character for the sake of their children. While the biblical community of believers has always played a role in the discipleship of families, whenever Scripture specifically addresses discipleship of children, it is always seen primarily as a parental responsibility. Parents have the greatest amount of influence, access, and quality time with their children and are regarded in Scripture as responsible for the spiritual care and growth of the family. Parents cannot leave spiritual nurture to anyone else in the church or community. They must own and carry out this important task to be obedient to their calling. Four primary passages will be considered in this chapter to demonstrate that parents are called to be the primary disciple-makers of their children: Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalms 78:1-8, Proverbs 1:8, 22:6, and Ephesians 6:1-4.

#### **Deuteronomy 6:1-9**

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 contains the first and greatest commandment cited by Jesus in Matthew 22:37. This command to “love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” is the highest form of Christian virtue. According to Jesus’s words, this first and greatest commandment along with the second, to “love your neighbor as yourself,” are chief of all the Law and Prophets. God revealed this commandment to Moses who would then teach the people of Israel. The commands in this passage set the direction and spiritual formation of the entire covenant community

of Israel to their God. The way these commandments were expected to be known, communicated, and obeyed throughout the generations was through the parents of each individual family. Fathers and mothers were the means of communicating God's highest commandments to the next generation. The Old Testament law establishes that parents are the primary spiritual leaders for the home. God clearly gave the commandments with the expectation that they would be observed and retaught in this way. Deuteronomy 6:1-9 says,

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

This passage serves as the "Great Commandment," the highest form of living in obedience to God, both for OT Israel and New Covenant believers. In this passage the promise of the Lord for obtaining a land flowing with milk and honey rested on the people of Israel following and obeying these commands. Every Israelite father and mother was expected to take on the spiritual formation of their individual family.

The first specific instruction given to Israel is to "hear" in verse 4. The LORD is to be known as the one and only God. He is to be the only object of their love and devotion. The reality that the LORD is one and is the only God of Israel would be a continued source of friction for future generations of Israelites. Disobedience to these commands and serving other gods provoked the one true God to jealousy and eventually led to Israel's punishment and exile.

It is clear in reading this passage that God intended his people to be the method of communication of his greatness and statutes. Israel is given the promise that if they remember the LORD and obey his statutes that they will “live long in the land.” This is a conditional promise to Israel. For them to experience the full blessing and promise from the LORD, they must continue to observe, love, and obey the LORD’s commandments. Duane Christensen notes, “In so doing [they] will prosper.”<sup>1</sup>

The converse is also true in Deuteronomy 8:20. The curse comes upon those who disobey: “Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.” This conditional promise from the LORD was given once to Moses on the Mount Sinai. The intent of this command is that every individual that makes up the nation of Israel would be aware of the promise. Peter Craigie notes that the primary duty of every individual was to respond with love and obedience to Yahweh.<sup>2</sup>

The promise was intended to be a standing covenant for all generations. The only way for Israel to continue to observe this promise through the span of time was for them to continue to teach their children diligently to obey the statutes given by the LORD. If Jesus’s words in Matthew 22:37 are to be understood literally, then it may be noted that the entirety of the law taught in Deuteronomy points back to this one primary command: to love God with heart, soul, and mind. Obedience to these commands signifies love for the one giving them.<sup>3</sup>

To prevent their falling away from the one true God, Israel had a significant burden to carry out the teaching of the law to their descendants, so that their children could be blessed and live long in the land. Their collective livelihoods depended on

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<sup>1</sup> Duane Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6a (Dallas: Word, 1990), 136.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 168.

<sup>3</sup> Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 143.

reteaching the law to future generations who must obey and love Yahweh. Craigie points out that the command in verse 5 to love the only true God with all their heart, soul, and might carries the connotation of a father and son relationship. Their love for God was never intended to be an empty form of legalism but instead something the Israelites committed themselves to with a deep understanding and affection for God, remembering his calling and saving them from the land of Egypt and bringing them to the promised land.<sup>4</sup> S. R. Driver writes,

The love of God, while alluded to as characterizing Jehovah's true worshippers in the Decalogue, is set forth in Dt. with peculiar emphasis as the fundamental motive of human action. . . . It is a duty which follows naturally as the grateful response to Jehovah for the many undeserved mercies received at His hands. . . . It thus appears as the most inward and the most comprehensive of all religious duties, and as the chief commandment of all.<sup>5</sup>

The continued remembrance of these great acts of God was dependent on Israel teaching their descendants about what God had done and how good he was in delivering them from their suffering and enslavement in Egypt. Israel would have never been in a position to inherit the promised land had it not been for God's miraculous deliverance from Pharaoh's enslavement. According to Craigie, each family was responsible to teach their own children about the faithfulness of God and his goodness to them. God's statutes and commandments were to permeate every part of their life, inside and outside the home, from the beginning of the day to the end.<sup>6</sup>

One of the ways parents were to teach their children about the commandments and faithfulness of the LORD was to talk about them wherever they happened to be in their daily life—whether that was in the home, around the table, or out walking in the world. Another means of teaching was through posting the commandments of God on their doorposts or as “frontlets between your eyes.” Much evidence points to the fact that Israel

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<sup>4</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

<sup>5</sup> S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (Los Angeles: Hardpress, 2012), 92.

<sup>6</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

interpreted these commands literally and wore phylacteries on their foreheads with Scripture from the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>7</sup>

All these efforts were to serve as reminders to the generations of Israel that they were the recipients of incredible mercies and blessings. They would inherit a land and subdue it only by God's power. Driver notes at this point, "Let Israel beware lest, in the enjoyment of material blessings, provided without exertion on its part, it forget Jehovah, its Deliverer, and desert Him for other gods."<sup>8</sup> These great blessings must not be forgotten by Israel. No matter how far removed they were from the original events, they were still beneficiaries of these acts of God.

For the following generations of Israelites to remember God's blessing and not take for granted their inheritance of land and freedom, they were to proclaim and teach the statutes of the LORD continually, whether they were working out in the fields or sitting around the dinner table. Even when they left the home to go about their day, they would be reminded of the LORD's commands as they passed through the doorposts of their home.

James Hamilton Jr. points out that the first phrase in Deuteronomy 6:7 could be translated, "And you shall repeat them to your sons and you shall talk about them." Many translations use the word "children" as a more generic term for "sons." For Hamilton, the use of the word "sons" in Hebrew is significant when taken with the consideration that the commands "you shall repeat" and "you shall talk" are in the masculine forms in the original language. While mothers and daughters are included in this imperative, the language leads James Hamilton to conclude that Moses intended the primary responsibility of teaching "sons" to be laid on the fathers of the nation of Israel.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

<sup>8</sup> Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 93.

<sup>9</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., "That the Coming Generation Might Praise The LORD," in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 37.

Israel's fathers had a great and awesome task before them. Although God certainly could have, he was apparently not going to continue to appear to future generations on mountaintops and repeat these commands and remind them of all he had done for Israel's fathers in Egypt. Rather, the onus to remember, teach, and repeat these words was put upon the parents', and specifically, on the fathers' shoulders. The fathers of Israel were expected to train up their own children in what Paul would later call the "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). Additionally, there is more than just formal teaching and discipline in view. Deuteronomy 6:7 commands that parents talk about them "when you walk along the way." This instruction includes the daily activities of the Israelite life. Parents were not simply to discuss Scripture and forget about it during the day but were required to emulate and talk about it throughout the day.

While the whole community of Israel would be dependent on the Levitical priesthood faithfully transcribing and teaching the Torah over time, the parents' duty over their own household to teach the Torah and discipline their children remained intact. No father of Israel was permitted to rely simply on the influence of the community of Israel or the Levitical teaching to be enough to lead his family. Each parental unit would be required to teach and model a life honoring, loving, and obeying the commandments of Yahweh.

This first and greatest command not only reminds Israel of God's oneness, goodness, and mercy, but also appointed parents in Israel to be the means by which faith in God was passed along. This reality is of no less significance today as all believing parents must undertake the same responsibility of living out and teaching their faith in God to their children, which must be the practice of all Christian parents until Jesus returns.

#### **Psalm 78:1-8**

Psalm 78 serves as a Psalm of instruction and encouragement to Israel to do everything they were told to do in the law. This Psalm also establishes parents as the primary means of spiritual discipline and instruction in the home. Parents who teach the law to their children are seen in this passage as the critical link for faithfulness to continue

throughout the generations. The passage alludes to the many great acts of God, his kindness to Israel throughout the generations, and how they must be faithful to teach their children and grandchildren to observe the commandments of the Lord and to love him with their whole heart. Failure to follow these instructions of the Lord given through the law had already in previous generations come with disastrous consequences for the covenant people of God. Thus, a significant reason for the writing of this psalm was to remind the Israelites “to not be like their fathers” (v. 8) who had abandoned these very instructions.

Psalm 78:1-8 reads,

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

In this text, there is a similar beginning instruction to listen or “hear” as in Deuteronomy 6. The psalmist begins with “give ear” and “incline your ears.” Similar to Deuteronomy 6, the reader should understand this as a command to listen and to obey the instruction that follows. Hans Joachim Kraus notes that this psalm carries many aspects of a wide variety of psalms and is difficult to categorize because of this diversity of content. Its beginning in verses 1 and 2 denotes wisdom poetry, but it is also strongly historical and didactic. Kraus categorizes this psalm as both historic and didactic although aspects of other forms of poetry exist.<sup>10</sup>

In verse 2 the psalmist writes that he “will open his mouth in a parable; [he] will utter dark sayings from of old.” According to C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, this is not an attempt by the psalmist to write in a mystical or confusing way with riddles that must

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<sup>10</sup> Hans Joachim Kraus, *Psalm 60-150*, Continental Commentaries (Augsburg: Fortress, 1989), 122-23.



be unlocked with secret knowledge. Rather, the psalmist intends to draw back a curtain from Israel's history to tell a story or parable that should serve as a clear reminder for Israel to observe and obey.<sup>11</sup>

The psalm itself reaches back into the history of Israel, recalling the great salvific acts of God toward them. In verse 3 the psalmist clearly links his teaching and wisdom to that received by "our fathers." The psalmist is not adding a new command or a new teaching but is continuing to pass along the teaching received by the previous generations.<sup>12</sup> Verse 4 cites "the wonders that he has done." God's miraculous intervention and deliverance in the lives of the Israelites are the grounds for their obedience and loyalty to him. The psalmist may be alluding to God's miraculous deliverance from Egypt as well as his calling and saving of their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all the way up to his miraculous protection to the time of the writing of the psalm itself.<sup>13</sup>

Willem A. VanGemerren notes,

The goal of the teacher of wisdom is to open Israel's history from God's perspective. The act of "telling the next generation" (v. 4) is a continuation of the tradition "heard and known" from the fathers. The contents of the tradition of redemptive history are transmitted without further explication, so that each generation may draw lessons from the "parables" and "riddles" of God's interaction with the previous generations.<sup>14</sup>

Verse 5 cites the "testimony of Jacob" and the appointed "law of Israel," which came directly from God. For Kraus, these statements strongly link Psalm 78 and the teaching from the psalmist to the Deuteronomistic tradition. The covenant and law were given by God to Israel and were to be faithfully taught to the following generations in order

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<sup>11</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 5, trans. Francis Bolton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 363.

<sup>12</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 125.

<sup>13</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 125.

<sup>14</sup> Willem VanGemerren, *Psalms*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 598.

to remember God's glorious deeds and his mercy to his people. The Great Commandment in Deuteronomy 6 and the intention of the psalmist in this passage are inextricably linked.<sup>15</sup>

According to Kraus, the Deuteronomistic tradition, which continued the re-teaching of the Mosaic law to the coming generations, required stringent and copious scribal activity along with translation and interpretive efforts to pass along the commands of God as they were originally given on Sinai. Israel would remain faithful if these careful activities of the Levitical tribe remained intact along with the participation of every Israelite family teaching God's law in their home.<sup>16</sup> When Israel failed in these capacities, the nation inevitably fell into idol worship and received the negative consequences of God's conditional covenant. It is apparent up to the time of Jesus that although skewed by pharisaical interpretations the remaining faithful Israelites still maintained careful teaching, interpretation, and scribal activity as an effort to obey the Mosaic law.

Verses 5 and 6 center in on the responsibility of parents to take charge of the spiritual instruction of their children, the coming generation, who would in turn teach the following generation, the "children yet unborn." The commands of God in the Law were not intended to be something that Israel could modify over time or reject because they were ancient history. The law of the LORD was intended to be a standing, never-ending truth. Psalm 119:160 says, "The sum of your word is truth, and everyone one of your righteous rules endures forever." That the righteous law of God endures forever predicates a continual act from every generation of the people of God to teach his eternal truth to the following generation. God ordained that the Old Covenant with Israel would be temporary but would find fulfillment in Christ in the New Covenant.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the people of God must continually teach the coming generation the "righteous rules" that endure forever.

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<sup>15</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 126.

<sup>16</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 126.

<sup>17</sup> For a fuller discussion on the covenants and relationship of the Law to the New Covenant believer see: Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 785-98.

Derek Kidner writes that the importance of teaching the following generation was paramount. This psalm is clearly linked with the Great Commandment of Deuteronomy 6:6-9, which would continue to be upheld only if parents re-taught its precepts to their own children. Kidner notes, “For Scripture has no room for parental neutrality.”<sup>18</sup> Parents taking ownership of their responsibility and carrying out the literal teaching of God’s words and faithfulness to their children would impact the course of the nation’s future. Israel would inevitably fall away if either the Levitical priesthood failed in its faithfulness or if Israelite parents failed in their faithfulness to teach their children. The history of Israel in the Writings shows that over time they again and again failed in both regards with disastrous consequences.

While Israel often disregarded the Law or attempted to keep it in perverted or incomplete ways, such as with the pharisaical teachings encountered in the Gospels, Kidner points to Psalm 119:1-5 as the ideal attitude toward the Law of God.<sup>19</sup> The psalmist writes, “Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes.”

The Law was not something to be kept with vain and empty repetition, but something that should capture the whole heart of a person. The psalmist delights and loves the Law because it will lead those who follow it to a blameless and steadfast life. The Law understood properly would bring joy and fellowship with God and would preserve the nation of Israel’s future. These truths were to be kept and passed along to every child who would ever be born an Israelite.

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<sup>18</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Tyndale, 1964), 311.

<sup>19</sup> Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 311.

Verses 7 and 8 remind Israel that in teaching their children the law they are teaching them to “set their hope in God and not forget the works of God.” Although the following generations of Israelites were removed by time from some of God’s mighty acts, they were nevertheless beneficiaries of his goodness and mercy through those acts. Should they ever forget God’s miraculous works and take for granted the law or the land, they would be recipients of disaster and punishment for abandoning the God who called and rescued them. Kraus points out that these verses serve as a warning to not “be so contrary and stubborn over against Yahweh as their fathers were, it should not forget his great deeds, should not despise his wonders and transgress against his covenant.”<sup>20</sup>

Psalm 78 serves as a wonderful reminder of not only God’s power and mercy to his people but of the ever-important responsibility of parents to teach their children about God and his commandments. Just as Israelite parents needed to continue the tradition of teaching their children about God in the home, so parents today must engage in spiritual nurture and discipleship in their own homes to continue faithfulness throughout Christian generations.

### **Proverbs 1:4-8, 22:6**

Proverbs is a book of wisdom literature, serving as a teaching tool to pass along the wisdom of God to another. Much of Proverbs is set and written as from a father to a son. Proverbs 1:8 sets the stage for the tone and delivery of the whole book of wisdom literature: “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.” The entire book serves as strong reminder that parents are the primary teachers and spiritual leaders to their children. According to Allen P. Ross, a proverb can be described as “an object lesson based on or using some comparison or analogy.”<sup>21</sup> The book of Proverbs is full of comparisons and analogies, especially between the wise and foolish

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<sup>20</sup> Kraus, *Psalm 60-150*, 126.

<sup>21</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Proverbs*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 904.

(1:7). Most of Proverbs contains short, pithy sayings that denote truths as applied to specific situations in life. Solomon, the primary author of the Proverbs, seeks to use lessons from experience and common situations to help a younger less experienced person, like a son, choose the best course of action.<sup>22</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch describe “proverbs” in the Hebraic form as something “figurative and concise,” often with an example that serves as a warning “in sharply outlined little pictures.”<sup>23</sup> These little pictures, served up as pithy sayings, teach great spiritual wisdom like that from a father or mother to their children.

As has been the case in both Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78, parents own the responsibility of spiritual care and teaching godly principles to their children. The book of Proverbs follows this motif, as the introduction to the book sets in focus the picture of a father teaching his son: “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction” (1:8). Ross notes that the formal address for the disciple or reader of Proverbs is “my son,” which indicates that Proverbs reinforces the idea that parents are primarily responsible for teaching and raising the next godly generation.<sup>24</sup>

The instruction set forth as from a father to his son in Proverbs is unmistakable. Not only does this form appear at the outset in 1:8 but it continues throughout the entire book. The first seven chapters of the book of Proverbs begin with an explicit directive to a son. The introductions to most of these chapters model what a teacher or parent might say to their pupil or child(ren) when giving wisdom for life, directives like to “hear” (1:8), “receive my words” (2:1), “do not forget my teaching” (3:1), “be attentive” (4:1), “incline your ear” (5:1), or “keep my words and treasure up my commandments” (7:1).

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<sup>22</sup> Ross, *Proverbs*, 904.

<sup>23</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 6, trans. Francis Bolton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 53.

<sup>24</sup> Ross, *Proverbs*, 907.

Additionally, Proverbs is full of statements that make it clear children must heed their parents' instruction and that parents serve in the important role of teacher to their children. Proverbs 10:1 says, "A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother." Proverbs 13:1 says, "A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke." Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." The theme of parents teaching their children in Proverbs is overt and cannot be ignored, reinforcing the thesis of the previously studied passages of Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78.

A primary theme of the entire book of Proverbs is teaching wisdom and the contrast between the wise and the foolish person. This is a primary concern of the author and father figure that he desires to pass along to the pupil. This theme comes out immediately in the first verses of the book. Proverbs 1:4-7 says, "To give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." In the first few verses the author states the mission of the book. He aims to pass along "knowledge" and "discretion" to those who need it most. He intends for this knowledge to bring wisdom and help for the pupil. In verse 4 the pupil is called "simple" and "youth," indicating the pupil's lack of life experience and wisdom. "Simple" is often a word used to characterize a foolish person in Proverbs, but Keil and Delitzsch note that this use denotes a person whose heart is open and malleable to outside influences.<sup>25</sup> The author's intent is to instruct this "simple" individual in order to give him a sense of shrewdness and ability to detect evil and turn away from it.<sup>26</sup>

Ultimately, the wisdom being passed along to the pupil in the book of Proverbs is not for its own sake, it is wisdom that produces the "fear of the LORD." The reader may

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<sup>25</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 56.

<sup>26</sup> Ross, *Proverbs*, 906.

conclude from this verse that any wisdom that does not produce the fear of the LORD is not wisdom at all. Those who do not have the wisdom producing fear of the LORD are seen immediately at the end of verse 7 in the contrast between the wise and foolish. The LORD is the God of the Israelites, the creator and sustainer of the universe. He gave the Law and instructed his people in the ways of righteousness and blessing. In addition to all these things, he miraculously delivered his people from their plight in Egypt. The wisdom and discipline one can obtain through pursuing God is only rejected and despised by one who is “hard, thick, [or] stupid.”<sup>27</sup>

The foolish are said to “despise wisdom and instruction” (v. 7). Derek Kidner writes that the foolish person is “a menace to society,” and he reveals himself as soon as he opens his mouth (17:28). In Proverbs, the fool is seen as stupid, stubborn, a scoffer, full of folly, among other negative traits. He has no patience to learn the wisdom and fear of the LORD.<sup>28</sup> It is exactly this type of person that the author of Proverbs instructs his “son” not to be like. Rather, in verses 5 and 6, the author desires his “son” to be wise and “hear an increase in learning . . . [and] obtain guidance,” all this to culminate in the “fear of the LORD.” The desire of the author to pass along this invaluable wisdom must be equally shared by every parent.

While the book of Proverbs is written as wisdom from a father to a son, as is seen in 1:4-8, it also includes wisdom for all kinds of persons in all kinds of situations. Proverbs 22:6 fits this description as a proverb for parents, which happens to reinforce the importance of parents teaching their children: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

This proverb contains a particularly challenging interpretive phrase that directs the whole meaning of the verse. “Train up a child in the way he should go” can be

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<sup>27</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 59.

<sup>28</sup> Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Tyndale, 1964), 38.

translated literally, “Give to the child instruction conformably to His way.”<sup>29</sup> This rendering seems to give to the interpretation that a parent should be aware of a child’s skills and inclinations so as to foster them for the child’s highest potential in their future vocation. This interpretation is argued for by Keil and Delitzsch.

Kidner, however, while acknowledging this phraseology, takes the meaning in a different direction. He agrees that there may be some need to understand a child’s personality and individuality, but the end stress of the proverb is not for the sake of a child’s future vocation. Kidner believes the verse has moral implications tied to the directive for parents to teach the child a way of righteousness that he will not depart from.<sup>30</sup> This is also Ross’s view, who says, “The wise parent will discern the natural bent of the individual child and train it accordingly.”<sup>31</sup> This proverb may have in view the idea that there are really only two potential ways to go—the way of the wise and the way of the fool.

The conclusion that this proverb instructs parents to teach their children the way of the LORD as the wise way to live seems most convincing. Parents must take their responsibility to teach their children while they are young very seriously. This teaching during the youthful years will take root and guide their steps for the rest of their life. Although this proverb cannot be taken as prophecy, it is nonetheless a significant directive for parents. They have the divine opportunity to shape and teach a child in such a way that the child’s entire life will be altered due to the parent’s influence.

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

In the letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul gives clear instructions to parents and children for the process of discipleship occurring in the family. In these few verses, Paul reaches back to the Old Testament to ground the command of parents as primary in

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<sup>29</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 87.

<sup>30</sup> Kidner, *Proverbs*, 139.

<sup>31</sup> Ross, *Proverbs*, 1061.



discipleship of the home. Paul cites the fifth commandment of the Decalogue, which comes with a promise for the Israelite generations. He then takes this commandment and applies it to the parents and children of the church at Ephesus. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

In verse 1, Paul addresses the children firstly in the instructions to the family. Obedience to their parents is a child’s commandment of utmost importance. For children, obedience to parents is plainly stated as “right.” Clinton Arnold notes that a child’s obedience to parental authority is grounded in their relationship with God. A child disobedient to parents is a child that is disobedient to God. These children are old enough to understand their parents’ instructions and are still in the process of being molded and “brought up.” A parents’ prerogative in expecting obedience from their children is more than just a “because I said so” mentality. It is rooted in a divine commandment to “obey . . . in the Lord.”<sup>32</sup> A child at this stage is capable of rebelling against authority, and Paul makes clear that rebelling against parental authority is a serious sin and has been since the giving of the Ten Commandments on Sinai. It is a correlate understanding that parents give structure and discipline to their children and expect them to obey unquestioningly.

Verse 2 takes the reader back to the establishment of obedience to parents in the Ten Commandments. The fifth commandment is quoted from Exodus 20:12. Paul reminds children that their obedience to parents came as a direct and primary commandment, one of the original Ten. This commandment he reminds them comes with a promise “that they might live long in the land.” A. Skevington Wood points out that this reiteration of the promise made to the Israelites should not be carried forward to the New Testament church.

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<sup>32</sup> Clinton Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 415-16.

It is quoted as a reminder of the importance and primacy of this command for the future of God's people.<sup>33</sup> In Deuteronomy 8 as well as in Psalm 78, Israel's unfaithfulness to this command came with disastrous consequences. The conditional nature of this command meant that a great amount of weight was ascribed to it. Obedience could bring about blessing and long-life, but disobedience could bring destruction and shortened life for them in their promised land.

The original context of the promise to "live long in the land," according to Andrew Lincoln, is for Israel to live long in the land of Canaan. Paul's quotation of Exodus 20:12 omits the phrase regarding the land, "that the LORD your God is giving you." Thus, Paul is not suggesting a direct corollary to the original promise to the Ephesian church as a result of obedience, but rather, a reminder that following this commandment will establish a blessed future.<sup>34</sup>

In verse 4, the address moves from the children's responsibility to that of the father. In 4a Paul says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger." Harold Hoehner explains that it is possible that both the mother and father are included in this instruction, but the father is called out as the one primarily responsible for his whole family.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, a mother's parenting should follow the father's model, but the father ultimately is seen as head of the entire household and its spiritual nurture.

Paul reminds fathers that in their goal to bring up godly and mature children they must avoid being irritable and demeaning toward them. The frustrations that come with raising children can at times cause parents to feel exacerbated by their children's behavior. Fathers must not give into the temptation to berate children so as to discourage them and cause them reason to feel angry. Lincoln notes that in Greco-Roman society

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<sup>33</sup> A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1, 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 81.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 397.

<sup>35</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 795.

families were strongly patriarchal. Fathers had ultimate authority in the family and would often exercise this authority in extreme ways, resulting in beatings and verbal abuses.<sup>36</sup> Such parenting techniques could easily lead to anger and resentment in children and even reinforce unhealthy cycles of parenting devoid of affection and love for future generations. Paul's instructions in these verses make clear that the family relationships in the life of the church must be radically different from that of the surrounding culture. A parallel passage can be found in the letter to the Colossians where Paul instructs, "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (3:21). Arnold says that these two passages directed toward fathers "effectively rule out reactionary flare-ups, overly harsh words, insults, sarcasm, nagging, demeaning comments, inappropriate teasing, unreasonable demands, and anything else that can be perceived as provocative."<sup>37</sup>

Arnold suggests that it might have been surprising for fathers in this society to hear Paul's instruction to not make their children angry. Especially given the command in 6:1, it seems most likely that it would be the children who should not make their fathers angry through their own disobedience and belligerence.<sup>38</sup> However, Paul sees the fathers as responsible for having a gentle affection for their children and teaching and instructing them carefully without being overly strict, harsh, or difficult to please. Such negative behaviors, no doubt, would make children less likely to produce the godliness Paul commands the Christians to emulate elsewhere in the book of Ephesians.

While verse 4a includes the negative action that fathers must avoid, 4b includes the positive action that fathers must take in raising their children. Paul says to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." The word "to bring up" in this verse is only used one other time, and it is found in Ephesians 5:29. Hoehner notes that Paul has in mind for fathers a special nurturing for their children during their growing years.

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<sup>36</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 399-400.

<sup>37</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

<sup>38</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

Bringing up children to adulthood must be done in a loving and cherishing way, contrasting with the harshness that would have often been practiced in their culture.<sup>39</sup>

Bringing up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord also denotes that the spiritual education of the family is ultimately the fathers responsibility. Arnold comments that the spiritual education is not merely information about the Lord, but should be more directly understood as instruction “that comes from the Lord,” as rendered by the NLT.<sup>40</sup> Fathers are teaching their children more than just facts about God. They are teaching the commandments of the Lord and the importance of total obedience to him. Fathers should be engaging in teaching their children Scripture and understanding it as the authoritative source for their lives.

The word for “discipline,” according to Lincoln, includes everything for a complete spiritual education or a “distinctly Christian way.” The term also includes a sense of chastisement or discipline for errant and sinful behavior.<sup>41</sup> Fathers are to utilize a complete and full system of spiritual education in their home, including positive and negative reinforcement of a biblical upbringing. This is consistent with Proverbs 15:5: “A fool despises his father’s instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.” A father’s responsibility to teach, discipline, love, and raise children in a godly fashion is of utmost importance for the future of God’s people. The word for “instruction” or sometimes translated “admonition,” according to Arnold is a narrowly focused word that includes warnings, rebukes, counsel, and wisdom for living a godly life in this world. Admonition is exercised as a means to correct an individual from a wrong way of living.<sup>42</sup>

Paul lays a high standard for parents, and fathers specifically, when it comes to raising godly children. The full burden of the spiritual education and discipleship of the

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<sup>39</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 797.

<sup>40</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

<sup>41</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 407.

<sup>42</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418-19.

home is laid squarely on the parents' shoulders. Children learn of Christ and how to live for him from their parents. In Ephesians 4:20-21 Paul reminds the believers that they learned Christ from him and through the spiritual community of the church itself. But for children, they learn Christ, his gospel, and the commandments of the Lord through faithful love, teaching, and discipline of their parents.

### **Conclusion**

Scripture is full of commands for parents to serve as the primary disciple maker in the home. In the passages outlined in this chapter—Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Proverbs 1:4-8, 22:6, and Ephesians 6:1-4—parents are commanded to serve in this important capacity in the lives of their children. Scripture makes it clear that even though the whole family should be brought up in the life of the church, parents, and fathers in particular, are the teachers and disciple makers of their own children. There is no warrant for parents to be able to move this responsibility to someone else or to rely solely on some other means of Christian education to influence their children for godly outcomes. For parents in the modern age, spiritual nurture and discipline must be a constant priority. Scripture must be present in times of formal study as well as in the informal walks of life. Parents must model and teach Christian values through everything they do from the beginning of the day with their children to the end.

### CHAPTER 3

#### PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR A FAMILY MINISTRY MODEL

Today, churches face the important practical issue of helping parents see themselves as primary disciple-makers and then teaching them how to accomplish this eternally significant task in their home. Unfortunately, indications from statistically validated surveys paint a grim picture. In 2007, the Family Needs Survey administered by FamilyLife ministries surveyed nearly 40,000 Christian parents across America and found that more than half of parents never or rarely have any sort of family devotions. The same survey found that over 40 percent of Christian parents admit to never or rarely discussing any kind of spiritual matters with their children.<sup>1</sup> Based on this data, Timothy Paul Jones concludes, “The overwhelming majority of Christian parents are not actively engaged in any sort of battle for their children’s souls.”<sup>2</sup>

Given that many parents are not actively engaged in the disciple-making process with their children, churches must address the difficult issue of how to help parents see their biblical role and then equip them to assume that role. The church must be engaged in fulfilling its own biblical role in making disciples as commanded by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20; however, the church should not overstep its bounds to the point where it removes the burden from parents to be the primary disciple-makers. This chapter will explore three recent models of family ministry—the Family-Integrated Ministry model, the Family-Based Ministry model, and the Family-Equipping Ministry model—

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<sup>1</sup> See FamilyLife, “Family Needs Survey: National Database: August 2008,” in Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 27-28.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 25.

which all aim to train and equip parents for home discipleship. For Beverly Hills Baptist Church, it will be argued that the Family-Equipping Ministry model is the strongest for accomplishing the task of training parents to assume their role of primary disciple-maker in the home.

The three family ministry models have been developed to course correct the role of the church and the role of parents in family discipleship. First, the Family-Integrated Ministry model incorporates all ages of the church into the same ministries. In this model there is no age-separation. The Family-Integrated Ministry model brings together children and parents in all elements of the church's ministry from worshipping together to serving together and more.<sup>3</sup> Second, the Family-Based Ministry model is less a structural reorganization of the church than it is a change in philosophy. Unlike the previous model, the Family-Based Ministry model maintains the age-segmented structures within the church but refocuses all activities within those age-segregated groups to encourage and foster discipleship in the family and emphasize intergenerational activities.<sup>4</sup> Third, the Family-Equipping Ministry model stands with the previous two models in the call for parents to be primary disciple-makers in the home. Like the Family-Based Ministry model, it retains some level of age-segmented ministry. What sets the Family-Equipping Ministry model apart is that it places a much higher emphasis on intergenerational ministries in the church along with a higher emphasis on equipping and championing parents to assume their role in the home as primary disciple-maker.<sup>5</sup> Of the three family ministry models, the Family-Equipping Ministry model is the strongest family ministry model for strengthening and supporting parents to assume their role as primary disciple-makers in the home.

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry" in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2019), 61-62.

<sup>4</sup> Brandon Shields, "Family-Based Ministry," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 113-15.

<sup>5</sup> Jay Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 164-65.

## Historical Development of Family Ministry

A major weakness developed in church ministry structure in previous decades related to how the church structured its ministries for making disciples in family ministry. The Segmented-Programmatic Ministry evolved over the twentieth century and incorporated similar philosophies to that of public-school education. While Sunday school as a program began before this time, the model most churches adopted grew from this period in history. During this era, the American education system developed structures of tightly graded classes and a trained professional to lead and teach each class. Not long after the period of World War II, churches began to mimic this public-school structure, using tightly graded classes for all ages, and when possible, hiring professionally trained ministers to lead, teach, and guide children, youth, and senior adult ministries.<sup>6</sup> Though many churches would not have the resources to fund professional ministers, the overall philosophy of this age-segmented model, according to Jones, “so thoroughly dominated church administration in the twentieth century that, even in the opening decades of the twenty-first century, many church members know no other approach.”<sup>7</sup>

What developed from the Segmented-Programmatic Ministry model was that most children and parents learned a habit of being separated in discipleship classes and leaving the discipleship of the family to another. While some churches would bring most of the family back together for worship, this was not entirely true of all church models, which by and large had adopted the strategy that discipleship must happen in age-segregated classrooms. Of this structure, which became common practice in churches from the early twentieth century up to current day, Jones questions whether this approach can be called family ministry at all.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Timothy Paul Jones and Bryan Nelson, “The Problem with Family Ministry,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 19-22.

<sup>7</sup> Jones and Nelson, “The Problem with Family Ministry,” 20.

<sup>8</sup> Jones and Nelson, “The Problem with Family Ministry,” 20.



The model itself contributed to a problem that it attempted to solve. Because parents and children were separated and each age group received its own separate discipleship, the parental role of engaging in disciple-making with their own children was, at least in many cases, missing entirely. While parental abdication cannot be blamed on any church model, the Segmented-Programmatic Ministry structure allowed greater opportunity for parents to see discipleship of their children as the responsibility of someone else.<sup>9</sup>

Over time, many churches, pastors, and parents came to recognize problems with this ministry model. Dropping off children and teens in a ministry at a church did not yield the satisfying result of new generations growing up with a passion and love for following Jesus. Rather, it seemed the opposite had occurred with as many as half of all active, church-going parents admitting that prayer, Bible study, and spiritual formation in the home was missing entirely and with children growing up to leave the church at an alarming rate.<sup>10</sup>

The trend of children growing up to leave the church and the lack of parents' involvement in the discipleship of their children caused a significant effort amongst many churches to recover a more effective family ministry model. The more recent developments in family ministry models that will be considered in this chapter all aim to help parents realize their biblical role as primary disciple-maker and help churches partner with them in that effort. The three models bring different strengths and have proponents with a passion for seeing the church serve the Lord and families the best way possible.

### **The Family-Integrated Ministry Model**

The Family-Integrated Ministry model makes a clean break from the classic Segmented-Programmatic Ministry model that so many churches have grown accustomed

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<sup>9</sup> Jones and Nelson, "The Problem with Family Ministry," 20.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 27-28.

to over the years. In the Family-Integrated Ministry model, all activities of the church are designed to include the whole family. The proponents of this model design all worship services, outreach activities, and events of the church to include all ages from children up to senior adults. Early proponents of this ministry model include Henry Reyenga and Rob Bradley at Hope Chapel in California, as well as Voddie Baucham Jr. and Paul Renfro at Grace Family Baptist Church in Texas.<sup>11</sup> Baucham describes this model in the following way: “The family-integrated church movement is easily distinguishable in its insistence on integration as an ecclesiological principle.”<sup>12</sup> Baucham continues,

Our church has no youth ministers, children’s ministers, or nursery. We do not divide families into component parts. We do not separate the mature women from the young teenage girls who need their guidance. We do not separate the toddler from his parents during worship. In fact, we don’t even do it in Bible study. We see the church as a family of families.<sup>13</sup>

The primary distinctive in the Family-Integrated Ministry model is the absence of such typical age-segregated ministries that most churches would consider essential. With no youth, children, or nursery ministries, churches that adopt this model bring the whole family together in every circumstance of its gathering, worshipping, and serving.

Renfro describes the typical Sunday at Grace Family Baptist Church, a Family-Integrated church, as a wonderful bringing together of the whole family who will serve alongside each other whether it be in greeting, technology, food, or another ministry of the church. The whole family also worships together in the sanctuary, and the whole family will be together in weekly Bible study.<sup>14</sup>

The shaping of each element of the church ministry encourages parents to lead and teach their children with the involvement and support of others in the church. For

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<sup>11</sup> Jones and Nelson, “The Problem with Family Ministry,” 24.

<sup>12</sup> Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 193.

<sup>13</sup> Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 196.

<sup>14</sup> Renfro, “Family-Integrated Ministry,” 64-67.

Renfro’s church, even the bulletin for Sunday worship is shaped with encouragements toward parents, and especially fathers, to lead family worship at home, using church-prepared catechisms. Expository preaching is a core tenant of the church worship service as well as training and equipping fathers in the congregation to assume their role of spiritual leader in the home. Following the worship service, fathers gather their families to participate in the Lord’s Supper. During the week, small group ministries gather whole families together for Bible study and fellowship. Renfro believes this church ministry model best exhibits Paul’s instruction in Titus 2:1-8.<sup>15</sup> The outreach and evangelism of the church ministries are accomplished by the whole family as well, which is seen to mimic Paul’s missional approach in Acts.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, proponents of the Family-Integrated approach see a major flaw in other ministry models that have age-segregation. The Church and Family Life organization, a network of Family-Integrated churches, states in its confession the biblical priority of integrating generations: “We affirm that returning to a biblically-ordered, age-integrated methodology for the worship of God and discipleship in a local church is consistent with Holy Scripture and critical for the restoration of the kind of worship and discipleship culture we see demonstrated in both the Old and New Testaments.”<sup>17</sup> Family-Integrated churches reject the idea that families should be fragmented and displaced in the church life and ministry.

Related to the age-segregation of youth ministry and the idea that teens need a ministry specifically for their age group, Renfro points to the research of David Black in his work *The Myth of Adolescence: Raising Responsible Children in an Irresponsible Society*:

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<sup>15</sup> Renfro, “Family-Integrated Ministry,” 68.

<sup>16</sup> Roger S. Greenway and Timothy M. Monsma, *Cities: Missions’ New Frontier* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 41.

<sup>17</sup> Church and Family Life, “A Declaration of the Complementary Roles of Church and Family,” accessed March 30, 2023, <https://churchandfamilylife.com/about/276>.

According to the Bible, the teen era is not a “time-out” between childhood and adulthood. It is not primarily a time of horseplay, of parties, of sports, of games. It is not a period of temporary insanity. The Bible treats teens as responsible young adults, and so should we. Paul told Timothy, a young man, to “be an example for other believers in your speech, behavior, love, faith, and purity.”<sup>18</sup>

For proponents of the Family-Integrated Ministry model, there is no biblical basis for a youth ministry, characterized by games, sports, and parties, often with less emphasis on biblical teaching and spiritual maturity than at adult levels in the church. One passage presented in Scripture for this view is Luke 2:46 where Jesus at age twelve listens and talks with the religious leaders in the temple. Additionally, since Jewish culture viewed adulthood to begin at age twelve, there is strong reason to see modern-day teenage years as young adulthood in the life of the church, according to Renfro.<sup>19</sup> And these young adults, like Timothy, should be expected to be exemplary as they grow in Christlikeness and serve in the ministry.

Another area of support for this model of ministry is the historical approach of the church seen in Scripture and throughout church history. Scripture nowhere indicates that age segregation occurred either in Old Testament Israel or in the early church. Contrarily, families worshipped altogether in the life of the people of God.<sup>20</sup> The great American preacher and theologian, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) encourages this style of discipleship amongst his church ministry:

Let me now therefore, once more, before I finally cease to speak to this congregation, repeat, and earnestly press the counsel which I have often urged on heads of families, while I was their pastor, to great painfulness in teaching, warning, and directing their children; bringing them up in the training and admonition of the Lord; beginning early, where there is yet opportunity, and maintaining constant diligence in all labours of this kind.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> David Black, *The Myth of Adolescence: Raising Responsible Children in an Irresponsible Society* (Highlands Ranch, CO: Davidson, 1999), 10.

<sup>19</sup> Renfro, “Family-Integrated Ministry,” 68-69.

<sup>20</sup> Renfro, “Family-Integrated Ministry,” 77.

<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Edwards, “Farewell Sermon,” in *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader*, ed. Wilson H. Kinnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1999), 236.

While many benefits of the Family-Integrated Ministry model can be clearly seen, several challenges exist as well. The Family-Integrated approach brings the family together in as many aspects of church life as possible. It equips parents to disciple their children, serve with them in church, and trains fathers to take on their role as spiritual leader in the home. However, Brandon Shields questions whether this model is best suited to reach families that would struggle to conform to this type of worship. He points out that most visiting families would expect to find ministries targeting their children and youth, and that the task of incorporating this method on public school families seems difficult.<sup>22</sup> Renfro readily admits that this model cannot easily be implemented in just any church context. Overcoming barriers to this radically different structure is a tall task for any pastor. Every ministry is re-designed to incorporate all ages, and this can be a daunting task.<sup>23</sup>

In conclusion, the Family-Integrated Ministry model brings significant benefits to the life of the church and to the ministry of the family. This model encourages parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their children. It trains fathers to step into their role as spiritual leader, and it incorporates serving and evangelism as a whole family endeavor, something often missing in churches today. However, significant challenges exist for churches to implement and sustain this model of ministry.

BHBC would likely struggle to change over from its current structure into a family-integrated ministry. BHBC uses mostly age-segregated classes and has a youth director as well as a committee for children's ministry. The children's committee and the youth director role are spelled out specifically in BHBC's bylaws, which makes change in this area more complicated, requiring a revision to the church's documents. While the Family-Integrated model can be applauded for its emphasis on parents leading family discipleship, the model is extremely difficult to incorporate when a church already has an

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<sup>22</sup> Brandon Shields, "Responses to Paul Renfro" in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 87-88.

<sup>23</sup> Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry," 81.

established structure for age-segmented ministry. For BHBC, a more practical model must be considered for enhancing family ministry.

### **The Family-Based Ministry Model**

Another ministry model that attempts to solve the family discipleship problems evident in today's church culture is the Family-Based Ministry model. Primary proponents of the Family-Based Ministry model are Mark Devries and Brandon Shields. The Family-Based Ministry model is distinct from the Family-Integrated model in that the Family-Based model maintains age-segregated groupings in the ministry of the church. Shields says of this model,

Family-Based Ministry isn't so much a fixed model of ministry as it is a ministry philosophy. The two core values undergirding this philosophy are flexibility and balance. . . . Family-based ministers value balance because they recognize that, even though encouraging the discipleship efforts of intact Christian families is important, most youth and children today do not enjoy the sociological luxury of an intact Christian family.<sup>24</sup>

The Family-Based model is less about making a harsh structural change than it is about using the structure that already exists in many churches and emphasizing biblical priorities of family togetherness with parents incorporated as a critical piece of discipleship over the family. A high-arching goal of the Family-Based model is to ensure the priority of family as part of the mission of the church and to train parents and give them the skills necessary to raise children in the family of God. Devries notes that the ministry model is not so much about its unique design and structure so much as what the design and structure are used for. He believes in creating as many opportunities as possible for parents and children to interact together within the existing age-segregated groupings.<sup>25</sup> In this structure, children, youth, and nursery ministries all operate with ministers or pastors overseeing those ministries. For Shields, age-segregation is not the problem with church

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<sup>24</sup> Shields, "Family-Based Ministry," 113.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Devries, *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry: The Practical Guide to Today's Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light, 2003), 7.

culture. In fact, he notes that this structure can bring significant benefits to the life of the church. Further, he argues that many of the alarming statistics used to argue against age-segregated ministry contain faulty logic and suspect research.<sup>26</sup>

One such statistic used by Baucham to argue for a radical change in structure and programming in the life of the church claims that nearly nine out of ten teens leave the church by their second year in college.<sup>27</sup> Shields's own research developed to answer the question of whether teens were leaving the church at such alarming rates produced different conclusions. According to his research, teens who showed strong commitment to their youth ministries during high school, and could be described as "engaged disciples," continued in the church as young adults at a rate of 93 percent.<sup>28</sup> For Shields, such data shows that church ministry structure and age-segregated groupings are not to blame and are not producing the alarming apostasy that many opponents would like to claim. Conversely, age-segregated groupings within church life provide opportunities for youth to be engaged and disciplined in an environment targeted toward their needs. These auxiliary environments, far from being unbiblical in Shields's mind, develop greater opportunities to reach students who would not otherwise participate in any church activities at all.<sup>29</sup>

Devries argues that two primary areas must be developed for this model to have the intended effect of biblically reaching and discipling families: "The real power for faith formation was not in the youth program but in the families and the extended family of the church."<sup>30</sup> He further argues that churches need to find ways to empower and equip parents to actively disciple their children and create opportunities for extended generations

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<sup>26</sup> Shields, "Family-Based Ministry," 115-18.

<sup>27</sup> Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 10-12.

<sup>28</sup> James Brandon Shields, "An Assessment of Dropout Rates of Former Youth Group Participants in Conservative Southern Baptist Megachurches" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Shields, "Family-Based Ministry," 122-23.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Devries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2004), 61.

in the church to interact with and engage in the discipleship of children and teens.<sup>31</sup> Family-Based congregations attempt to use the typical age-segregated church structure but intentionally add new activities for all generations. Church leadership also calls for parents to step into their biblical role of primary disciple-maker in the home. While the structure of the Family-Based approach is different from the Family-Integrated approach, the goal of emphasizing the role of parents in discipleship is the same. Both models also emphasize a need for churches to bring together the varying generations in the life of the church.

The benefits of the Family-Based approach are significant for most church structures. There is little need for radical reorganization. The church maintains the youth and children's ministry that many families rely on for partnership and support in discipling their children. Opportunities for the church to reach individuals who do not fit the traditional family paradigm are also preserved. Further, this model recognizes the need for and emphasizes a call on parents to assume their biblical role of primary disciple-maker in the home. In the life of a Family-Based congregation, the church creates opportunities for parents to step into this role. Many pastors and congregations would find this approach to be an easier and more palatable shift than a full-scale swing to a Family-Integrated approach, which requires a revamping of every ministry and outreach in the whole of the church structure.

Although the Family-Based model brings such benefits and may be an easier steppingstone for many churches, desiring to address the question of family ministry effectiveness, some complain that this model does not address all the problems it claims to. Those in the Family-Integrated camp question whether age-segmented activities are genuinely helpful for any reason other than cultural comforts. Other areas of question are familial and children-oriented evangelism, which should be led by parents rather than by

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<sup>31</sup> Devries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 67.



other ministry departments, according to Renfro. Further, he complains there is little, if any, formal training for parents to take on the role of primary disciple-maker in the home.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Family-Equipping Ministry Model**

The final family ministry model to be considered is the Family Equipping-Ministry model. The Family-Equipping model, like both previous models sees parents as the primary disciple-makers in the home and believes in the importance of bringing together the generations for discipleship and church ministry. Unlike the Family-Integrated model, the Family-Equipping model does not call for the complete abolition of age-segregated activities. Like the Family-Based approach, it maintains age-segregated ministries within the church structure. However, this model sees age-segregated ministries as further opportunities for equipping parents to step into their role as primary disciple-maker and partner with parents in the discipleship of their children. The primary distinction in this model from the Family-Based approach is the emphasis and priority on equipping parents and incorporating intergenerational activities in the church. Timothy Paul Jones is credited with coining the term “family-equipping,” and is one of the primary proponents of this model, as are Jay Strother and Randy Stinson.<sup>33</sup>

Though many similarities exist between the Family-Based and Family-Equipping models, the priority and intentionality around intergenerational ministries and championing parents’ biblical role is seen to be much more obvious in the Family-Equipping model. According to Bryan Nelson, “Family-Equipping churches cultivate a congregational culture that coordinates every ministry to champion the role of parents as primary faith-trainers in their children’s lives.”<sup>34</sup> Titus 2:1-8 is a passage of primary importance for developing biblical ministries that are both intergenerational and

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Renfro, “Responses to Brandon Shields,” in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 139-40.

<sup>33</sup> Strother, “Family-Equipping Ministry,” 164-65.

<sup>34</sup> Jones and Nelson, “The Problem with Family Ministry,” 27.

discipleship oriented. Unbelieving parents are typically connected with mature believers and each ministry in the church is re-designed with the proper biblical priorities where the more mature disciple and teach the less mature.<sup>35</sup>

Strother points to data from Barna Research that indicates churches having the greatest success at transforming individuals into engaged and mature Christians had created a parent-church partnership. This partnership between the church and parents of those families in the church is a primary aspect of the Family-Equipping model that distinguishes it from other models. The age-segmented structures are still intact, although those age-segmented ministries like youth and children's ministries partner with parents in the goal of discipling their children. At the same time, parents are intentionally disciplined for their unique role.<sup>36</sup>

The Family-Equipping model sees the age-segmentation as a further development of Titus 2:1-8, where mature believers come together to help and equip other less mature believers with their families. These age-segmented ministries are not merely tweaked and re-focused but radically redesigned with entirely different focuses and priorities. Strother notes, "Family-equipping churches retain some age-organized ministries but restructure their ministries to connect people across the generations and to partner with parents at every level of ministry so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable for the discipleship of their children."<sup>37</sup>

The Family-Equipping approach sets itself apart in the efforts of equipping and holding parents accountable for the discipleship of their children. For advocates of the Family-Equipping model, the Family-Based model does not do enough equipping, teaching, and training for parents to understand and take on this role.

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<sup>35</sup> Jones and Nelson, "The Problem with Family Ministry," 27.

<sup>36</sup> Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry," 164-65.

<sup>37</sup> Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry," 166.

Although most parents in evangelical circles acknowledge that they should be the primary disciple-makers in the home, many have little knowledge of what this looks like on a day-to-day basis. Even many Christians who had been in church for most of their life indicate that family worship is a foreign concept. Many Christian parents also acknowledge that their children's sports and education play a significant role in how much time is available for family worship.<sup>38</sup>

For Jones, parents need to be taught to reshape the priorities in the home and understand the critical importance of making time for spiritual formation. He asks the rhetorical question, "What does it profit our child to gain a baseball scholarship and yet never experience consistent prayer and devotional times with us, the parents?"<sup>39</sup> Jones identifies two primary reasons that Christian parents are not leading family worship time in the home. First, he notes that churches are not training parents to do this task. Second, he notes that busyness of both the parents and church calendars prevent this important training from occurring. He suggests both churches and parents scale back their busy calendars so to focus energy on critical components of spiritual formation in the family.<sup>40</sup>

The core values of the Family-Equipping Ministry model are parenting with an eternal goal, parenting with a life-long plan, appreciation for the generations, faith training in the home, high expectations for Christian husbands and fathers, and active compassion for spiritual orphans.<sup>41</sup> Using these core values, proponents of the Family-Equipping model have developed a specific plan for what "equipping" looks like in the life of the church. Parents must be taught to continually think of the eternal destiny of their children's soul and shape the family schedule to place a priority on the need for spiritual formation. Parents should also work on developing a life-long plan of spiritual formation with their

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<sup>38</sup> Jones, *The Family Ministry Field Guide*, 97-100.

<sup>39</sup> Jones, *The Family Ministry Field Guide*, 103.

<sup>40</sup> Jones, *The Family Ministry Field Guide*, 106-7.

<sup>41</sup> Jones, *The Family Ministry Field Guide*, 115.

children. When children are young, a family devotional time with prayer and Bible activities works well. However, as children grow, more intentional strategies will be needed to address life crises for teens. Christian husbands and fathers must be taught to step into their role as spiritual leader in the home. Parents must be taught how to lead family worship on a regular and consistent basis. Finally, churches must recognize the reality of spiritual orphans and create opportunities for individuals without believing parents to be adopted into and disciplined in the church.<sup>42</sup>

The Family-Equipping Ministry model comes with a great number of benefits to the local church and is the strongest model for BHBC. Because this model does not abolish age-segregated ministries, there is no need to revolutionize the way the church meets as those in Family-Integrated churches do. The Family-Equipping model also sets up a specific and tangible plan for equipping parents to take on the role of disciple-maker in the home. Lastly, reshaping each age-segregated ministry to establish a partnership with parents is a significant benefit.

Strother acknowledges that despite all the benefits to this strategy, there are also challenges. A significant challenge with this model is re-training those who have developed long-held traditions within the age-segregated ministries. He notes that ministry leaders must all be convinced that the “equipping” is a core component of their ministry, or the model will falter in its execution. Further, churches often maintain old structures that are difficult to reshape. Many parents also simply struggle to find the time to implement many of the spiritual formation strategies in the home.<sup>43</sup> Lastly, Renfro believes that as long as age-segregation exists in the church, there will be a significant barrier to training parents to disciple their children.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Jones, *The Family Ministry Field Guide*, 115-17.

<sup>43</sup> Strother, “Family-Equipping Ministry,” 185-87.

<sup>44</sup> Renfro, “Responses to Jay Strother,” 194.

In response to several critiques of the Family-Equipping model, Strother notes that challenges to implementation do not mean the model itself is faulty.<sup>45</sup> While re-training within a current ministry structure can be challenging and time consuming, a church can execute the shift to a Family-Equipping model with the right emphasis and intentionality even if it takes years to do so. The church leadership must champion this model, not so much as a new program but as a new philosophy that takes root in every area of the church and home.<sup>46</sup> At least annual training for leaders and teachers must take place to ensure the priorities of the new model remain. Renfro's final complaint that age-segregation is a significant barrier to biblical family discipleship is non-sequitur. Proper training and equipping for parents can happen within age-segregated groupings as the church partners with parents in family discipleship.

### **Areas of Agreement amongst the Three Views**

Although significant differences exist amongst the three views considered, two areas of agreement rise to the surface. First, all three views emphasize the need for intergenerational ministry. The age-segmented model of ministry that has existed in the previous generations of the church has removed opportunities for multi-generational fellowship and discipleship. Appropriately, all three models of family ministry point to this need for intergenerational discipleship to occur in the church to see a true biblical model of family discipleship.

A second area of agreement amongst the three views is the need for parents to take on the role of primary disciple-maker in the home. While the church is a significant partner in its ministry to families and the discipleship of children, the church by itself cannot replace the need for parents to raise their children faithfully and nurture spiritual

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<sup>45</sup> Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry," 186.

<sup>46</sup> Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry," 185-86.

formation at home. Parents have long neglected this duty, relying too heavily on others to do their job for them.

Charles Ryrie writes, “The home and the church are the only two God-ordained ‘institutions’ for carrying out His work.”<sup>47</sup> Ryrie agrees that God can and does use other institutions, like Christian schools, to further his kingdom, but the church and family are the primary means through which God ministers in the world.<sup>48</sup> Mel Walker explains, “It’s a powerful influence when the home and the church work together for the common goal of developing lasting spiritual maturity in the lives of the next generation.”<sup>49</sup> He affirms that parents are the primary disciple-makers, but that the community of the church is a significant factor in maturing and developing the next generation. He sees the age-segregated ministries of the church as opportunities to target age-specific issues while also incorporating older generations into the process of discipleship in those same ministries. For Walker, the whole family must commit to being involved in church together and take advantage of God’s plan for discipleship of the whole family by the whole church.<sup>50</sup>

Although Walker admits a variety of potential benefits for age-segregated ministry, he laments this approach when it is pursued to an extreme. He points to a mega-church in Grand Rapids, which hosts separate worship services for each age group. According to Walker, it seems the larger the church, the larger the separation that exists between the age groups. He refers to these types of churches as one-generational ministry models. These churches intentionally set up an extreme separation of age groups, which

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<sup>47</sup> Charles Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 140.

<sup>48</sup> Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, 140.

<sup>49</sup> Mel Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry: Why a Balanced View of Connecting the Generations is Essential for the Church* (Chinchilla, PA: Vision for Youth, 2013), 34.

<sup>50</sup> Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry*, 34-42.

he points out can bring significant harm to the process of biblical discipleship where the more mature disciple the less mature.<sup>51</sup>

Further, Walker notes that even in churches that do bring the generations together for worship, they often do so without any meaningful interaction. In many churches where most of the church is gathered for a single worship service, in what he calls a multi-generational gathering, the generations typically separate themselves and pass each other like ships in the night. He argues for a solution that brings together the generations into purposeful intergenerational discipleship.<sup>52</sup>

Walker offers these seven intentional steps for churches to address the challenge of intergenerational discipleship.

1. “Motivate and train adults to pray for emerging generations.”<sup>53</sup>
2. “Give your adults specific opportunities to see younger generations actively living for the Lord.”<sup>54</sup>
3. “Provide specific opportunities for the different generations to have interaction and fellowship with each other.”<sup>55</sup>
4. “Develop intentional intergenerational mentoring connections.”<sup>56</sup>
5. “Begin to provide ways for different generations to pray with each other.”<sup>57</sup>
6. “Provide significant ways for younger generations to serve alongside older people in established ministries.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry*, 47-48.

<sup>52</sup> Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry*, 50.

<sup>53</sup> Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry*, 51-52.

<sup>54</sup> Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry*, 52-53.

<sup>55</sup> Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry*, 53-54.

<sup>56</sup> Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry*, 54-55.

<sup>57</sup> Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry*, 55-56.

<sup>58</sup> Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry*, 56.

7. “Recruit a team of encouraging and loving adults to actively welcome emerging generations into the life of the church.”<sup>59</sup>

Developing intergenerational ministries in the life of the church is a critical component to a healthy family ministry model. Regardless of which ministry model a church might opt for, fostering intergenerational interactions is both biblical and essential for raising up the next generation for the Lord. Equipping parents to assume their biblical role as primary disciple maker is also critical for any church ministry model. Parents should be equipped to engage with their children in formal times of Bible study as well as in informal settings along the pathway of life.

Family discipleship as a primary responsibility of parents has been emphasized by church leaders throughout church history. Martin Luther expressed the home as an “earthly kingdom” where parents are to teach their children the commandments of God. He believed that parents’ responsibility to disciple their children was a divine calling.<sup>60</sup> Jonathan Edwards said, “Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church.”<sup>61</sup> Charles Spurgeon writes, “Let no Christian parents fall into the delusion that the Sunday school is intended to ease them of their personal duties. The first and most natural condition of things is for Christian parents to train up their own children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”<sup>62</sup>

A church’s family ministry models should equip parents to have, according to Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, time, moments, and milestones.<sup>63</sup> First, they encourage

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<sup>59</sup> Walker, *Intergenerational Youth Ministry*, 56-57.

<sup>60</sup> Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism in The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J Wengert, trans. Charles Arand (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 410.

<sup>61</sup> Edwards, “Farewell Sermon,” 236.

<sup>62</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Sermons on Family and Home* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), 92.

<sup>63</sup> Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Times, Moments and Milestones* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 43.



parents to set apart time from their busy schedules for intentional conversations about living out the gospel. They encourage parents to set daily, weekly, or monthly opportunities to have gospel related conversations with regular Bible study incorporated into those conversations.<sup>64</sup> Second, they write that parents should take advantage of moments in everyday life for having gospel-centered conversations with their children. Every moment is a gift from God and a fresh opportunity to teach children about God through the walks of life.<sup>65</sup> He also encourages parents to have spiritual milestones to celebrate God’s work in the family’s life. He notes that these milestones could be “making” or “marking” events. Milestones that are “making” events help the family remember and celebrate God’s work in a child’s personal life. Milestones that are “marking” type events help the family remember and celebrate God’s unpredictable provision or protection in a family members life.<sup>66</sup>

Titus 2:1-8 commands that more mature believers be involved in the spiritual growth and development of those who come behind. Intergenerational discipleship is a biblical mandate for spiritual growth to occur in the emerging generations. Ephesians 6:1-4 commands parents to be the disciple-makers of their children. Parents must not neglect their biblical mandate to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Intergenerational discipleship along with equipping parents to be primary disciple-makers are crucial components in the family ministry model of the church. As churches assess their own ministry model, these two elements should be considered as non-negotiables no matter which family ministry model is adopted.

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<sup>64</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 87-89.

<sup>65</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 115-17.

<sup>66</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 139-40.

## **The Strongest Family Ministry Model for Beverly Hills Baptist Church**

The three family ministry models considered in this chapter all bring strengths and advantages. The Family-Integrated model emphasizes intergenerational ministry more than the other models. It also emphasizes parents' role in discipling their children and providing means for them to do this in the home. A significant weakness of the Family-Integrated model is that it is difficult to implement for most church structures. The difficulty of implementing this model is prohibitive for most pastors and churches. A second weakness is revealed in this model's approach to spiritual orphans. Because the family is together in every aspect of this church ministry, spiritual orphans may find themselves lost or lonely. For these reasons, Beverly Hills will be best suited to choose a ministry model that provides age-segmentation in the various ministries of the church.

The Family-Based ministry model brings strengths for most churches in terms of maintaining flexibility to work within existing age-segmented structures. Establishing opportunities for intergenerational discipleship as well as promoting parents' role as primary disciple-maker sets this model apart from the era of Programmatic-Segmented ministry. Advocates of the Family-Based model correctly identify gaps in the Programmatic-Segmented ministry and establish a need to address them. A significant weakness in this model is that it lacks a clear roadmap behind bringing the generations together and equipping parents to be primary disciple-makers. Beverly Hills will be best suited to implement a model that does these two things more effectively.

The Family-Equipping ministry model is the strongest ministry model of the three considered. Like the Family-Based model, the Family-Equipping model does not remove existing age-segmented structures but utilizes those structures for incorporating intergenerational discipleship and equipping parents to assume their biblical role of primary disciple-maker. Because this model implements steps to encourage, equip, and hold parents accountable, it is more preferable than the Family-Based approach. Because it does not require a complete restructuring of the church ministry, it is also more preferable than

the Family-Integrated approach. Like any ministry model, the effectiveness of the Family-Equipping model comes down to ministry leaders buying into the approach and executing it well. For most churches striving to implement this model, regular training for ministry leaders and regular equipping for parents will be required.

Any family ministry model must also address the needs of non-traditional families like those made up of single parents, blended families, or grandparents raising children. The Family-Equipping model at Beverly Hills must provide intentional training and support for families that fit these categories as well. Overall, the Family-Equipping model provides the strongest framework for discipling and supporting families of any type. Beverly Hills will be best served to adopt the Family-Equipping model and implement it to train, equip, and prepare parents for home-centered discipleship.

### **What Is Family Worship?**

The previous sections of this chapter focused on how the church should model itself in order to partner with parents in the discipleship of the family with parents serving as the primary disciple-makers. The local church should take the question of its family ministry model seriously and ensure that it is structured to successfully fulfill the purpose of family discipleship. However, another important question relates to how family discipleship is done in the home. What does discipleship look like when it is happening within the family? What is the church trying to help parents do at home? This final section will spell out what family worship looks like so families within the local church, and specifically BHBC, will have a targeted result as their aim.

Peter Schemm Jr. writes, “Envision a household where the gospel stands at the center of life—a place where Scripture, in all its depth and richness, is believed and lived anew each day . . . where those who have yet to believe can see the influence of the Lord

Jesus, morning and evening.”<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, as seen from the research of Timothy Paul Jones noted in the beginning of this chapter, such a household is a rarity amongst Christian homes. Many parents need help to untangle the mystery of family worship.

Schemm’s words point to the most important aspect of family worship—the gospel and its transforming power in the life of the family as revealed in Scripture. Scripture reading together as a family is the most integral component of family worship. Schemm writes, “Holy Scripture is the most important source for training in the Christian household.”<sup>68</sup> Every family needs to have a regular time of reading Scripture together and digesting its truth. Without Scripture, it is difficult to see how any family worship has occurred at all. While some can be intimidated at this family exercise, Schemm suggests that reading the Word together should be approached simply. The Bible is not a compilation of difficult lesson plans. Reading the Bible as a family should be exactly that—a time to read and listen to God’s Word.<sup>69</sup>

As for frequency of family Bible reading within the context of family worship, Chandler and Griffin recommend planning an intentional time of daily, weekly, or monthly opportunities. They note that the regularity of family worship might differ from one family to the next and might change through varying seasons of family life.<sup>70</sup> Schemm suggests nothing more than a consistent practice. Dangers exist when aiming for a daily habit. Many who aim for daily reading whether personally or as a family will fail in this regard and then give up entirely. He suggests that a regular and consistent time of Bible reading is the best approach and cautions against a spirit of Pharsaism in this effort. Performing the act of family Bible reading itself can become another vice for a pharisee.

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<sup>67</sup> Peter R. Schemm Jr., “Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 177.

<sup>68</sup> Schemm, “Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household,” 182.

<sup>69</sup> Schemm, “Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household,” 184.

<sup>70</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 87-90.

He also recommends using an identical translation for all family and individual Bible reading.<sup>71</sup>

Dallas Willard writes in his work on the spiritual disciplines that Bible reading, prayer, and church participation should be done in a way that prevents a new bondage from occurring. The spiritual disciplines should deepen one's love and affection for Christ and desire to become more like him rather than a hollow task on a daily religious schedule.<sup>72</sup> In this way, family Bible reading further enhances discipleship within the home and contributes to a gospel-centered environment for the whole family.

Prayer as a family is another important component of the family worship time. Chandler and Griffin note that prayer time should be a regular and simple part of the family worship routine. Talking to God together as a family should be normal and done more than just at mealtimes. They recommend incorporating into family prayer praise to God, thankfulness, confession of sin, and requests for daily needs.<sup>73</sup>

In many families, regular gathering for Bible reading and prayer is more than enough to be considered an effective time of family worship. However, other activities can be incorporated into family worship depending on the needs and abilities of those within the family unit. Schemm mentions singing, catechisms, reciting creeds, and talking at the table as components to family worship.<sup>74</sup> Whatever the specific forms include in a family's worship time, Chandler and Griffin note that rhythm and intentionality must be part of the successful formula: "One-off occasional family devotions are good, but they will not have the same positive cumulative effect on your child's training."<sup>75</sup> Every family has a

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<sup>71</sup> Schemm, "Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household," 178-84.

<sup>72</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God changes Lives* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 251.

<sup>73</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 90.

<sup>74</sup> Schemm, "Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household," 177-91.

<sup>75</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 94.

routine and schedule, family worship should be worked into this rhythm of the life with planning and intentionality.

A final component of family worship often not associated with the formal times of Bible reading in the living room is discipleship conversations. Griffin and Chandler call these spontaneous conversations “moments.”<sup>76</sup> Jones refers to them as “faith walks.” He says of this element of family discipleship, “Faith walks are simply a category to describe conversations about God that unfold in the context of your day-by-day life.”<sup>77</sup> Every question that comes up within the regular activities of the family can be another opportunity for a faith walk conversation. Conversations about God can occur on the ballfield, at the zoo, in the car, and anywhere else the family might go. Chandler and Griffin note of these “moments” that parents should be prepared to communicate God’s truth in whatever circumstances that come their way.<sup>78</sup> While these spontaneous conversations are not necessarily incorporated into the intentional family worship time, Deuteronomy 6:7 sees such conversations, “when you walk by the way,” as part of the whole of teaching the commandments of God to children while they are under the tutelage of their parents.

Though family worship might look different from one family to another, one thing family worship cannot be is nonexistent.<sup>79</sup> Bible reading, prayer, singing, catechisms, reciting creeds, and faith walks are all possible components of a strong family worship and discipleship environment. These home-centered activities are important but should never be seen as a replacement for participation in the local church. Corporate worship, preaching, singing, prayer, ordinances, and fellowship are all activities critical to the health of any Christian, including children in the home. Parents must be committed to reinforcing

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<sup>76</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 113.

<sup>77</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 161.

<sup>78</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 113.

<sup>79</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 88.

discipleship in the home through the spiritual discipline of regular and intentional family worship and involvement in their local church. For parents at BHBC, discipleship should occur within the life of the church for the whole family, as the church model itself serves as a partner to parents for home-centered discipleship throughout the week.

## CHAPTER 4

### MINISTRY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Chapters 2 and 3 of this ministry project focused on the biblical mandate on parents to be the primary disciple-makers in the home and covered the role of the church in family ministry. In Scripture, parents are always seen as the primary disciple-makers of their children. While the church plays an integral role of teaching and fostering the spiritual growth of the family, parents must embrace their role rather than leave discipleship of the family to a pastor or ministry volunteer. The church should establish its structure and programs to partner with parents in discipleship of their children as well as to equip and teach parents to fulfill their biblical role. Chapter 3 considered three different family ministry models and the Family-Equipping Ministry model, a church ministry model that teaches parents to disciple their family in the home, was identified as the best model for BHBC. Within this framework, BHBC will be able to better equip and train parents for family discipleship.

The purpose of this project was to equip parents at Beverly Hills Baptist Church in Asheville, North Carolina, to disciple their children. This chapter summarizes the implementation of this ministry project at BHBC. Three goals were developed to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of this project. Goal 1 assessed the current family discipleship practices at Beverly Hills Baptist Church. This goal was measured by distributing a Family Discipleship Practices Survey to at least four attending parental units with children between the ages of 0 to 18 to assess current discipleship practices in the home. This goal was considered successful after 75 percent of the surveys



administered were returned complete.<sup>1</sup> Goal 2 developed an eight-lesson teaching series to lay the biblical framework for family discipleship. This goal was measured by a panel of experts, who used a teaching rubric, to evaluate the series for biblical faithfulness and proper pedagogy.<sup>2</sup> This goal was considered successful if 90 percent of the ratings met or exceeded the “sufficient” level on the Teaching Series Evaluation form. Goal 3 was to increase the frequency of discipleship conversations and family worship within the families who participated in the teaching series. This goal was measured by comparing results from the pre-survey to the post-survey and was considered successful if an increase in the frequency of home-centered discipleship conversations and family worship occurred.

### **Preparation**

I began preparation for this project targeting family ministry when I was the associate pastor at New Prospect Baptist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina. However, partially through the development of this project, I accepted the call as the senior pastor at Beverly Hills Baptist Church in Asheville, North Carolina, which was in the beginning stages of a revitalization effort. After consultation with the church leadership at BHBC and my doctoral supervisor, it was agreed that this project would be an excellent way to re-launch the children’s and young families’ ministries at BHBC. When I started as the senior pastor in 2022, few children regularly attended the weekly children’s ministries, and few young families were present in worship services.

The Family Discipleship class began at a critical time in the life of the church as BHBC was already in the process of revamping its family ministry structure and emphases. I worked with the leadership on a vision for family ministry in concert with the development of the course materials for this class. Although small, the family ministry at

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1 for Family Discipleship Practices Survey.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 2 for Teaching Series Evaluation Tool.

BHBC was positioned excellently for a class that would target young families and relaunch the family ministry of the church.

For several months prior to implementation I communicated the coming class to the whole church on Sunday mornings and invested in several one-on-one conversations with deacons and church leaders on how a Family-Equipping ministry would enhance the discipleship of children through the church and families connected to the church. At the same time, I individually contacted parents with children between the ages of 0 to 18 to participate in the coming class, which would focus on discipling children and raising godly families. Eight families with children between the ages of 0 to 18 expressed interest in the class, but two families declined participation because of summer vacations conflicting with the class schedule. A total of six families with children ranging from age 3 up to 17 participated in the class.

Initially, I planned to teach the sessions only in a live classroom setting; however, upon communication with a few parents, I decided to make recordings available in the event of missed sessions. Ultimately, I built an online course through TalentLMS that mirrored the live class almost exactly. I pre-recorded each lesson and uploaded the recordings to YouTube. TalentLMS provided an important avenue for creating surveys and embedding YouTube videos in an online course, which easily allowed for sessions to be re-watched by participants and allow me as the instructor to see real-time progress through the online course. An added benefit of this effort was that the online course would be available to the church in the future without any further effort in creating or implementing the class.

I developed each lesson in the spring of 2023 and reached out to several individuals to serve as an expert panel to review the lessons for clarity and biblical faithfulness. Lesson 1 of the class was titled “The Beginning of Family Discipleship” and covered Deuteronomy 6:1-9. Lesson 2 was titled “Parents Disciple the Generations” and was taught from Psalm 78:1-8 and several passages from Proverbs. Lesson 3 was titled

“Parents Disciple Children in the NT” and was taught from Ephesians 6:1-4. Lesson 4 was titled “How the Church Partners in Family Discipleship” and began with an overview of various models of family ministry within the church. Lesson 5 was titled “Family Discipleship in the Church.” Lesson 6 was titled “Beverly Hills Baptist Church, A Family-Equipping Church.” Lesson 7 was titled “Times, Moments, and Milestones.” Each participant was gifted the book *Family Discipleship* by Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin for this session as several chapters were utilized in the teaching of this material. Lesson 8 was titled “Family Discipleship in the Home.” In this final lesson participants created their own personalized family discipleship plan.

Four individuals agreed to serve as the expert panel and review the eight-lesson class. The first panel expert is the associate pastor at Grace Bible Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He has a Doctor of Ministry from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and has also completed some Doctor of Philosophy work from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He oversees the family ministry in his church and works with the elders at Grace Bible Church to develop a healthy family ministry through several years of significant growth in the church.

The second panel expert is the senior pastor from Grace Baptist Church in West Asheville, North Carolina. He has completed a Doctor of Education from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and actively teaches theology as an adjunct professor at Fruitland Baptist Bible College in Hendersonville, North Carolina. He has been pastoring in his current church for over five years and is in a season of growth after several years of revitalization work. He leads the Pillar Network in Asheville, North Carolina, which is a network of pastors seeking to plant or revitalize SBC churches in western North Carolina.

The third panel expert currently serves as the Director of Missions for the Buncombe Baptist Association, the local Baptist network in Asheville, North Carolina. He has served in this position for over ten years and has nearly thirty years’ experience in

pastoral ministry. He has a master's degree in theological studies from Midwest Bible Seminary.

The final panel expert is the senior pastor from New Prospect Baptist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He has over fifteen years' senior pastor experience and has completed a Master of Divinity degree from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. We originally brainstormed together the need for a ministry project targeting young families at New Prospect Baptist Church in 2018, and his input in the direction for this project was influential in its beginning phases of formulation.

### **Project Implementation**

The Family Discipleship class at BHBC was scheduled to begin on Sunday, June 18, 2023. I announced the start of the class to the whole church and individually requested young families to participate in the class. The Family Discipleship class took place during the Sunday school hour from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. with three sessions also taking place on Wednesday evenings during the Bible study hour from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The eight-lesson series was concluded on Wednesday, July 19, 2023.

While each session was taught live, pre-recorded sessions were uploaded to YouTube and made available through the online course created inside of TalentLMS. Six parental units agreed to pilot the online Family Discipleship course created inside of TalentLMS along with the live class taught on Sundays and Wednesdays. TalentLMS was as an expedient way to provide recordings for missed sessions and to survey those participating in the course. The resource may also serve as a regular way for BHBC to train and equip young families who join BHBC in the future.

Prior to the classes beginning, each participating family unit was given a unique username and password via email for their account in TalentLMS. Over the duration of the class, a few participants missed live sessions but made them up through the online course. During the live sessions, BHBC's Sunday morning and Wednesday evening children's and youth ministries operated, allowing for parents to be completely available

for the class. Lessons 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8 were taught on Sunday mornings to the young families group, while lessons 4, 5, and 6 were taught on Wednesdays to a larger audience of the church, including young families.

### **Pre-Survey Results**

Those in the Family Discipleship class who had children between the ages of 0-18 agreed to complete a pre- and post-survey as part of the class. The survey utilized for this portion of the project was the Family Discipleship Practices Survey developed by Timothy Paul Jones in his book *The Family Ministry Field Guide*.<sup>3</sup> The survey itself was reviewed by the leadership as well as the Children’s Ministry Committee at BHBC for perspective and appropriateness for the context of our young families’ ministry. The survey’s use in this project was also approved by the Research Ethics Committee via email on May 30, 2023.

The survey consisted of eight statements of agreement and eight questions on both parental perceptions as well as practices. Six parental units participated in the class but only four completed the pre-survey. Responses from the pre-survey showed that the parents who participated in the class desired to disciple their children and that they believed parents have the primarily responsible for this duty. However, the survey responses indicated opportunity for parents to do more than they are currently doing with their children.

The agreement scores that indicated a strong belief from this group that parents are the primary disciple-makers can be seen in statements 6, “Parents, and in particular fathers, have a responsibility . . .” (5.25); 7, “Church leaders are the people primarily responsible . . .” (2.00); and 4, “When my child asks . . . I really wish that my child would have asked a minister . . .” (2.00). The scores on each of these statements point to a belief in this group that parents, not church leaders or someone else, should be leading and

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 125.

disciplining their children. Statements 4 and 7 received the lowest agreement in the survey at 2.00. And statement 7 had the highest agreement at 5.25, which clearly indicates the parents in this group desire to take on the discipleship role in their family life.

Survey respondents also indicated that family devotional time was a priority in statement 1, “I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship time . . .” (4.50). However, statement 2 indicated a dichotomy or conflict to the scores in statement 1. Survey respondents indicated in statement 2, “I would like to do family devotions . . . but our family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while,” (4.25), a high level of tension with their priorities. The group notates family devotions as a priority, but the pre-survey data appears to show that it is not (see table 1).

Table 1. Survey responses parental perceptions (1 to 8)

Survey Responses Parental Perceptions (1 to 8) Scoring (1 to 6)	SD 1	D 2	DS 3	AS 4	A 5	SA 6	Agree Score
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family’s schedule.				2	2		4.50
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.			1	1	2		4.25
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.		1	2	1			2.50
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	1	2	1				2.00
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	1	1		1	1		3.75
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage in discipleship with each of their children.					3	1	5.25
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for disciplining my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.		4					2.00
8. My church has helped me develop a clear plan for my child’s spiritual growth.		1	1	1	1		3.50

In the parental practices portion of the survey, survey respondents were provided more probing questions around family discipleship activities like prayer, devotions, and spiritual conversations. The ratings given on questions 9, 11, and 13 all indicate opportunity for improvement in family discipleship activities. Question 9, “How many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with my children?” (2.75); question 11, “How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?” (3.5); and question 13, “How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship . . .” (2.75) indicate areas where more discipleship activity can be implemented by parents (see table 2).

Table 2. Survey responses parental practices (9 to 16)

Survey Responses Parental Practices (9 to 16) Scoring (1 to 6)	0 1	1 2	2 3	3-4 4	5-6 5	7+ 6	Agree Score
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	1		2	1			2.75
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?			2	1		1	4.00
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?			3		1		3.50
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?			1		3		4.50
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	1		2	1			2.75
14. How many times in the last two months have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children’s spiritual development?		1	2		1		3.25
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?		3	1				2.25
16. 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?	2		1	1			2.25

## **Class Content**

Lesson 1 was titled “The Beginning of Family Discipleship” and covered Deuteronomy 6:1-9. The class began with participation questions, such as “what would your children say is your favorite thing to talk to them about?” This question kicked off lively discussion about how parents should be intentional about talking with their children about the Lord and how to live for him. Deuteronomy 6:1-9 is the command to parents to teach their children about how to love the Lord and live for him daily. An exposition of the passage encouraged parents first to model love for the Lord with all their heart, soul, and mind. Without a genuine love for the Lord, any parent would fail in their discipleship of children. Following this encouragement the class discussed the command to teach children diligently while sitting in the house, walking by the way, laying down, and rising up. Family discipleship was then emphasized as an ongoing process in the life of the family. There are to be times of formal and informal teaching throughout every day. The class ended by pointing to a coming session on how to plan these formal and informal times of discipleship.

Lesson 2 was titled “Parents Disciple the Generations” and was taught from Psalm 78:1-8 and Proverbs 1:8 and 22:6. Psalm 78 further emphasizes the role parents play in discipling children and how discipleship of children impacts the generations that follow. The Psalmist indicates that our children’s children and even “children unborn” are to be considered in discipleship of the family. The class discussed the potential legacy left behind to each family’s children and grandchildren as it relates to living godly lives. The group then asked, “How will our grandchildren be impacted by our testimony?” The psalmist points to previous generations of wicked Israelites who were stubborn in their response to God’s commands. The class reflected on the impact of our parents and grandparents, whether faithful or not, and considered the potentially disastrous consequences of not taking seriously the command to disciple our children diligently. Passages from Proverbs further emphasized the important role parents play in teaching



the wisdom and fear of the Lord to their children, so that when they grow into adulthood they will know the truth of God and not depart from it.

Lesson 3 was titled “Parents Disciple Children in the NT” and was taught from Ephesians 6:1-4. This session began with a brief overview of spiritual leadership as seen in Ephesians 5:22-25. The emphasis of spiritual leadership was placed on husbands and fathers as described by Paul. This spiritual leadership was described as loving service and Christlikeness, not as dictatorial or domineering authority. Although spiritual leadership is emphasized in Ephesians 5 and 6, children are still required to “obey their parents.” Both parents are involved in teaching and discipline of children, spiritual leadership does not take away from the responsibility of wives and mothers to model and teach their children. Titus 2:3-5 was also brought in to show the importance of wives and mothers in the discipleship of the family. Fathers are then encouraged by Paul to bring up their children in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord.” The class discussed the importance of gentle and loving instruction to children, not provoking them to anger as overly disciplinarian fathers might do.

Lesson 4 was titled “How the Church Partners in Family Discipleship” and began with an overview of various models of family ministry within church life. A major focus of this lesson was in seeing the church as a true partner in family discipleship rather than as the primary means of discipleship for children. In many church ministry structures, age segmentation often contributes to the problem of displacing parents as disciple-makers for children and youth. Many churches, perhaps unwittingly, contribute to the notion that someone other than parents should teach children how to follow Jesus with their whole lives. Further, little equipping and training of parents on how to assume their biblical role of primary disciple-maker was emphasized. I concluded this lesson with the overarching theme that the church is an incredibly important piece of family discipleship, but that parents should continue their discipleship priorities within the home throughout the week, serving as the primary disciple-makers. The church reinforces and contributes to family

discipleship on a regular basis but should never be the only place where children and teens are taught about God and his Word.

Lesson 5 was titled “Family Discipleship in the Church.” In this lesson I taught through several church ministry models that have evolved in order to course-correct problems identified from the era of age-segmented church ministry. For each ministry model, strengths and weaknesses were considered. The first model covered was the Family-Integrated Ministry model, which seeks to keep the whole family together in every area of church life. This model emphasizes parents as the primary-disciple maker and provides training and resources for family discipleship. Another model covered was the Family-Based ministry model. This model maintains most of the structures of age-segmentation but seeks to incorporate opportunities for multi-generational interactions. The final model covered was the Family-Equipping ministry model. This model also maintains some level of age-segmentation but re-emphasizes every ministry and seeks to intentionally train and equip parents to do family discipleship in the home.

Lesson 6 was titled “Beverly Hills Baptist Church, A Family-Equipping Church.” After reviewing three models of family ministry, the class concluded together that the best ministry model for the context of BHBC was the Family-Equipping ministry model. BHBC has historically operated with a youth and children’s ministry, both of which are seen as valuable ministries to families in the church. The priority of these ministries at BHBC is to partner with parents in the process of becoming like Christ. In the class the question was asked, “Have you ever had a class in the church teach you how to disciple your kids at home?” While everyone in the class believed it was their job to teach their children about God, none of the participants had ever had a class in the church train and equip them for this important task. Most participants admitted that their efforts in the home were limited or based on what they had experienced growing up with their own parents. The next two lessons of this class were the first experience for any

participants to have a focused lesson oriented on how to do family discipleship in the home.

Lesson 7 was entitled “Times, Moments, and Milestones.” Each participant was gifted *Family Discipleship* by Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin. We discussed the three categories laid out in the book and how those areas of discipleship can be implemented in our lives. “Times” are the specific formal opportunities to read God’s Word as a family and teach the family about God. “Moments” are informal times along the pathway of life where discipleship conversations can be had with children and teens. “Milestones” are specific dates on the calendar that are utilized to celebrate God’s providential care and work in the lives of the family. As the class worked through each of these categories of family discipleship, I encouraged them to be intentional this week about how they can have formal and informal times of discipling conversations with their children.

Lesson 8 was entitled “Family Discipleship in the Home.” In this final lesson I led the class to consider the specific details of what it looks like for each parent to intentionally disciple their children both in formal settings and in informal settings. I created a “Family Discipleship Plan” document that was passed out to each parental unit to complete. This final session was a concluding time of understanding the need for and importance of intentional family worship times and intentional conversations along the pathway of life that point children to God and help them formulate a faithful and biblical worldview. I encouraged each parental unit to complete their family discipleship plan with a goal of having family worship at least one time per week. Each parental unit was encouraged to find an appropriate family devotional book or Bible reading plan to facilitate family worship. We discussed various children’s Bible story books as well as Bible reading plans for teens. We also spent some extended time discussing “Milestones” that could work for each family’s situation. By the end of this session, each parent had a working document on which they could establish their personalized family discipleship plan and move forward with concrete steps to intentionally disciple their children.

## Post-Survey Results

At the conclusion of the class on July 19, 2023, class participants with children between the ages of 0-18 completed their post-survey inside of TalentLMS. Six parental units participated in the class but only four completed post-surveys. The wider audience that was present for Wednesday evening sessions was not surveyed. The same group of parents who completed pre-surveys also completed post-surveys. Two parental units did not utilize their account inside of TalentLMS. Because I released the online class and sent invitations in the middle of June, some parental units were able to complete the online sessions and post-survey prior to the end of the live sessions.

Table 3. Survey responses parental perceptions (1 to 8)

Survey Responses Parental Perceptions (1 to 8) Scoring (1 to 6)	SD 1	D 2	DS 3	AS 4	A 5	SA 6	Agree Score
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.					4		5.00
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.		2	2				2.50
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.		3		1			2.50
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	4						1.00
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.		2		2			3.00
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage in discipleship with each of their children.					1	3	5.75
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.		4					2.00
8. My church has helped me develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.		1			2	1	4.50

Table 4. Survey responses parental practices (9 to 16)

Survey Responses Parental Practices (9 to 16) Scoring (1 to 6)	0 1	1 2	2 3	3-4 4	5-6 5	7+ 6	Agree Score
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?			1		3		4.50
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?		1		1	1	1	4.25
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?			1		1	2	5.00
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?					1	3	5.75
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?			1	1	1	1	4.50
14. How many times in the last two months have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?			1	2		1	4.25
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?			2	2			2.50
16. 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?				1	2	1	5.00

Although a more thorough comparison of pre- and post-survey results will be completed in the following chapter, a notable increase in scores can easily be seen in parental practices over the course of the project implementation. Questions 9, 11, 12, and 13 all reveal encouraging discipleship activities for those families surveyed.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the project's preparation, implementation, and conclusion. The three goals of this project, assessing current family discipleship practices, utilizing an expert panel to review the eight class sessions, and showing an increase in family discipleship activities were all incorporated into this chapter. A more thorough analysis of the three goals of this project will follow in chapter 5. Being able to lead this project implementation and see firsthand the encouraging results was a great blessing. I pray the Lord was glorified as BHBC strives to equip parents and disciple the next generation.

## CHAPTER 5

### MINISTRY PROJECT EVALUATION

This chapter evaluates the ministry project's purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. This chapter notes what could be done differently to enhance the overall impact of the project if it were to be implemented again at Beverly Hills Baptist Church, and this chapter includes my personal and theological reflections after implementing the project as well.

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

The purpose of this ministry project was to equip the parents at Beverly Hills Baptist Church to disciple their children. The purpose was derived from Scripture's commands for parents to take on the lead discipleship role within the context of the family. In Deuteronomy 6:1-9, parents of Israel are commanded to teach diligently the law of God to their children. The most prominent command found in the New Testament is Ephesians 6:1-4 where fathers are instructed to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The church partners along with parents in the discipleship of the family, but parents are always seen in Scripture as the primary disciple-makers in the home. This project served to meet the goals of BHBC in re-building a biblical family ministry that partners with parents in the discipleship process.

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

Three goals were developed to guide this project through implementation and to assess the effectiveness of the overall project. These goals will be evaluated in this section.

## **Goal 1 Results**

The first goal of this project was to assess the current methods of discipleship in the home among families with children between the ages of 0 and 18 at Beverly Hills Baptist Church. I was hired on at BHBC in 2022 to begin the process of re-building and re-shaping the many ministries of the church, including the children's and young families' ministries. This first goal was a natural fit for the strategy of the church overall. All of the participants in the class were newer to the congregation, so the timing of this project worked out excellently. I individually requested parents with children in the home to participate in the survey process and teaching series. When I began at BHBC as the senior pastor, my family was the only family in this category, but a total of eight young families with children between the ages of 0 to 18 were identified within the church. Six of the eight agreed to participate in the Family Discipleship teaching series and complete the survey.

The Family Discipleship Practices Survey was utilized for the evaluation as the pre- and post-survey. It consisted of eight statements of agreement and eight questions and was divided into two separate categories, parental perceptions and parental practices. The survey was created and distributed through TalentLMS, an online tool that serves as a teaching and training resource. In addition to the survey, each session was recorded and made available through TalentLMS for those participants who may have missed a session.

This goal was considered successful after 75 percent of the surveys administered were returned complete, providing a clearer picture of current discipleship practices amongst families at BHBC. This goal was measured by distributing a Family Discipleship Practices Survey to at least four attending parental units with children between the ages of 0 to 18 to assess current discipleship practices in the home. Six pre-surveys were administered to participating parental units through TalentLMS, and four pre-surveys were returned complete. That six parental units participated in the series and four parental units completed the pre-survey was an excellent outcome for this project and for



BHBC overall. For this project, a goal of four total parental units was established with at least 75 percent returning surveys. The total number of class participants and number of survey respondents exceeded the initial goal. Because a total of six participants were present throughout the teaching series, and four surveys were returned, resulting in a 66 percent participant completion, this goal missed the percentage of its initial target. However, the result of a higher number of participants was a great encouragement for BHBC and for me as I implemented the project, given the lack of young families at the beginning of this project. This goal was considered partially successful.

### **Goal 2 Results**

The second goal of this project was to develop an eight-lesson teaching series to lay the biblical framework for understanding parents as primary disciple-makers in the home and teaching them how to assume that role. The teaching series was created, and implementation at Beverly Hills Baptist Church began on June 18, 2023. The sessions were taught both live during the young families' Sunday School hour and in a pre-recorded version posted inside TalentLMS for those who may have missed a session. Three of the eight sessions were also taught to a wider audience during the Wednesday night Bible study hour. The three sessions taught to a wider audience on Wednesday evenings were available to the young families as well as the whole church. This approach brought in a wider audience for the sessions that addressed the role of the entire church in family discipleship. These sessions taught the importance of the whole church playing a part in family discipleship. Older members were encouraged to participate in teaching and equipping younger parents in church, so an intergenerational process of discipleship could be established.

Prior to implementation, an expert panel consisting of four individuals evaluated the teaching series using the teaching series evaluation tool. Three of the four experts completed the evaluation and provided comments prior to implementation of the teaching series. One member of the expert panel did not complete the evaluation in time for the

implementation of this project. The panel members included (1) a pastor with a Doctor of Ministry from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a partially completed Doctor of Philosophy from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; (2) a pastor and professor of theology with a Doctor of Education from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; (3) a pastor with fifteen years' experience in ministry with a Master of Divinity from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; and (4) the Director of Missions for the Buncombe Baptist Association. The DOM for the Buncombe Baptist Association has served in ministry both as a pastor and as a DOM for over thirty years and has a Master of Biblical Studies from Midwest Bible Seminary. The three panel experts who completed evaluations provided valuable insight to the content of the teaching series as they serve in similarly situated and like-minded SBC churches and have experience shepherding their churches through issues related to family discipleship.

According to the panel, the teaching series completed the purpose for which it was designed, to teach parents how to disciple their children. All members of the panel notated items 3, 5, and 8 with the highest possible rating: item 3, "The content of the teaching series sufficiently covered the issue it was designed to address," item 5, "Each session was clear, containing a big idea," and item 8, "At the end of the course, participants will be able to better understand how to and why disciple their children."

Two items (1 and 3) received a rating of "requires attention" from one panel expert: item 1, "Each session was sound in its interpretation of Scripture," and item 3, "The teaching series sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical method." Branton Burleson provided comments next to his ratings of "requires attention" on item 1:

Yes, the sessions are sound. I would recommend integrating the following passages: Judges 2:6-23 and Titus 2:1-8. The Judges text is important for showing what happens when families don't disciple their children. The Titus text is important for providing the foundation for how the family-equipping model works itself out in the life of the church. I would like to see more about how intergenerational discipleship works between age groups in the church.

Upon review of the expert panel’s recommendations, I revised the teaching outlines to include these additional verses in the lessons as well as incorporate more opportunities for individual participation. Ryan Leasure, DMin, commented on question 6, “While each lesson begins with discussion questions, it wasn’t clear to me in the lesson plans if more group interaction was planned.” The final lesson was designed to be more collaborative and group-oriented upon review of his recommendation.

Table 5. Teaching series evaluation results

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary				
Criteria	1	2	3	4
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>				
Each session was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.		1		2
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.			1	2
<b>Scope</b>				
The content of the teaching series sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.				3
The teaching series sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.		1		2
<b>Pedagogy</b>				
Each session was clear, containing a big idea.				3
Each session provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.			1	2
<b>Practicality</b>				
The sessions clearly detail how parents can faithfully disciple their children.			1	2
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better understand how to and why disciple their children.				3

Overall, the panel experts marked twenty-two of the twenty-four possible ratings as either “sufficient” or “exemplary,” making 91.6 percent of the ratings at or above the

sufficient level. The original target for this goal was to have at least 90 percent of the ratings at or above the “sufficient” level, resulting in this goal being successfully met.

### **Goal 3 Results**

Goal 3 was to increase the frequency and number of parents leading family worship and having discipleship-related conversations with their children in their homes. This goal is evaluated by comparing the pre- and post-survey results for an increase in such discipleship activities over the course of the teaching series.

Several encouraging statistics can be drawn from the parental perceptions comparison survey scores. Statement 1, “I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship time . . .” showed an increase of 0.50 over the course of the teaching series. This indicates the participating parental units understood the urgency of family worship and a need to be consistent with formal times of discipleship in the home. Statement 2, “I would like to do family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy . . .” showed the largest statistical change (-1.75) from pre- to post-survey scores. The negative change indicates a change in parents’ scheduling and priorities, so that time can be made for family worship (see table 6).

The comparison scores on the first two statement show that the parents who participated in the teaching series shifted to a greater level of urgency for prioritizing family devotional or worship time and removing or adjusting other competing priorities. A final encouraging detail in the parental perceptions survey scores is found in the final statement, “My church has helped me develop a clear plan for my child’s spiritual growth,” which increased 1.00. Amongst those who participated in the teaching series, there was a noted positive increase in parents’ perception that the church helped to equip them for family discipleship, a major priority for BHBC (see table 6).

Table 6. Comparison responses parental perceptions (1 to 8)

Comparison Responses Parental Perceptions (1 to 8)	Pre-Survey Score	Post-Survey Score	Change (+/-)
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	4.50	5.00	0.50
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	4.25	2.50	-1.75
3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	2.50	2.50	0.00
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	2.00	1.00	-1.00
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.	3.75	3.00	-0.75
6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage in discipleship with each of their children.	5.25	5.75	0.25
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.	2.00	2.00	0.00
8. My church has helped me develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	3.50	4.50	1.00

In the parental practices comparison scores, a positive change can be seen on every question, indicating an increase in discipleship activities over the course of the teaching series. Participants were asked in the survey to rate each question on a scale of six options: never, once, a couple of times, three to four times, five to six times, and seven or more times. For the purpose of scoring the results, each option was given a weight on a scale of 1 to 6 with 1 being the lowest and 6 being the highest. A review of several of the survey question comparison scores shows a marked increase in discipleship activities in the participants' homes.

Pre-survey scores on question 9, "Other than at mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?" (2.75) showed that intentional

prayer occurred on average between once and a couple of times per week. Post-survey scores on question 9 (4.50) showed an increase to between three to four and five to six times per week.

Pre-survey scores on question 11, “How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?” (3.50) showed that intentional family Bible reading occurred on average between a couple of times to three to four times per month. Post-survey scores (5.00) showed an increase to five to six times per month.

Pre-survey scores on question 12, “How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?” (4.50) showed that intentional discipleship conversations during day-to-day activities occurred on average between three to four times and five to six times per month. Post-survey scores (5.75) showed that these conversations increased to almost all parents having spiritual conversations seven or more times per month. All but one parental unit indicated the highest scoring option of seven or more times per month.

Pre-survey scores on question 13, “How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship in our home?” (2.75) showed that family devotions occurred between a couple of times and three to four times. Post-survey results (4.50) showed an increase to between three to four times and five to six times.

Question 16 showed the highest change (2.75) when compared to pre-survey results. Pre-survey scores indicated on question 16, “How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me engage actively in my child’s spiritual development?” (2.25) showed that church leaders were involved on average between once and a couple of times per year. Post-survey scores (5.00) showed an increase to five to six times per year.

Overall comparison scores on the Family Discipleship Practices Survey showed a marked increase from pre- to post-survey scores (see table 7). Parents who participated in the teaching series and completed surveys noted an encouraging result in

how much discipleship activity was taking place before and after the implementation of the project. Because such noted improvement can be seen across the comparison survey scores, this goal was met successfully.

Table 7. Comparison responses parental practices (9 to 16)

Comparison Responses Parental Practices (9 to 16)	Pre-Survey Score	Post-Survey Score	Change (+/-)
1. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	2.75	4.50	1.75
2. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	4.00	4.25	0.25
3. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	3.50	5.00	1.50
4. 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?	4.50	5.75	1.25
5. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	2.75	4.50	1.75
6. How many times in the last two months have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	3.25	4.25	1.00
7. 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?	2.25	2.50	0.25
8. 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?	2.25	5.00	2.75

### Project Strengths

A significant strength of this project is the increase in discipleship activities in the everyday lives of the families who participated in the teaching series. I was greatly encouraged by the results indicated in the post-survey scores and felt strongly that the content of the class impacted the church for the glory of God. My hope is that the parents

who participated in this class understand the urgent command of Scripture to be the primary disciple-makers and to carry that out faithfully in their homes beyond the implementation period of the project.

A second strength of this project came about unexpectedly. While I planned to record the live sessions in some form to make them available to those who may have missed sessions, I did not initially plan to go through the effort of building an online course. Building the course in TalentLMS took additional time prior to implementation but was well worth the effort. By pre-recording the teaching sessions, I was able to cater the teaching directly to online viewers and have a discipleship resource that would be permanently available to anyone who wanted to review it. By the end of the implementation of the project, two other family units requested logins to the online course, which I was able to make available to them for their own spiritual benefit. Many in the church expressed great excitement about having such a resource available at no cost, provided the available free seats were managed appropriately.

A final strength of this project is related to the overall strategy of the church and the timeliness of this series as BHBC seeks to revitalize its young family ministries. Just one year ago, BHBC had zero children in the children's ministry and a limited number of students participating in the youth ministry. Over the time of my starting at BHBC up to the project's implementation, a period of about eight months, we have seen engagement of between six and eight families with children in the elementary age group. The teaching series on family discipleship helped engage these families and bring them together into the community of the church, which has greatly encouraged many at BHBC.

### **Project Weaknesses**

In reviewing the project, one weakness may be related to the visibility of the teaching content to the entire church and especially to the children's ministry leaders. The church was informed about the family discipleship class, but participants were mainly parents with children between the ages of 0-18. The exception to this was three sessions



taught to a wider audience on Wednesday evenings. These Wednesday evening sessions intended to bring in the children's ministry leaders and the whole church to the content most relevant to them. However, it would have been helpful for these individuals to participate in the entire class and have a measurement to assess their knowledge of the material. A positive for BHBC going forward is that the online course is available via TalentLMS should they desire to complete it.

A second weakness to this project may be related to the emphasis on the role of the church in family discipleship. While a portion of the research and teaching were devoted to the role of the church serving as a partner to parents, more emphasis could have been given to the fact that family discipleship occurs when participating in worship services, singing, praying, giving, hearing God's Word, and in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Family discipleship is not just something that happens in the home but should be significantly connected to doing life with a community of believers, including worshipping God together.

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

One area of the project that I would do differently if I were able would be the survey tool. The Family Discipleship Practices Survey was used with permission from Timothy Paul Jones's *Family Ministry Field Guide*,<sup>1</sup> and while the survey provided a means to measure family discipleship activities, my preference would have been to develop a survey more specific to my context and project research.

A second area that I would do differently would be the inclusion of a wider audience in the whole teaching series along with a measurement tool to assess the knowledge of the wider audience. While I was able to include a wider audience in three sessions of my project, I was not able to provide a survey to assess their knowledge. The survey I utilized in this project was built only for participants with children in the home.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 202-3. Used by permission.

Having another measurement tool in addition to the family discipleship practices survey would have given a more complete picture of the impact of the teaching series on the whole group.

### **Theological Reflections**

The divine vision for discipleship in the family or the discipleship of any person is given by Jesus in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father of the Son and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

For the Great Commission to be experienced firsthand in the life of the church and throughout coming generations, parents must be actively involved in making disciples in their own home, teaching their children to observe all that Christ commanded. Parents are the primary method for leading children to Christ and showing them how to live a life of faithfulness. Scripture strongly commands parents to take on this role, and the passages from Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Proverbs 1:8, 22:6, and Ephesians 6:1-4 clearly demonstrate the urgency and responsibility for parents to take on this role.

Making disciples in the church is an ongoing process and involves everyone inside. The church is made of people who need to be discipled through the commands of Christ. While family discipleship is just a part of how the church evangelizes the lost and makes disciples of Christ, it is an important piece of that mission. As the next generation grows, they need to be taught the miraculous works of God, his law, and his grace as spelled out in Psalm 78. When the people of God fail to teach the next generation, just like Israel fell into rebellion and idol worship, so we will see that same result in our own time.

As parents strive to raise godly, humble, and faithful families within the life of the church, parents themselves must remember that they are also on the path of discipleship. Mothers and fathers need to pursue a vibrant relationship with Christ. Without

parents' pursuit of Christ, family discipleship becomes an effort in futility. Children will inevitably experience the hypocrisy of parents who do not follow Christ in their own personal lives. Further, parents must be careful not to assume that someone else inside the church is capable of doing what only parents themselves can do with their children. Parents have the most access and opportunity to disciple their own children, and Scripture gives them this divine prerogative.

Finally, the Word of God is the ultimate source and power for leading and teaching the family. We experience the transforming power of God through his Spirit when we read the Word, hear it taught, and apply it to our lives. The more parents can lead their children to God through Scripture, the more they will experience a genuine relationship with Jesus. Churches that center the power and authority of the Word of God in their services and equip parents to make the Word of God the focal point of the home will see many come to Christ and the Great Commission carried out in their midst.

### **Personal Reflections**

As I researched, wrote, and implemented this project, I was often reminded of my own shortcomings and failures as a parent. Every Christian parent and their family are impacted by their own sin and need of a savior. While this project pointed to the ideal of family discipleship, the reality is that everyone needs the grace and mercy of Christ to deal with the failings that inevitably arise in the family. The regular practice of confession and repentance must be present as we strive imperfectly to model the life of Christ and teach our children to do the same.

I was blessed in my own upbringing to have faithful Christian parents who led family devotions on a consistent basis and who did their best to model Christlikeness in the home. Although my parents did their best to raise me and my four brothers in a godly environment, many failures were still present both in my parents and in us, the children. I remember most about my father, a pastor to this day, that he was quick to repent when he failed. Now that I am grown with a family of my own and lead family devotions, including

a time of Bible reading, hymn singing, and prayer, I also strive to model the act of confession and repentance, which I often saw modeled by my own parents. I hope that my children will remember this more than anything else about me—that I relied on Christ’s forgiveness and did my best to extend it to others.

Knowing my own failings, there were times throughout this project that I felt unqualified to teach other parents how to disciple their children. However, the grace of Christ and his all-encompassing forgiveness simply became more sweet and more integral in my teaching in the class. For this, I am extremely thankful.

### **Conclusion**

At the conclusion of this project, the parents of Beverly Hills Baptist Church who participated in the series were taught and equipped to make disciples in their own home. Of the three goals that were set at the beginning of the project, all three were considered successfully met. Moving forward, I believe that this project will set in motion a continuing process of intentional equipping and teaching parents to lead their children to Christ and make disciples of the next generation for the glory of God.

## APPENDIX 1

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES SURVEY

This survey was used for both the pre- and post-survey to assess family discipleship practices prior to and after the teaching series.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 202-3. Used by permission.

## FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES SURVEY

### Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assist Beverly Hills Baptist Church to equip and train parents to disciple their children. This research is being conducted by Aaron Mishler for purposes of completing a doctoral project at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will be asked to provide your opinions and information regarding family discipleship practices.

Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this Family Discipleship Practices Survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Identifier Code : \_\_\_\_\_

Please respond to the statements using the following options. Based on the following scale, circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement.

SD= Strongly Disagree

AS= Agree Somewhat

D= Disagree

A= Agree

DS= Disagree Somewhat

SA= Strongly Agree

### Part 1: Parental Perceptions

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

SD          D          DS          AS          A          SA

2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.

SD          D          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 spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.

SD          D          DS          AS          A          SA

5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat meals together.

SD          D          DS          AS          A          SA

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

SD          D          DS          AS          A          SA

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

SD          D          DS          AS          A          SA

8. My church has helped me develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.
- |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
|----|---|----|----|---|----|

**Part 2: Parental Practices**

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

Never	Once	a couple times	three or four times	five or six times	seven or more times
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10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?

Never	Once	a couple times	three or four times	five or six times	seven or more times
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11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?

Never	Once	a couple times	three or four times	five or six times	seven or more times
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12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?

Never	Once	a couple times	three or four times	five or six times	seven or more times
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13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?

Never	Once	a couple times	three or four times	five or six times	seven or more times
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14. How many times in the last two months have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?

Never	Once	a couple times	three or four times	five or six times	seven or more times
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15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?

Never	Once	a couple times	three or four times	five or six times	seven or more times
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16. 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?

Never	Once	a couple times	three or four times	five or six times	seven or more times
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## APPENDIX 2

### TEACHING SERIES EVALUATION TOOL

The Teaching Series Evaluation Tool provided a means of evaluating the teaching series by a ministry leader. The evaluation scores and comments served the process of revisions for future teaching of this material in the church.



Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Teaching Series Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each session was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the teaching series sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The teaching series sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each session was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each session provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The sessions clearly detail how parents can faithfully disciple their children.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better understand how to and why disciple their children.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3  
FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM PLAN

Lesson 1

- 1) **Parents Were Intended to Train Their Children Spiritually in the OT**  
**(Deuteronomy 6:1-9)**
  
- 2) Group Questions for Consideration
  - a) If asked, what would your children think is your favorite thing to talk about with them?
  
  - b) How often do you and your children talk about spiritual things? (i.e. once per day/week/month)
  
- 3) Outline
  - a) **Introduction**
    - i) Raising godly children is difficult. How does God expect parents to do this task with all the pressures of every-day life?
      - (1) God proclaimed his greatness and then passed the responsibility on to parents in the OT to teach their families about God's greatness.
      - (2) The responsibility is laid on parents to do this important task.
      - (3) God promised Israel that they would live long in the promised land if they obeyed this command.

**b) God's Plan for Israel to Live Long in the Land**

i) God planned to prosper Israel for many generations in the promised land. In order for this to happen; however, Israel was required to obey the laws given by God throughout their generations.

(1) The teaching of children within the family context was integral to God's plan for Israel to continue living long in the land.

(2) God not only gave his law to Israel but expected them to re-teach it to their children as the generations continued.

**c) The Greatest Command in all the Law**

i) In all God's law the greatest command was to love the LORD with every part of one's being.

(1) Jesus reaffirms that this command is the first and greatest command in Matthew 22:37.

(2) Loving God in this way requires more than mere external obedience to traditions and man-made requirements.

(3) We never want to end up like the Pharisees who continued generations of vain worship. (Matthew 15:7-9)

**d) Loving God Faithfully Over Generations Required Spiritual Formation by Parents**

i) The words of the law are to be on our hearts. (v. 6)

ii) Parents are commanded to teach these words, the words of the law and the command to love God with all their hearts, diligently. (v. 7)

- (1) Teaching diligently requires more than simply attending worship services, either at the tabernacle or at a modern-day worship service.
- (2) Teaching diligently is more than outward acknowledgement of what is true about God.

**e) Teach Diligently When You Sit in Your House**

- i) Teaching children while sitting in the house paints a picture of formal times of worshipping God and learning about him as a family.
  - (1) Formal times of teaching in the house includes mealtime prayer and thankfulness.
  - (2) Formal times of teaching in the house includes family prayer and Bible study.
- ii) Formal times of diligent teaching is not enough.

**f) Teach Diligently When You Walk by the Way**

- i) Walking by the way for Israel would have included informal teaching about God as the moments of life came and went.
  - (1) Informal teaching about God includes opportunities to point out God's grace and provision even in small things like our occupation and friendships.
  - (2) Informal teaching about God includes pointing to God's greatness in creation and nature.

**g) Teach Diligently When You Lie Down and Rise Up**

- i) Teaching about God when you lie down and rise means to make God and his greatness impact everything you do from the beginning of the day to the end.
  - (1) Prayer to God should be the way that we begin and end our day with our families.
  - (2) Communing with God all through the day every day is the intent of family spiritual formation.

**h) Physical Reminders of God's Gracious Provision and Requirements**

- i) Israel was commanded to write the laws of God on their doorposts and gates as a reminder when they came and went from the home what God's holiness required.
- ii) They were required to be placed as symbol on their hands and head of how critical obedience to the laws of God were.
  - (1) These physical symbols were only to remind Israelites of their internal commitment to love God.
  - (2) Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their outward obedience to these symbols but lack of internal love for God. (Matthew 23:5)

i) Conclusion

- In OT Israel parents were an integral part of God's plan to continue faithful worship and love continuing throughout the generations. While the tabernacle worship and formal teaching by priests and Levites continued, this in no way removed the burden from parents to teach their children in the home. These two

efforts both by parents and the priestly class were intended to point the people to God.

**j) Homework**

- i) Begin brainstorming how your family can follow the instructions found in Deuteronomy 6. Talk about God when you sit down, rise, walk by the way, etc.

## Lesson 2

### 1) **Parents are an Integral Piece of God's Intended Plan to Disciple the Generations**

**(Psalm 78:1-8, Proverbs 1:4-8, 22:6)**

### 2) **Group Questions for Consideration**

- a) How often do you have intentional conversations with your children to remind them of great things that God has done for you?
- b) How often do you remind your children of the great things God has done as revealed in Scripture?

### 3) **Outline**

- a) Introduction
  - i) Although God revealed himself and his perfect law to Moses on Mount Sinai, God will not continually reveal himself repeatedly in this same manner.
    - (1) God's plan to continue his revelation through the generations requires continued teaching from his followers.
    - (2) It is the responsibility of adult parents to reteach to their children God's law and his miraculous works throughout history.
    - (3) The Psalmist takes this responsibility seriously in Psalm 78:1-8
  - ii) The Psalmist begins his message by telling the people to listen to his teaching and to give "ear" to his instruction.
    - (1) The Psalmist explains his teaching is similar to a parable and a dark saying from of old. (v.2)

- (2) The parable and dark saying from of old is not so much a mystical or hidden message as it is a familiar story, one they have heard before.
  - (3) The teaching is passed down from their fathers who faithfully taught the same thing in the previous generation. (v.3)
  - (4) He proclaims that they will continue the same practice of teaching their children just as their fathers before them. (v.4)
  - (5) Their teaching to their children must reveal the continuous greatness of God and salvific works to the nation of Israel both in terms of physical deliverance from Egypt and other enemies as well as God's goodness to them in spiritual salvation and restoration
- iii) An example of God's great and mighty works follows in a description of the revelation of God's perfect Law to Jacob.
- (1) God's work of revealing his law to his people is a gracious and sanctifying act to his people. (v.5)
  - (2) Just as Israel received and retaught God's law to their children, Christians must also make a practice of teaching God's law and the work of Christ to their children.
  - (3) The Psalmist reminds his readers that when God gave the Law he also gave the command to retrain it to the generations that follow. (v.5)
  - (4) The result of retraining God's Law to the next generation is seen as the next generation knows and obeys the law, and further, obeys the same command to teach to those who are yet "unborn."



- (a) Reteaching God's Law and his salvation is a perpetual process that each generation passes along to the next. (v.6)
- (5) The next generation will set their hope in God and not forget his commandments because of faithful parents who teach these things to their children. (v.7)
  
- iv) A warning is given in should Israel fail to follow the command to reteach God's law and his miraculous works amongst his people.
  - (1) The result of failing to teach God's Law to the next generation is people who are stubborn and rebellious just like the previous generations of Israelites who turned to idol worship and paganism. (v.8)
  - (2) Christians in our current generation have experienced a falling away because of a failure to teach faithfully God's Law and mighty works.
  - (3) If we are faithful to these commands, just like the Psalmist intends to continue the teaching of God's faithfulness to the next generation, we can also continue the Gospel impact to our children and their children.
  
- v) Solomon also begins Proverbs, his book of Wisdom, as a book of teaching to a son.
  - (1) The author models through his writing the proper responsibility of a parent teaching godly wisdom to a child. (1:8)
  - (2) This wisdom is seen throughout the book of Proverbs as a dominant theme known as the "fear of the Lord."

- (3) The author also tells parents to bring up their children in the proper way, so that when they are old they will not depart from it.
  - (4) This verse could be generically interpreted to cultivate the natural skills of a child, so they can grow in their natural abilities.
  - (5) However, a better interpretation fits the theme of Proverbs as a whole; that parents should train their children to fear the Lord and obey his commandments, so that when they grow up, they will be faithful to it.
- vi) Parents should not be surprised when children depart from Christianity if they were not taught faithfully at home. However, it can be surprising when children do this despite being brought up in the way of the Lord.
- (1) Parents should remember that this passage is a proverb and not a prophecy.
  - (2) It is generally true that children who are taught the way of the Lord at home will grow up fearing God and living a faithful Christian life.

**b) Conclusion**

- i) Reteaching God's Law and his gracious works to our children is not simply a command from God but is the primary means by which the Gospel will continue to impact the generations to come. Christian parents carry a vital responsibility to continue the spreading of the Gospel through the faithful teaching to their children and even grandchildren. Although training up children in the way of the Lord is not an absolute guarantee of a child

becoming a true believer, it is the primary way that God intends children to be evangelized and disciplined for his glory.

**c) Homework**

- i) Find a specific time this week to talk with at least one of your children about God in an informal setting (walking by the way).
- ii) Be prepared to share with the group how this conversation went.

### Lesson 3

1) **Parents are seen as the primary disciple-makers in the home in the NT, and fathers take a leadership role (Ephesians 6:1-4)**

### 2) **Group Questions for Consideration**

- a) Do you regularly read the Bible together as a family?
- b) Do you pray together as a family other than at mealtimes?
- c) If there are two parents in the home, which parent is more intentional about family devotional time if devotions are done at all?

### 3) **Outline**

- a) Introduction
  - i) In Ephesians 5-6 Paul lays out the biblical roles of the family relationships. Chapter 5 describes the roles of husband and wife, and chapter 6 describes the roles of parents and children.
    - (1) Paul directly addresses children in the beginning of chapter 6. Children are commanded to obey both mother and father. (v.1)
      - (a) This command is not simply a recommendation by Paul. He declares, “It is right,” to do so.
      - (b) He appeals to the ten commandments, specifically the command to honor parents in Exodus 20:12, to prove that obedience to parents is a command directly from God.

- (2) Paul reminds his readers that this commandment was so important for the Israelites that it came with the promise to live long in the land.
- (a) In the original context Israel was given a conditional promise of living long in the land if they obeyed God. However, if they persisted in disobedience God would bring judgment on them. (Deuteronomy 8:19-20)
  - (b) Unfortunately, Israel would ultimately reject God and fall into the pagan worship practices of the land of Canaan. God would then bring judgment on them and exile from the promised land.
  - (c) Paul is not expressly saying the OT land promise applies to Christians today, but rather, is reminding believers that following God and obeying his commandments comes with the promise of a blessed future.
  - (d) Believers may see the land promise reference in this passage as an appropriation to the promise of heaven for all believers.
- (3) The next instruction from Paul in this passage is directly to fathers to lead and train up children.
- (a) Although both parents are responsible for raising children and the children are responsible to honor both mother and father, fathers bear the ultimate responsibility of ensuring a biblical foundation and care takes place in the home. (v.4)
    - (i) Husbands are also commanded to take the leadership role in relationship to their wives. (5:25)

- (ii) While husbands and fathers may not make every decision and do all the teaching that takes place in the home, the ultimate responsibility to ensure these things take place lies with the father, who is also responsible for modeling the selfless love of Christ in the married relationship.
- (b) Paul tells fathers that it is possible to be too harsh and disciplinarian with your children. (v.4)
  - (i) Expectations that are too high can lead to frustrated children.
  - (ii) Outbursts of anger from a father toward children who fail can lead to frustrated children.
  - (iii) Leading children toward goals that may not be in their best interest can lead to frustrated children.
  - (iv) Heavy handed discipline can also lead to frustrated children.
- (c) Fathers should instead bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
  - (i) This discipline is meant to be loving discipline like that the heavenly Father directs toward his children. “The Lord disciplines those he loves.” (Heb. 12:6)
  - (ii) The Lord’s discipline can sting, but it is for the ultimate good of his children and brings us into loving fellowship with him. Fathers’ discipline should be of the same nature—loving and for the child’s best interest.
  - (iii) Instruction of the Lord is an aspect of teaching that all fathers are meant to assume.

1. Not every father is gifted in teaching, but every father is commanded to teach children what it means to live for the Lord and follow his Word.
2. Family devotions should be a regular piece of this instruction for children. Bible reading, prayer, and singing can be excellent tools for instruction in family devotions.
3. Mothers are not meant to be absent in the process of discipleship and teaching of children. They are to follow the lead of the husband and participate in the teaching and family devotion time with the children.
4. Informal times of teaching should also take place as the family does life together. Regular conversations through the walks of life should point to Christ and to serving him.

**b) Conclusion**

- i) Parents are seen as primary disciple-makers in the home in the NT as well as the OT. Children are to be brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord by the parents. Fathers take the reins as the spiritual leader in the home, but mothers also play a critical role in teaching and training children alongside of their husbands. God expects Christian parents today to lead and teach their children and serve as the primary means of discipleship in their children's lives

**c) Homework**

- i) Gather the whole family at least once and open the Bible and read a passage and share what it means.
- ii) Be prepared to discuss with the group how this time of Bible reading went.



## Lesson 4

### 1) **The Church Partners with Parents in the Discipleship of Children**

### 2) **Group Questions for Consideration**

- a) Have you ever been too hard on your children in such a way that they became frustrated? What was the situation and result? How would you do it differently?
- b) Do you take time to formally teach your children about grace, mercy, and forgiveness?
- c) How can parents model grace, mercy, and forgiveness in the home?

### 3) **Outline**

- a) Introduction
  - i) As parents serve as primary disciple-maker with their children, the community of the church also participates in the discipleship of the whole spiritual family, including children.

(1) A history of the problem with family discipleship in the church – Age-

#### Segmented Ministry

- (a) In the twentieth century a popular church model took over most churches and separated parents and children into groups for training and discipleship.
- (b) These groups were then led by a trained professional or volunteer for each age-group and discipleship was targeted during these “separate” times of teaching.

- (c) This model largely mimicked the public-school structure with each age led by a teaching trained for that specific group.
  - (d) While not stated explicitly, over time, many parents began to view discipleship as something done by a professional within the church, and thus, the problem of dropping off children somewhere else for discipleship occurred.
  - (e) According to research by Timothy Paul Jones, many parents are not engaged in the process of family discipleship at all.
- (2) Some church ministries completely separate families during discipleship and worship.
- (a) In this type of model, worship for children and teens occurs in separate environments that are catered to their interest in more fun and dynamic activities.
  - (b) Trained professionals often oversee this type of ministry and execute it without any participation from parents.
  - (c) Home-centered discipleship is not a focus.
  - (d) Training and equipping for parents are not a primary activity and little encouragement for any type of discipleship outside of the church is emphasized.
  - (e) With models like this, parents often lose their vision for discipling children and may even come to believe that family discipleship is someone else's responsibility.

- (3) Other church ministries have some form of multi-generational ministries, but holistic multi-generational discipleship and equipping for parents is often missing.
- (a) In this type of model, there is often some form of age-segmented discipleship, but most generations in the church are brought together for the worship service.
  - (b) Only children's worship or nursery occurs outside the sanctuary during the time of corporate worship.
  - (c) Although better, this church model often misses the point of equipping parents and encouraging genuine multi-generational discipleship activities.
  - (d) Typically, different generations still separate and pass each other like "ships in the night."
- ii) The church should serve as a true partner in family discipleship by encouraging home-centered discipleship and partnering with parents in teaching and discipling in the church environment.
- (1) Targeted age-segmented ministry can be beneficial for reaching unique needs of each age group, especially that of children and youth.
- (a) Done correctly, discipleship in the church can continue the spiritual growth of children and youth while not displacing parents in their role as primary-disciple-maker.

(b) Training and equipping must be an emphasis for parents, so that parents, both married and single, know how to carryout home-centered discipleship.

(c) Bringing the generations together for worship is a biblical way to worship God corporately.

**b) Conclusion**

i) Although the model of each individual church may vary, emphases on equipping parents and partnering with them in the discipleship of the family is incredibly important. Reshaping ministries throughout the church to focus on these important discipleship goals should be a focus for every church leader and every ministry event.

**c) Homework**

- i) Gather the family at least once this week for a time of Bible reading and prayer.
- ii) Have at least one informal (walking by the way) conversation about God with your children this week.

## Lesson 5

### 1) **The Family-Integrated, Family-Based, and Family-Equipping Ministry Models**

### 2) **Group Questions for Consideration**

- a) Can you remember a time when your child came home from church and told you something they learned about God? How did this make you feel as a parent?
- b) What role do you believe the church plays in family discipleship?

### 3) **Outline**

- a) Introduction
  - i) Recent church ministry models have been developed to address the family discipleship problem in the church that was discussed in the previous session.  
These models are known as:
    - (1) The Family-Integrated Ministry model
    - (2) The Family-Based Ministry model
    - (3) The Family-Equipping Ministry model
  - ii) Family-Integrated churches believe that the church is a “family of families” and every ministry of the church should incorporate all ages together.
    - (1) Family-Integrated churches have no need for age-segmented ministries of any kind.
      - (a) No Nursery
      - (b) No Youth Ministry
      - (c) No Children’s Ministry

- (d) No Senior Adult Ministry
- (2) Every time the church gathers all ages are brought together for ministry, fellowship, and worship.
  - (a) Families sit together during corporate worship where fathers are encouraged to take the lead in ensuring the family participates and learns in the worship gather.
  - (b) Serving and outreach ministries are executed using the entire family with mothers and fathers serving alongside of their children.
  - (c) Parents are encouraged to lead their family in home-centered discipleship, typically, by use of catechisms or family devotionals provided by the church.
- (3) This ministry model brings several strengths and weaknesses.
  - (a) Strengths:
    - (i) Family discipleship led by the parents, especially the fathers, is a focal point.
    - (ii) Resources are provided for parents to encourage home-centered discipleship.
    - (iii) The whole family worships, serves, and fellowships together.
  - (b) Weaknesses:
    - (i) Some may find it hard to acclimate to this type of model, especially if they have grown accustomed to the ministry benefits of Youth or Children's ministries.

(ii) Some individuals in the life of the church do not fit into a typical family dynamic. These orphaned children and adults must be identified and adopted into another family.

(iii) This ministry model is such a radical change from the typical that many churches would struggle to implement it.

iii) The Family-Based Ministry model is made up of churches that recognize the need for greater interaction between the generations and work to integrate some levels of multi-generational activities without breaking the typical age-segmented ministry structures.

(1) Family-Based churches continue the use of Youth and Children's ministries but will work to find opportunities for whole family outreaches and events.

(2) Worship typically includes the whole family although children's worship and nursery are likely to be functioning with some level of separation for the youngest children.

(3) Age-segmented discipleship classes are maintained unlike the previous model.

(4) Strengths:

(a) This model is attractive for many churches that may want to incorporate greater levels of multi-generational interaction while keeping the existing age-segmented structures that have been such a regular part of church ministry.

(b) This model encourages more family discipleship than the older methods, which might have overlooked such activities.

(5) Weaknesses:

(a) This model may bring more potential opportunities for the generations to interact but there is no specific intentional equipping of parents for home-centered discipleship.

iv) Family-Equipping churches recognize a significant need for equipping parents and holding them accountable for home-centered discipleship as well as increasing the importance of multi-generational worship and activities in the church.

(1) This model maintains the age-segmented structures for their benefits to families and the partnership of family discipleship.

(2) This model continues the use of Youth and Children's ministries but reshapes every ministry in order to partner with parents as the primary disciple-makers.

(3) Family-Equipping churches ensure a high degree of training for parents, both single and married, to teach them how to lead family worship as well as disciple children through the walks of life.

(4) Multi-generational ministries are utilized as well for the sake of enhancing family discipleship.

(5) Strengths:

(a) Training and equipping in this model are emphasized to teach parents to assume their biblical role.



- (b) Age-segmented structures are maintained but reshaped in order to partner with parents.
- (c) Multi-generational worship, outreaches, and events are emphasized to foster greater discipleship amongst the generations.

**b) Homework**

- i) Gather the family at least once this week for a time of Bible reading and prayer.
- ii) Have at least one informal (walking by the way) conversation about God with your children this week.
  - (a)

## Lesson 6

- 1) **The Family-Equipping Ministry Model is the Strongest Ministry Model for Beverly Hills Baptist Church**
  
- 2) Group Questions for Consideration
  - a) Have you ever attended a class at church that specifically encouraged and taught you as a parent how to do family devotions?
  - b) Have you ever been taught by someone how to evangelize your children? Would this be beneficial to offer in the church in your opinion?
  - c) How do you know when your child is ready to be baptized?
  
- 3) Outline
  - a) **Introduction**
    - i) Beverly Hills Baptist Church wants to grow and develop the young families in a biblical way.
      - (1) The Family-Equipping ministry model will serve Beverly Hills best in achieving the goals of raising faithful godly families.
        - (a) Beverly Hills current ministry structure is age-segmented with Children's and Youth ministries. These ministries serve the church well and many families rely on them for discipleship.
        - (b) The age-segmented Sunday School classes can be shaped in such a way to partner with parents.

- (c) Additional equipping and training classes should be created and implemented to help parents in taking on their role as primary disciplinarian.
- (d) Equipping classes should be regularly offered, so that new families can participate in them and refresh and motivate parents who might have gone through the classes previously.
  - (i) Equipping classes should include the biblical mandate for parents to disciple children seen in Deut. 6 and Ephesians 6.
  - (ii) The equipping classes should go over practical family devotional strategies, teaching parents how to implement this practice.
  - (iii) Equipping classes should also include teaching on how to deal with discipline issues that arise through the various ages of parenting and include teaching on how to disciple children during informal times.
- ii) The Family-Integrated model would be too radical of a shift for BHBC. The members would struggle to understand and adopt to such a different structure after having age-segmented ministry for many decades.
  - (1) The Family-Integrated approach brings benefits in certain ways to church ministry, and might relieve the need to find nursery volunteers and hire Youth and Children's ministries; however:
    - (a) This approach would cause unnecessary turmoil in the congregation.

(b) This approach would also miss out on the benefits of Youth and Children's ministries to the overall family discipleship partnership that should exist in the church.

iii) The Family-Based Ministry model is a helpful approach for most churches that have age-segmented ministry, but this ministry model does not seem to emphasize equipping and training for parents as much as is necessary.

(1) Though the Family-Based model could be an easy transition for Beverly Hills, this model is missing some critical "teeth" in the execution of helping parents assume their role.

**b) Conclusion**

i) Of the three family ministry models considered. The Family-Equipping model is strongest model to help Beverly Hills achieve its goals of growing and developing young families in a biblical way. This model will retain the structure that currently exists but reshape the emphases in the age-segmented groups and add training for parents that has long been missing in its ministry structure.

**c) Homework**

- i) In addition to Bible reading and informal conversations this week with your children, look for a way to witness to an unbeliever together.
- ii) Be prepared to share how this opportunity went.

## Lesson 7

- 1) **Times, Moments, and Milestones** (Family Discipleship by Matt Chandler)<sup>1</sup>
  
- 2) Group Questions for Consideration
  - a) Do you feel confident enough to lead a family devotional time with your kids?
  - b) What resource do you think would be an appropriate resource to help you lead family devotions, considering your children's ages? (i.e. Bible, devotional book, kids Bible story book)
  - c) How could you incorporate music or singing into your family devotional time?
  
- 3) Outline
  - a) **Introduction**
    - i) In this final lesson parents will follow along in Matt Chandler's book Family Discipleship in order to further develop their personal family discipleship plan
      - (1) Times:
        - (a) Chandler encourages families to set aside specific and formal times to study God's Word and pray together.<sup>2</sup>
        - (b) While Chandler does not specify how often to do this, he does say that daily, weekly, or monthly opportunities should be considered.

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Griffin and Matt Chandler, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Times, Moments and Milestones* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 43.

<sup>2</sup> Griffin and Chandler, *Family Discipleship*, 87-112.

(c) At least once per week is the recommendation for those who will participate in this 8-week teaching series.

(2) Moments:

(a) Moments are Chandler's reference to informal or spontaneous opportunities to draw attention toward God and his working in the world.<sup>3</sup>

(b) These informal times of discipleship can occur after sporting events, through hardship, out in nature, during relationship break ups, or even during casual conversation around the dinner table.

(c) Deuteronomy 6 refers to these discipleship conversations as "along the way." Anything we do in life that could be considered along the way of life can be turned into an informal conversation about God's grace and his love.

(3) Milestones:

(a) Milestones are significant events in the life of any member of the family that could be regularly recognized as major life events where God's work and grace could be seen.<sup>4</sup>

(i) Milestone examples:

1. The date a child gave his/her life to Christ or was baptized.

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<sup>3</sup> Griffin and Chandler, *Family Discipleship*, 113-34.

<sup>4</sup> Griffin and Chandler, *Family Discipleship*, 135-54.

2. The date a major prayer was answered.
3. The date a significant health challenge was surpassed.
  - a. The author shares how they celebrate the first communion ever taken and the day their children accepted Christ.<sup>5</sup>

(ii) Each milestone should own a date on the calendar in order to be a regularly remembered and celebrated every year following.

1. Taking a child out to dinner on their spiritual birthday every year is a helpful way to celebrate such a milestone with conversation surrounding all God is doing spiritually in their life.

**b) Conclusion:**

- i) Using Chandlers Times, Moments, and Milestones method parents can be confident they are building a meaningful and effective family discipleship plan. Every child needs to decide for themselves to follow Jesus with their life; however, a strong family discipleship plan can greatly aid in evangelizing children and helping them grow into faithful Christians.

**c) Homework**

- i) Read through chapters 1-3 in *Family Discipleship* by Adam Griffin and Matt Chandler
- ii) Begin brainstorming your own family's Times, Moments, and Milestones

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<sup>5</sup> Griffin and Chandler, *Family Discipleship*, 140.

## Lesson 8

### 1) **Family Discipleship in the Home**

2) Participants will use a portion of this final lesson to complete the Family Discipleship Plan below for their own specific family context.

### 3) **Outline**

#### a) Introduction

i) In this session parents will begin to formalize their own personal plan for family discipleship.

(1) This plan will include:

(a) A plan to implement some form of family worship or family devotions for at least once weekly with the whole family.

(b) A guide on how to incorporate spiritual conversations into the daily life of their family.

(c) A listing of spiritual events that might be potentially worth recognizing and celebrating with their children (spiritual birthdays, baptisms etc.).

(2) Parents should consider the most appropriate devotional plan for their family.

(a) Family devotions with young children should be kept to their age level with an appropriate story Bible or children's devotional book.



- (b) Family devotions with older children and teens should include more in-depth Bible study with opportunity for deeper questioning on biblical themes.
  - (c) Prayer times should be incorporated with devotional strategies for all ages.
  - (d) Some families may be able to incorporate music or singing into family devotions although this step may not be possible for all families.
- (3) Incorporating informal times of discipleship should also take place in the life of the family.
- (a) Informal discipleship may be simply pointing children to the glory of God out in nature or talking about God's common graces and provision.
  - (b) Informal conversations often are not planned but parents should keep an eye out for opportunities to foster these conversations when possible.
- (4) Creating a list of important spiritual events in the life of each member of the family can help to point the whole family toward the goodness and provision of God.
- (a) Parents will create a list of at least these events:
    - (i) Spiritual birthdays of each child.
    - (ii) Baptisms if the child(ren) have/has been baptized.

- (iii) Other significant events in the life of the family that might be memorable (i.e. healing from serious sickness, provision for significant physical needs etc.)

**b) Conclusion**

- i) By the conclusion of this section, parents will have started a concrete pathway to begin building their own personal family discipleship plan with specific steps to execute it in their home.

**c) Homework**

- i) Complete Family Discipleship Plan Document and carry it out!

## APPENDIX 4

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

The Family Discipleship Plan was provided for each participating family to create their own individualized plan for teaching their children as part of the final lesson in the teaching series.

## FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

Use the grid below to customize a realistic discipleship plan for your family.

	<b>Dates/Frequency</b>	<b>Resource/Plan</b>
<b>Formal:</b> Family Devotions/Worship (Times)	How often to do family devos? (i.e. nightly, weekly?)	What is your devotional book or Bible study plan?
<b>Informal:</b> Spontaneous conversation along the pathway of life (Moments)	What moments during life are prime for spiritual discussion?	How can you be intentional about informal moments?
<b>Formal:</b> Major life events to celebrate (Milestones)	What major dates/events in your family's life should be remembered?	How will you celebrate those major dates/events?
<b>Other:</b> Additional ideas for your family?		

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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING PARENTS AT BEVERLY HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH IN ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

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This project seeks to equip parents at Beverly Hills Baptist Church in Asheville, North Carolina, to be primary disciple-makers of their children. Chapter 1 presents the historical and ministerial setting and goals of this project. Chapter 2 explores and exegetes the relevant biblical data establishing parents as primary disciple-makers of their children (Deut 6:4-9; Ps 78:1-8; Prov 1:8; 22:6; Eph 6:1-4). Chapter 3 considers the variety of ministry models in modern churches that seek to equip parents as primary disciple-makers of their children and seeks to promote the Family-Equipping Model as strongest. Chapter 4 describes the project as the teaching series is carried out week-by-week. Chapter 5 evaluates the project based on completion of the specified goals. The final purpose of this project is to equip parents to understand the urgency of carrying out discipleship in their home with their children and not relying on anyone else, even the church, to do this important work for them.



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