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EQUIPPING PARENTS AT CROSS POINTE CHURCH IN  
DULUTH, GEORGIA, TO UNDERSTAND THEIR  
BIBLICAL ROLE AS THE PRIMARY DISCIPLE  
MAKER IN THE HOME

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A Project  
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the Faculty of  
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Doctor of Ministry

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by  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

EQUIPPING PARENTS AT CROSS POINTE CHURCH IN  
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To my late father, Steve Ledford, a man who was a model, mentor, and hero in my life. The inception of this project stems from the foundational principles he instilled in me from my earliest days. Truthfully, he should be the one authoring this work on family discipleship. I am deeply grateful for his guidance, his example, and his unwavering commitment to shaping us, his sons, into men who reflect the character of Jesus. I can only aspire to be half the father he was. Until we're together again, Dad.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE .....	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Context .....	1
Rationale .....	6
Purpose .....	7
Goals .....	8
Research Methodology .....	8
Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations .....	9
Conclusion .....	10
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE PROJECT .....	11
Teach: Psalm 78:1-8 .....	13
Model: 1 Timothy 4:11-15 .....	18
Steward: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 .....	23
Commit: Joshua 24:14-15 .....	28
Conclusion .....	32
3. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP .....	34
Parents Need a Healthy View of the Church .....	34
Parents Need to be Equipped to Lead .....	39
Parents Need to Manage Their Schedule and Routines Appropriately .....	43

Chapter	Page
Parents Need to Adapt to the Challenges of Living in a Postmodern Age.....	49
Conclusion .....	54
4. DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT .....	56
Preparation .....	57
Implementation .....	60
Content Overview .....	63
Conclusion .....	66
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT .....	67
Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose .....	67
Evaluation of the Project’s Goals.....	69
Strengths of the Project .....	72
Weaknesses of the Project.....	74
What I Would Do Differently .....	75
Opportunities Stemming from the Project .....	77
Theological Reflections .....	78
Personal Reflections.....	79
Conclusion .....	81
Appendix	
1. FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY.....	83
2. FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC .....	87
3. SIX-WEEK FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM.....	89
4. T-TEST RESULTS .....	150
5. FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY RESULTS .....	151
6. EXPERT PANEL RESPONSES .....	152
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	154

## PREFACE

This project stands as a testament to the providence of a sovereign God. It is by His goodness that I have reached this point in my life, and He has guided me every step of the way. I come before God with a heart overflowing with gratitude for guiding me through the completion of this project. His unwavering presence, wisdom, and strength were evident throughout not only this entire process, but my entire life. I am continually humbled by His grace, and I hope this work will bring glory to His name and fame.

My deepest gratitude goes to my beautiful wife, Kaelin. None of this would have been possible without her steadfast love and support. Her sacrificial nature allowed me to bring this project to its completion. Kaelin is a treasure from the Lord, a true servant at heart. Thank you, Kaelin, for your patience and encouragement throughout this entire journey. I am immeasurably blessed to have you by my side.

To my mother, Leisa. You are the very inspiration for my curiosity into family discipleship. From the very beginning, you diligently taught me the ways of God and fervently prayed that I might become a follower of Jesus. Thank you, Mom, for creating a home that abounds with the love and presence of Jesus.

Dr. Mike Daniels. Thank you for your leadership, your mentorship, and most of all your friendship. Your ability to see the potential in me and your refusal to let me settle for anything less than my best have made an indelible mark on my life. I am eternally grateful for your impact on my life and ministry.

Dr. James Merritt, my pastor and friend. Thank you for faithfully preaching the Word and showing me the way forward in ministry. Your consistent heart for the lost inspires me to continually share the good news with those around me.

Dan Dumas, thank you for your mentorship and your support. Thank you for your commitment to develop leaders with high character that are both faithful and fruitful.

Dr. Beau Hughes, my project supervisor, consistently guided me from start to finish in the details of this project. I am grateful for your impact and influence, which extend far beyond this project and have greatly enriched both my life and ministry.

A heartfelt thank you is owed to Betsy Fredrick for her remarkable patience in undertaking the challenging role of being my editor.

It is my sincere hope and prayer that this project serves as a source of encouragement and inspiration for parents, urging them to persevere in their noble calling. I believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God. May the outcome of this project bring honor and glory to God's name. "Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up" (Gal 6:9).

Micah Ledford

Duluth, Georgia

December 2024



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Raising children is no easy task. Discipling them might be even more difficult. When a couple becomes parents, they carry the responsibility of pointing their child to Jesus. Christian parents are not called to simply raise their kids “right,” they are called to invest in their children spiritually, engage with them in theological conversations, and disciple them in the grace of the Lord Jesus. All believers have a responsibility to disciple others, but parents’ number one responsibility is to disciple their own children. Too many families today have adopted a mindset that discipleship is the church’s responsibility; they have not taken the call of discipleship seriously. Simply put, many parents have forsaken the biblical responsibility to disciple their children. Christian homes are marked more by pithy signs about God hung on the walls and less about the conversations and lifestyles taking place within that home. Parents need to clearly understand that they are the primary disciple maker within their home.

#### **Context**

Cross Pointe Church is located in metro Atlanta inside the business district of Duluth, Georgia. Duluth is a growing city located in Gwinnett County, one of the most populated counties in the state of Georgia. Per the most recent census in 2020, Gwinnett County was called home by 957,062 people.<sup>1</sup> In 2019, Cross Pointe Church conducted a survey through the Baptist Convention of Georgia to analyze data within a five-mile radius of the church. As of 2019, the population of within a five-mile radius of the church

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<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau, “QuickFacts: Gwinnett County, Georgia,” accessed February 18, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/gwinnettcountygeorgia/POP010220#POP010220>.

campus, located at 1800 Satellite Boulevard, totaled 223,094 people.<sup>2</sup> This same survey estimated that by 2029, the same radius would contain 295,047 people.<sup>3</sup> This is a growth rate of 13.8 percent, nearly double the statewide average at 7.2 percent. Therefore, there is a growing need to further develop discipleship practices at Cross Pointe Church to continue to engage the ever-expanding population and culture around the campus. Further, Gwinnett County is known as one of the most diverse counties in the region. Partnership Gwinnett writes, “Gwinnett’s diverse population continues to grow, with more than 100 different languages and dialects spoken in households and a student population representing more than 180 countries across the County. One out of four Gwinnett residents were born outside of the U.S.”<sup>4</sup> This diverse and growing population presents an opportunity to fulfill the scriptural command of reaching the nations while also posing the challenge of innovatively engaging individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and socioeconomic levels. A recent study in 2022 found the population of Gwinnett County to be “34.7% white, 27.7% black, 13.4% Asian, 13.2% other, and 11.0% two or more.”<sup>5</sup> Further, “Gwinnett County boasts a diversity index of 84.9%, meaning that if two people are picked at random in Gwinnett County, there’s a 84.9% chance that the two would be of a different race or ethnicity.”<sup>6</sup> While Cross Pointe would be considered one of the most diverse Southern Baptist churches in the area, the church itself is slightly less diverse than the surrounding area. People who have

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<sup>2</sup> Georgia Baptist Mission Board, “The ExecutiveInsite Report,” December 12, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Georgia Baptist Mission Board, “The ExecutiveInsite Report.”

<sup>4</sup> Partnership Gwinnett, “Inclusion & Diversity,” accessed February 18, 2024, <https://partnershipgwinnett.com/inclusion-diversity/#:~:text=Gwinnett's%20diverse%20population%20continues%20to,born%20outside%20of%20the%20U.S.>

<sup>5</sup> Partnership Gwinnett, “Inclusion & Diversity.”

<sup>6</sup> Partnership Gwinnett, “Inclusion & Diversity.”

completed our Starting Pointe Class,<sup>7</sup> however, continually leave positive feedback citing diversity as one of the main reasons they joined the church. Cross Pointe’s mission is to reach and serve families residing in Duluth and the broader Gwinnett County area, aiming to impact lives with the message of Jesus.

The church was founded by James Merritt in May of 2003 as a mission of the First Baptist Church in Snellville, Georgia, where Merritt served as the senior pastor. Following God’s lead, he decided to plant a church northeast of Atlanta to reach the city’s ever-growing population. The current property located at 1800 Satellite Boulevard was donated by local businessmen who had a heart for the gospel message and an affinity for Merritt. The property was originally a missile factory during the Cold War that included both warehouse and administration space. Major renovation began in 2003 to convert the factory into a place of worship. During the renovation of the worship center, the church of about 200 people met in the cafeteria of Peachtree Ridge High School. Further into the renovation, two of the main focal points were the student building and children’s facility. Both spaces comprise nearly 50,000 square feet of space dedicated for ministry to the next generation. Due to the amount of space within the building, Cross Pointe has been the centralized location for most church activities and programs with little ministry taking place in the community. Therefore, the “come and see” culture of Cross Pointe began to be solidified in the minds of parents over time. Consequently, this has made it easier for parents to simply drop their children off at church to be discipled without owning a large portion of that responsibility themselves. There can be no doubt the facilities of Cross Pointe Church are incredible resources and a direct blessing from the Lord. However, a prevalent culture of contentment among parents attending church has led to complacency regarding discipleship within the home.

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<sup>7</sup> Starting Pointe Class is the formal process to become a covenant member at Cross Pointe Church.

Over the years, while the staff has changed, the mission has remained the same. The mission of Cross Pointe Church is “pointing people to Jesus and inspiring them to live the cross shaped life.” This mission is carried out in four primary ways: (1) worship, (2) discipleship; (3) serving; (4) sending. Worship takes place both privately and corporately. Discipleship is demonstrated in the form of small groups. Members of Cross Pointe serve both in the church and in the community. Lastly, believers are sent not only across the street but also across the world.

This project focuses on the second pillar: discipleship. The concentration of discipleship is rooted in Matthew 28:19-20: “Jesus said, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.’”<sup>8</sup> This Great Commission was given by Jesus before he ascended into heaven. While this calling is for the local church, the staff of Cross Pointe Church also believe this command is given directly to individual followers of Jesus. Every believer should take part in both the evangelization of the lost and the discipleship of those already in the faith. Evangelism and discipleship are two sides of the same coin that cannot be divided from one another. This core biblical and theological principle of “making disciples” is where a disconnect lies within the church staff and many parents within the NextGen ministry.

Parents should be the primary disciple maker in their homes. This is an obligation given directly to parents. Adam Griffin and Matt Chandler state, “Making disciples is the job of every follower of Jesus. This is your purpose in your home: making eternal deposits in your children. . . . Your family is the primary instrument and environment for discipleship in the life of your child, and your calling in this life is to give the discipleship of your home your unique best.”<sup>9</sup> Spiritual leadership in the home is

<sup>8</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the Christian Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>9</sup> Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Time, Moments, and Milestones* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 29.

not merely encouraged in Scripture, but commanded (Eph 6:4; Deut 6:6-7; Ps 78:4, Prov 22:6). However, there is a growing trend in which parents do not hold fast to this reality. They see the church as the primary disciple maker in their child's life. One of the aims of this project is to push against this narrative and to develop a curriculum to equip parents to see their need to be the primary disciple maker in their child's life.

Over the last several years, the church staff and culture has changed significantly. Merritt brought in Mike Daniels as executive pastor in 2017 to help oversee and implement staff and churchwide changes. Since then, the culture has shifted from running programs and managing events to focusing on missional living and community engagement.<sup>10</sup> The staff is still reviewing attendance and budget, but the emphasis has shifted to the depth of the people. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic brought its own set of challenges and complexities including shutting down a satellite campus, navigating staffing changes, and evaluating the systems and processes previously in place. One of the main challenges that emerged after the pandemic was the church's engagement with parents. This challenge is best demonstrated in the glaring absence of parents from ages 35 to 50 within the church. This demographic of people simply did not return to church at the rate of other age groups. Quite frankly, this is the lowest attended grouping of people in our church and has been since 2020. Thus, the NextGen Ministry at Cross Pointe senses the burden to make every effort to reach and disciple all parents, but specifically this demographic of parents in the surrounding community.

The staff of Cross Pointe Church believes that if followers of Jesus take care of the depth, then God will take care of the breadth. The staff's desire is to continue to see the lost saved and the saved disciplined. Amid this dark culture, discipling families can be life giving to both the families and the church. One of the best ways to continue to fulfill

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<sup>10</sup> Several of our pastors lead teams of church members who substitute teach in the local school system. Two specific pastors are Gwinnett County police chaplains. Teaching allows them to minister to the needs of the hurting and the broken on a weekly basis. Cross Pointe's high school pastor is involved in the local Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), trying to reach students for Christ.

this mission of reaching and discipling the community is to equip believers one family at a time. The need for family discipleship branches from this mindset of wanting to raise the level of biblical literacy and spiritual moxie among the parents in the NextGen ministry at Cross Pointe Church.

### **Rationale**

There are numerous reasons surrounding the need to design a family discipleship curriculum at Cross Pointe Church. First, the church has a culture and demographic of parents that views the church as the primary disciple maker in their child's life, not themselves. This major problem lies in direct opposition to the teaching of the Scripture (Deut 6; Ps 78; Eph 6), which views parents as the primary disciple maker in their child's life. Part of this disconnect stems from generations of ministry executed at one central building, located at 1800 Satellite Boulevard. This style of ministry has led to people being consumers of material taught from the pulpit, yet not being effective producers in their own homes and spheres of influence. Thus, a curriculum to arm parents with the tools necessary to lead in the home is vital.

Second, Cross Pointe Church has little engagement from parents within the NextGen ministry. This was a growing trend prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic has expedited and exploited this weakness within the church. A culture of consumerism has led to parents just attending the worship service and neglecting discipleship, serving, and sending. For parents to take up the mantle of spiritual leadership in the home, they must first be engaged in the life of the church. Otherwise, parents will attempt to teach their family something they do not know, which will lead to frustration and a pattern of discipleship that will eventually fizzle out. The church needs a curriculum to teach parents the value of being discipled and at the same time discipling their children.

Third, the main demographic of people the church is reaching within its NextGen ministry has little to no background of Scripture. Most of the student ministry is

comprised of families who have minimal background knowledge of Scripture. Most students come from the public school system. Students in the public school system may live in difficult environments, such as blended families, single parent homes, and low-income housing neighborhoods. Ministering to these students and their families takes a completely different model and approach simply because they function different than the traditional family unit. The nuclear family<sup>11</sup> is becoming an ever-shrinking minority within Cross Pointe Church today. In the families the church is reaching from the local school, theology is a tertiary issue, and the little knowledge of God they have is not enough to effectively disciple within the home. Parents have simply not been taught how to disciple and lead spiritually in the home. The creation of the family discipleship plan is a needed resource for families who have solid theology and those who have no theology. Adaptability is crucial.

Lastly, of the parents who are engaged and involved at the church, spiritual matters are secondary to other items in their life. A growing trend among NextGen parents is a concern with their child's morality more than their child's spirituality. In other words, parents are more focused on behavior modification rather than the sanctifying work of Christ. Thus, a family discipleship curriculum is crucial for parents to understand the need for spiritual regeneration in their child's life.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum for Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Georgia, that equips parents to disciple their children within the home.

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<sup>11</sup> Cambridge Dictionary defines the nuclear family as “a family consisting of two parents and their children, but not including aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.” Cambridge Dictionary, “Nuclear Family,” accessed February 17, 2023, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/nuclear-family>.

## **Goals**

Three goals were created to support the purpose of the project. The identified goals for this project were as follows:

1. The first goal was to assess the current understanding and application of family discipleship of NextGen parents at Cross Pointe Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a curriculum to provide the theological and biblical framework for family discipleship.
3. The third goal was to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum taught to NextGen parents by teaching it over a six-week period.

Based upon the articulated goals, a detailed research methodology was crafted to measure the successful achievement of these three goals. This methodology is described in the subsequent section.

## **Research Methodology**

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of these three goals. The first goal was to assess the current understanding and application of family discipleship of NextGen parents at Cross Pointe Church. This goal was measured by dispensing a Family Discipleship Survey to NextGen parents.<sup>12</sup> The survey assessed the level of discipleship taking place in the home as well as the level of comfort in leading the family to worship the Lord. The goal was considered successfully met when 75 percent of the parents attending the curriculum sessions completed the survey and responses were recorded.

The second goal was to develop a curriculum to provide the theological and biblical framework for family discipleship. This curriculum consisted of six sessions to teach parents the importance of family discipleship and equip them to disciple their children in their home. This curriculum was evaluated by the pastoral staff team at Cross Pointe Church, consisting of Dr. James Merritt, Senior Pastor; Dr. Mike Daniels,

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<sup>12</sup> See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.



Executive Pastor; Bruce Hardy, Administrative Pastor; Austin Drummond, Communications Pastor; Ryan Garvin, High School Pastor; Greg Westmoreland, Family Pastor; and David Walker, Worship Pastor. This team used the Family Discipleship Curriculum Evaluation rubric to evaluate the curriculum based upon theological accuracy, biblical support, scope, pedagogy, and practicality.<sup>13</sup> This goal was considered successfully met once the staff evaluated the curriculum and the average staff rating given was at least 3.5/4.0. All feedback was received, and changes were applied.

The third goal was to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum taught to NextGen parents. Parents were informed of the days in which the curriculum would be taught and asked to be at each session. This goal was considered successfully met when a statistically significant positive increase was noted regarding the level of family discipleship taking place within their home. This was demonstrated best in a *t*-test, comparing the pre-survey results and the post-survey results.

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

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

*Family discipleship.* This project defines family discipleship as teaching and training the family to know and follow Christ. The *Lexham Theological Workbook* states it very well:

Discipleship is the process of devoting oneself to a teacher to learn from and become more like them. . . . This refers to the process of learning the teachings of Jesus and following after his example in obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit. Discipleship not only involves the process of becoming a disciple but of making other disciples through teaching and evangelism.<sup>14</sup>

While believers are called to *be* discipled and *to* disciple others, mothers and fathers within the family unit are also called to disciple their family. This involves teaching,

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<sup>13</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>14</sup> Chris Byrley, "Discipleship," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014), Logos.

modeling, stewarding, and committing their family unto the Lord. Family discipleship also specifically refers parents leading their family in worship (i.e., reading the Bible or praying) inside of the home.

*NextGen.* This project uses the term NextGen to refer to a particular age range of young people in the church, more specifically at Cross Pointe Church. NextGen denotes children ranging from preschool age through high school, or roughly age 4 to 18. At Cross Pointe, the NextGen ministry consists of preschool, children (K-5), middle school (6-8), and high school (9-12).

There were a few limitations and delimitations related to this project. First, all project participants who were Cross Pointe Church members were expected to be in good standing, active, and engaged. Participants who attend Cross Pointe but are not covenant members were selected on a case-by-case basis, particularly noting the involvement of their child or student. Second, only parents of NextGen families participated in the survey of this project. Third, this project concentrated on the level of discipleship taking place within the home. Fourth, this project was limited to those willing to fill out the survey. Finally, this project was administered over a period of six weeks.

## **Conclusion**

God designed the family to function and relate in a way that uniquely honors and glorifies Him. Through the power of the gospel “anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord can be saved” (Rom 10:13). The combination of these two elements makes family discipleship a reality. It is the primary responsibility of Christian parents to teach their children the truths of Scripture in effort to bring them to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to disciple them to grow in their relationship with Him. This project provides an examination of the Scriptures regarding family discipleship and arms parents with the resources necessary to implement discipleship strategies in their home. The ensuing chapters address the biblical basis and practical application of family discipleship.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BIBLICAL AND AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR DISCIPLESHIP IN THE HOME

The Bible is clear that all people are commanded and commissioned by God to be a disciple who makes disciples. This command is best noted in the Great Commission given in Matthew 28:19-20: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” More specifically, parents are given the role and responsibility of discipling their children. Since the creation of man, the family unit has been the ideal structure for discipleship to take place. Naturally, parents spend more time with their children than with any other adult and bear the responsibility of raising them up in the “training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). Even though God does not need any help to carry out His plan to “make disciples” in the world, He has given this primary responsibility to parents throughout the generations. While the words “primary disciple maker” are not found in Scripture, the important spiritual role of discipling children is primarily given to parents. This idea is supported by the following texts.

First, one of the more notable examples is found in Ephesians 6:4: “Fathers, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Training implies the idea of working and shaping that requires time and intentionality. One cannot merely “train and instruct” if they are not intentional. The duty of a Christian father is to bring his children up to follow the Lord Jesus.

A second example is found in examining the life of Abraham. After establishing the Abrahamic covenant, God tells Abraham he is to command his children and his house

after him to keep the way of the Lord. Genesis 18:18-19 says, “Abraham is to become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him so that he will command his children and his house after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. This is how the Lord will fulfill to Abraham what he promised him.” The command is clear and direct. Abraham was to be the primary catalyst for his family and future family’s spiritual development.

Third, further evidence is cited in Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The psalmist commands parents that it is their responsibility to “train” their children spiritually. Like an athlete training for a competition, parents are expected to train and instruct their children according to the ways of Scripture.

Fourth, Scripture teaches that children are a blessing from the Lord given to parents by God. Psalm 127:3-4 says, “Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord, offspring, a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons born in one’s youth. Happy is the man who has filled his quiver with them.” Arrows are only good if pointed in the right direction. Arrows must be guided by a skilled warrior to fulfill their purpose and reach their desired impact. Likewise, children must be guided in the right direction by their parents to fulfill their purpose and reach their desired impact. Parents are to point their children to Jesus and teach them to walk in His ways.

Suffice it to say, the primary disciple maker in a child’s life should be his or her parents. This does not mean that parents should be the *only* discipling influence, but simply the primary influence. Discipling a child is first and foremost the parents’ duty, not the church’s. In other words, discipleship is not exclusive to the parents, it is simply driven by the parents. This allows room for pastors, churches, friends, and family to come alongside parents to aid in a child’s spiritual journey. In no way does this rationale minimize influences outside of the home such as siblings, grandparents, friends, pastors, churches, and neighbors. Rather, it supports the idea that parents are the primary disciple

makers while leaving room for other influences as well. The prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon, put it this way: “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>1</sup> Whether directly stated in certain sections of Scripture or implied in others, one cannot dispute the importance of parents being the primary engineer for discipling their children. The responsibility of family discipleship is woven into the fabric of the gospel and parents are charged with this righteous task.

The preceding texts provide a general understanding of the spiritual obligation of parents directed to their children. There are several books devoted to articulating the assumption that parents are the primary disciple makers of their children including: *Teach Your Children Well* by Sarah Cowan Johnson, *Write It on Their Hearts* by Chris and Melissa Swain, *A Neglected Grace* by Jason Helopoulos, and *Family Discipleship* by Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin. However, the theological aim of this chapter is not to cover those bases, but to build upon it. Therefore, four primary texts have been selected to support framework for discipleship in the home: Psalm 78:1-8, 1 Timothy 4:11-15, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and Joshua 24:14-15.

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

One of the foundational principles of family discipleship is to properly convey God’s work, often referred to as teaching the Bible. This principle is exemplified in the narrative of Psalm 78, emphasizing the importance of passing down these teachings. This psalm is one of the great hymns of Israel’s history. Psalm 78 is the longest psalm in the psalter outside of Psalm 119. It is also unique in structure because it contains both wisdom and historical literary elements. Tremper Longman writes, “The psalmist is a sage in

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<sup>1</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “The Sunday School and the Scriptures” (sermon delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, October 18, 1885), <https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons31/sermons31.li.html>.

imparting wisdom that he learned from his ancestors (vs. 3) and passing it on to the next generation.”<sup>2</sup> The psalm is, as Derek Kidner explains, “meant to search the conscience: it is history that must not repeat itself.”<sup>3</sup> In addition, it is meant to bring great encouragement by reminding the Israelites, as well as the modern Christian reader, of the promises of God. Thus, the great British preacher Charles Spurgeon asserts, “It is not a mere recapitulation of important events in Israelitish history but is intended to be viewed as a parable setting forth the conduct and experience of believers in all ages.”<sup>4</sup> Before entering the exegetical portion of Scripture, it is evident theologically that the reader must learn from the past.

The passage opens with a clear command to “hear my instruction” and “listen to my words” (Ps 78:1). In the book of Psalms, these exhortations are typically addressed to God, but here it explicitly addresses Israel, not humanity in general.<sup>5</sup> By addressing Israel as “my people,” the psalmist is calling to mind language of the prophets in using historical language.<sup>6</sup> Further, the text is heavily influenced by wisdom literature. John Goldingay comments, “The use of the terms *mšl* (‘wise sayings’) and *îdôt* (‘mysteries’) in v. 2 indicate that this is wisdom instruction that the father teaches to his son; and the references to parental teaching in vv. 3-8 parallel the frequent call, ‘Hear, my son,’ in the book of Proverbs.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, the author blends together both wisdom literature and historical literature to get Israel’s attention and produce a response.

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<sup>2</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Psalms*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 16 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 290.

<sup>3</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 16 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 310-11.

<sup>4</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *Psalms 56-87*, vol. 3 of *The Treasury of David* (London: Marshall, 1881), 330.

<sup>5</sup> John Goldingay, *Psalms*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 2:716.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, New American Commentary, vol. 13 (Nashville: B & H, 2019), 74.

<sup>7</sup> Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 74.

In keeping the progression of wisdom literature, the psalmist answers the question of how he will instruct the nation and what specifically he will teach them. He will accomplish his goal by teaching them “things we have heard and known and that our fathers have passed down to us” (78:3). These teachings are not anything new, but rather the same teachings their ancestors had learned. In other words, the psalmist is instructing the people to take what they learned from previous generations and pass it on to the next generation. This calls to mind a similar passage known as the “Shema” found in Deuteronomy 6: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (vv. 4-5). W. Dennis Tucker and Jamie A. Grant comment, “Clearly, it is never enough for any particular generation to be so focused on their own piety that they should fail in their responsibility to instruct the generations that follow. In the theology of Deuteronomy, practice and instruction are inseparable.”<sup>8</sup> Similar language is represented in Psalm 78, reflecting the necessity of bearing the responsibility of the next generation. Goldingay notes, “It is vital that the present generation plays its role as the link between the past generation and the next generation. Without this, the chain of learning will be broken.”<sup>9</sup>

Three major points in this introduction of Psalm 78 set up what is to follow. The first of these major points is stated in verse 4: “But we will tell a future generation the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, his might, and the wondrous works he has performed.” Daniel Estes explains, “The participle *msapprîm*, ‘will tell,’ suggests has not so much to do with the factuality of a specific event as with people’s subjective experience of it, which, due to extraordinariness and mystery, evokes an emotion of awe.”<sup>10</sup> Clearly, the Israelite’s worship should not focus on what happened, but rather on the singular person

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<sup>8</sup> W. Dennis Tucker Jr. and Jamie A. Grant, *Psalms*, NIV Application Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 2:142.

<sup>9</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:719.

<sup>10</sup> Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 75.

behind the act. YHWH is worthy of praise. Tucker and Grant exhort, “The hearer and reader of the psalm should focus their attention on Yahweh’s awesome, salvific deeds in the history of his dealings with his people, and, by implication, they should think about the proper response to such a God in their generation.”<sup>11</sup> The people must deal with the disparity in God’s awesome and wondrous acts versus their sin, rebellion, and neglectful response. Scripture shows that family discipleship involves conscientiously teaching kids what God has done, for God deserves worship and praise.

The second point of this three-part introduction occurs in verses 5-8. This grand story should be told to the next generation (v. 5) so that they might put their confidence in God (v. 7). Further, God “established a testimony in Jacob and set up a law in Israel” (v. 5). Spurgeon remarks that Israel “existed for the very purpose of maintaining God’s truth in the midst of surrounding idolatry. Theirs were the oracles, they were the conservators and guardians of the truth.”<sup>12</sup> The primary purpose in reflecting on what happened in Israel’s past was to remind them they were a chosen nation, called to be set apart, and to serve YHWH alone. In the ancient near east, teachings and stories were passed down orally through traditions and storytelling. As Tucker and Grant explain, “Normally, this elite endeavor was specialized; but Israel’s task is made easier by the gift of revelation. By decreeing written statutes and establishing a written law for his people, God has made cross-generational education much easier.”<sup>13</sup> God, through his providence, made a way for each family to teach their children about who he was and what he had done. Teaching the next generation is not an option, but rather an obligation.

Additionally, the purpose of this “teaching” is stated in verse 6: “So that a future generation—children yet to be born—might know.” Tucker and Grant further note, “It is not enough just to respond to our own knowledge of God. Each generation must

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<sup>11</sup> Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 2:143.

<sup>12</sup> Spurgeon, *Psalms 56-87*, 331-32.

<sup>13</sup> Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 2:143.



both respond to and teach true knowledge of God.”<sup>14</sup> The underlying thought here is that children will not know what God has done unless their parents tell them. In the plain reading of the text is a rudimentary understanding directed at parents to tell their children what God has done.

However, the purpose is not fully complete until one reads verse 7: “So that they might put their confidence in god and not forget God’s works but keep his commands.” Goldingay says there are two observable elements of the covenant relationship: “God’s acts and their obedience to God. The starting point in the relationship is God’s acts, but the relationship becomes effective only when the people keep these acts in mind.”<sup>15</sup> There is a similar dichotomy between faith and works found in Paul’s letters and the book of James. One cannot have faith without works, but one also cannot have true works without faith. Goldingay emphasizes that “YHWH does not simply act in grace and then go no further; instead, YHWH feels free to issue commands on the basis of those acts. The people’s job is to observe these commands.”<sup>16</sup> The goal of telling children about God is so that they too will keep his commands.

The final point of this three-part introduction occurs in verse 8. While the first two points are positive in nature, this point has a rather ominous tone. Israel was to teach the next generation so that they would put their confidence in God, not forget his commands, and “that they would not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not loyal and whose spirit was not faithful to God” (v. 8). The final point serves as a warning of what will happen if the Israelites fail to teach their children about the story of God. Tucker and Grant explain that some translations miss the nuance of the original language “by translating the verb as a stative

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<sup>14</sup> Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 2:144.

<sup>15</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:722.

<sup>16</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:722.

rather than the Hebrew's causative."<sup>17</sup> The translation should really read, "a stubborn and rebellious generation that did not establish its heart."<sup>18</sup> Verses 10-11 further clarify this point. This generation did not happen to become rebellious, stubborn, and disloyal; it was a direct result of parents failing to teach their children about the steadfast love of God.

In conclusion, Psalm 78:1-8 is a bedrock text for teaching the next generation the ways of God. It is imperative that parents find avenues to teach their children truth from the pages of Scripture. The stakes are too high. Failure to do so will also lead to "a stubborn and rebellious generation" (Ps 78:8). It was upon reading and reflecting on this text that led Spurgeon to conclude, "[May this text] move many to labor after the elevation of themselves and their posterity."<sup>19</sup>

#### **Model: 1 Timothy 4:11-15**

A person who discipled their family well not only talks the talk but also walks the walk. Thus, the second principle of family discipleship focuses on the practical demonstration of one's beliefs. Parents are tasked with not only instructing their children but also modeling these teachings for their children. The book of 1 Timothy is a part of a piece of Scripture known as the Pastoral Epistles. In this short letter, Paul writes to his young ministry associate to provide him with instructions for pastoral care, oversight, and commitment to strong doctrine. Robert Gromacki provides helpful background knowledge on Paul's ministry associate:

Timothy was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother (Acts 16:1) . . . and he was influenced by the godly lives of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). . . . He was converted to Christ by Paul during the latter's first missionary journey (1 Tim. 1:2, 18; cf. Acts 14:6-23). Because of his spiritual gifts

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<sup>17</sup> Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 2:145.

<sup>18</sup> Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 2:145.

<sup>19</sup> Spurgeon, *Psalms 56-87*, 332.

and rapid Christian maturity, he was selected by Paul during the latter's second journey to become an associate in the missionary enterprise (Acts 16:1-3).<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, Paul's writings to Timothy serve as a believer's guide for leadership in the Christian faith. More specifically, the latter half of chapter 4 challenges Timothy (and all believers today) to develop spiritually and cling to the Word of God. Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin state, "In 4:11-16 Paul emphasized that Timothy was to persevere or continue in what he had begun. Timothy had begun well in obeying God's commands. Paul desired that he continue in the path he had started so as to provide an example for other believers."<sup>21</sup>

Philip Towner states that in this short span of verses there are "ten imperatives that establish the genre and set the tone. Timothy's own behavior and activities as a coworker form a pattern of the godliness just reflected on."<sup>22</sup> Parents must understand that, to disciple their family well, they must appropriately *model* walking with Jesus daily. A pattern of holiness and Christlikeness must be consistently present.

Paul opens the final section of chapter 4 with a dual imperative to "command and teach these things" (v. 11). The term translated "command" describes the authoritative activities of "ordering, exhorting and instructing."<sup>23</sup> Towner comments, "The second term, 'teach,' refers to the equally authoritative instruction in the congregational setting (of the *didaskalia*); this activity will consist of doctrinal instruction and perhaps a more structured pedagogy."<sup>24</sup> By using these two terms, Paul is providing a

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<sup>20</sup> Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 293-94. Gromacki continues, "Paul's constant mention of Timothy as his son doubtless refers to the latter's conversion as well as the close relationship which developed between them" (294).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 122.

<sup>22</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 184.

<sup>23</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 185.

<sup>24</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 185.

job description for Timothy to fight doctrinal errors or other issues that might arise. Timothy is to command and teach the things Paul previously imparted to him.

In verse 12, Paul exhorts Timothy to let no one despise him because of his youth. Many scholars debate over exactly what the term “youth” means. Towner states that this phrase “may compare his age to Paul’s, or to older people in the church over whom he would exercise delegated apostolic authority (1 Tim. 5:1). Each possibility would apply, as well as the simple fact that he was standing in for Paul.”<sup>25</sup> The message is clear that Timothy must conduct himself in a manner that is honoring to the Lord. Greek scholar William Mounce explains, “The parallel imperative (v. 12b) suggests that the way to do this is to be such a good example that accusations have no credence.”<sup>26</sup> In the backdrop of Paul’s writing is the Ephesian church, of whom Timothy was up against. The sub audience in this text is the Ephesian church because they were the ones who needed to heed the words of Paul and listen to what Timothy had to say.

Further, Timothy is to be an example for other believers. Mounce says, “τύπος, ‘example,’ occurs elsewhere in the Pastoral Epistles in Paul’s injunction to Titus that he be an example of good deeds (Titus 2:7). . . . It ‘denotes a mark made by striking . . . an impression made by something, such an impression used in its turn as a mold to shape something else.’”<sup>27</sup> The word picture it paints is not so much that Timothy is an example others can emulate but that he is a mold that should be pressed into the lives of others so they attain the same shape.<sup>28</sup> The takeaway is that Timothy could not be an example unless he inserted himself into the lives of the Ephesians. This backdrop sets the shape for specifically how Timothy was to be an example in speech, in conduct, in

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<sup>25</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 185.

<sup>26</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46. (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins, 2016), 258.

<sup>27</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 259.

<sup>28</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 259.

love, in faith, and in purity. The first two terms, speech and conduct, are public traits and ones that could be observed. Lea and Griffin argue, “Speech refers to all types of verbal expression, and [conduct] describes general behavior. Paul wanted Timothy to be known for wise words rather than for rash, impetuous drivel.”<sup>29</sup> Towner states that speech and conduct were commonly linked together in both Greek and Jewish teaching. Timothy’s “manner of life was to correspond to what was professed . . . [the result] was to command the respect of one assigned to represent the apostle and his teaching in the community.”<sup>30</sup> The last three words, “faith, love and purity,” describe inner traits. As Lea and Griffin put it, “Paul desired a love that demonstrates itself for both God and others. The term “faith” is anarthrous in the Greek and likely represents an attitude of faithfulness or trustworthiness rather than right belief. The call for “purity” demands both sexual purity and integrity of heart.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore, by doing these things, Timothy would display a lifestyle that was morally consistent, spiritually coherent, and worthy to be followed.

Additionally, Paul instructs Timothy to “give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching” (v. 13). Paul very practically presents Timothy with what he needs to do given the authority transferred to him by Paul himself. Some suggest that these three commands were given as a model for how the worship service should be structured. Lea and Griffin argue that this is misleading, for other elements of the service including “praying, singing, words of testimony, and the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>32</sup> Towner further comments, “These were certainly not innovations in the worship service, but rather activities that needed to be continued (or possibly resumed) in view of the disruption caused by the false teaching.”<sup>33</sup> Lea and Griffin state that the public reading of

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<sup>29</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 122.

<sup>30</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 186.

<sup>31</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 122.

<sup>32</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 122.

<sup>33</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 186.

Scripture was crucial because it was “At a time when believers lacked personal copies of God’s Word, such a practice was essential to promote knowledge of the divine message.”<sup>34</sup> Through this very practice the people would learn, memorize, and know what the Scriptures said. Further, “exhortation” and “teaching” are linked together, showing that Timothy was to appeal to the moral instruction of one’s will (preaching) and appeal to the intellect (teaching) which informs the listeners about the truth of the Christian faith.<sup>35</sup>

These commands are enhanced through Paul reminding Timothy of his past: “Don’t neglect the gift that is in you; it was given to you through prophecy, with the laying on of hands by the council of elders” (v. 14). This is the second of three references to Timothy’s commissioning into ministry. Towner mentions that the opening phrase, “don’t neglect,” “stresses first of all that Timothy must regard his ‘gift’ as carrying with it the responsibility to put it to proper use; he must live up to his God-given potential and exercise the authority that goes with the gift.”<sup>36</sup> Paul reminds him that this gift given to him by the Holy Spirit was also confirmed by the council of the elders. In other words, this gift should lead to action. Lea and Griffin propose, “The ‘gift’ likely represented an aptitude for teaching and preaching together with an ability to understand the gospel and discern error.”<sup>37</sup> This section of Scripture also forces readers today to stop and ponder what gifts God has given them to use, and further to reflect on how they have been implementing them in their own area of ministry. For the apostle Paul, orthodoxy should lead directly to a practical action step.

Lastly, Paul gives an appeal for consistent spiritual growth: “Practice these things; be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all” (v. 15). This

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<sup>34</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 122.

<sup>35</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 122.

<sup>36</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 188.

<sup>37</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 123.

verse is an emphatic repetition of verse 12, stating that Timothy must be an example for others. The phrase “practice these things” can also mean “be diligent,” and implies meditation or practice/training.<sup>38</sup> The second imperative, “be committed,” does not add new information, but rather the stress is on dedication, or the command to be absorbed with these things.<sup>39</sup> Timothy is to immerse himself, to be absorbed with, and to live and breathe these instructions and duties given to him. Towner says, “While Timothy’s devotion to his good conduct and his duties would certainly have personal benefits, Paul attaches a purpose clause (*hina*) that focuses instead on the observations of others.”<sup>40</sup> This clause ensures that if he is dedicated to these things, then through the help of the Holy Spirit this devotion will produce observable progress.

The goal of modeling is never perfection, for followers of Jesus will never be perfected until they meet the risen Lord. The goal of modeling is steady progress and Christian maturity. This can only happen through the practice of faith and the continued work of the Holy Spirit.

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

The third principle, steward, is derived from one of the most well-known texts in the Bible. A suitable study of family discipleship would not be complete without a proper examination of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. This grouping of verses is known as the “Shema,” taken from the term found at the beginning of this passage that is typically translated as “hear.”<sup>41</sup> In using this introduction, J. A. Thompson says, “Israel is invited to respond to Yahweh with the same fullness of love that Yahweh displayed towards his

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<sup>38</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 124.

<sup>39</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 190.

<sup>40</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 190.

<sup>41</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy: Not by Bread Alone*, Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 2016), 96.

people.”<sup>42</sup> Further, Raymond Brown comments, “These verses have a distinct place in Judaism . . . they still form part of the Jewish believer’s daily prayers.”<sup>43</sup> Thompson states that the “[Shema] was the heart of Israel’s confession, namely that Yahweh was not a pantheon of gods, but One. He was, therefore, to be the sole object of Israel’s faith and obedience.”<sup>44</sup> Deuteronomy 6 is the primary scriptural basis for the importance of family discipleship in the Old Testament.

Stephen Cook observes that verse 4 is unique in structure as the literal Hebrew reads, “The LORD, our God, the LORD, one. . . . The key Hebrew term is ‘ekhad,’ ‘one.’”<sup>45</sup> And finally, the theme of the Shema is the oneness of God; so much so that “not even a verb is present to distract from its emphatic ring.”<sup>46</sup> יהוה אחד together form the predicate of the sentence. The idea is not, Jehovah our God is one (the only) God, but “one (or the only) Jehovah.”<sup>47</sup> God alone is worthy of worship. This type of monotheistic idea and the sole worship of YHWH was especially prevalent for Israel amidst the polytheistic nations nestled around them in the Ancient Near East. Cook asserts of the differing roles of polytheistic gods, “A Baal is in charge at Peor (4:3); Yarikh, the moon god, is in charge at Jericho (‘moon city’); and Shemesh, the sun god, is in charge at Beth-Shemesh. According to Deuteronomy 6:4, this fragmenting of reality distorts the truth

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<sup>42</sup> J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1974), 137.

<sup>43</sup> Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy*, 96.

<sup>44</sup> Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen L. Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy*, Reading the Old Testament Commentary Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2014), 73.

<sup>46</sup> Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy*, 73.

<sup>47</sup> Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1:884.



and must stop.”<sup>48</sup> Brown also states, “The Lord reminds them of His uniqueness. There are to be no rivals, for they do not exist. He is the one and only Lord.”<sup>49</sup>

Verse 5 commands loving God “with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.” Cook explains, “The parties to ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties—both sovereigns and their subjects—spoke of their binding relationship as ‘love.’ The language emphasized the pure devotion and genuine obedience that should characterize covenant loyalty.”<sup>50</sup> Cook eloquently describes how the three-part phrase of heart, soul, and strength build upon one another to climax with a singular focus upon God.

To love with all the heart is to love with all one’s intentions (Heb., “heart” controls the understanding and will). More intensively, to love with all the soul is to love with the entire self, even to the point of death (Heb., *nefesh* includes all that makes a person unique). Climactically, to love God with all one’s *me’od* (literally, one’s “very-muchness”) is to love with full gratuity, with total abandon.<sup>51</sup>

Notice the words start inward and proceed outward. Daniel Bock says, “Proceeding from the inside out, the three Hebrew expressions, *lēb*, *nepeš*, *me’ôd*, represent three concentric circles, each of which represents a sphere of human existence.”<sup>52</sup> Therefore, this covenant love describes the fullest capacity of love. This love starts within and protrudes forth, eventually pervading every aspect of one’s life. Thus, verses 4 and 5 are inextricably linked. Cook asserts that verses 4 and 5 “combine as a dual command within the Shema, a package deal: ‘Hear . . . and love.’ To appreciate God’s oneness is already to love God with all one has.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy*, 73.

<sup>49</sup> Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy*, 96.

<sup>50</sup> Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy*, 75.

<sup>51</sup> Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy*, 75.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIV Application Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 142.

<sup>53</sup> Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy*, 76.

Verses 6-9 complete the Shema with compelling language about internalizing and living out the covenant. Verse 6 states that these instructions were to be upon their hearts. Thus, devotion to God was not to be determined by ritual acts, but by an internal commitment to God. A proper understanding of “heart” language in Hebrew accentuates this point. Eugene Merrill points out, “In the psychology of the Old Testament the heart is not the center of emotional life and response but the seat of the intellect or rational side of humankind. To ‘be upon the heart’ is to be in one’s constant, conscious reflection.”<sup>54</sup> These instructions were to be an affair of the heart, not just of the memory.

Verse 7 says, “Repeat them to your children.” Merrill delineates, “‘Repeat’ denotes sharpness or precision, so much so that the covenant recipient must impress the words of covenant faith into the thinking of his children by inscribing them there with indelible sharpness and precision (thus the piel of sanan).”<sup>55</sup> As Merrill notes, “The image is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite.”<sup>56</sup> This miniscule detail is no accident. To “repeat” these words to children is not to passively mention them on occasion; rather, it is to deliberately talk about the commands of God to children. Moses states that the way this message is not forgotten is by constant repetition. Verse 7 concludes, “Talk about then when you sit in your house and when you walk by the along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” The pairing of these contrasting ideas describes the all-encompassing nature of the extreme importance of repeating the instructions. Merrill writes, “Sitting suggests inactivity; and walking, of course, activity. Together they encompass all of human effort. Likewise, to retire at night and rise up in the morning speaks of the totality of time. So important is covenant truth that it must be

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<sup>54</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 142.

<sup>55</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

<sup>56</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

at the very center of all one's labor and life."<sup>57</sup> Once again, this phrasing accentuates the preceding thought in verse 4 that the Lord is one. The oneness of God compels mankind to repeat His words and follow His instructions.

God must be at the center of one's life. Moses understands this principle and further encourages his people to follow the commands of the Lord and to "bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates" (vv. 8-9). These verses are highly controversial. In the Jewish faith, this is taken literally. Merrill expounds, "In postbiblical Judaism and to the present day a miniature box containing verses of the Torah (Exod 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Deut. 6:4-9; and Deut. 11:13-21) were placed inside the four chambers of the box, the whole being known as the *tpillîn* 'prayers') or phylactery."<sup>58</sup> Thompson clarifies, "A further practice developed, that of enclosing these four passages in a small container for attaching to the doorpost of one's house (the *mězûzâ*)."<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, Christians take this instruction to be figurative and symbolic in nature. According to Merrill, the intention for these instructions to be figurative "is quite clear from the context of the instruction, where there can be no doubt the nonliteral meaning ('upon the heart,' v. 6; 'at home,' 'along the road,' v. 7)."<sup>60</sup> Merrill further argues that taking these verses literally is impractical and the fact that modern Jews only wear them on certain special worship occasions points to the fact that these instructions were meant to be figurative.<sup>61</sup> Thus, these words should serve as a symbol of how one is to live in light of these truths. Raymond Brown notes, "They testify to where the individual stands—the band as the

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<sup>57</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

<sup>58</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

<sup>59</sup> Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 139.

<sup>60</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 143.

<sup>61</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 143.

symbol of personal action and commitment; the forehead as symbolizing personal direction and deliberate intent.”<sup>62</sup> For Jewish people who take this literally, the practice has dwindled into legalism that loses the original meaning of the passage. Thus, Thompson argues for a figurative reading: “It was love toward God and the remembrance of all his past mercies that moved men to obedience. These were signs enough, apart from any physical reminders. The recollection of the saving acts of God and the declaration of his covenant demands would suffice to keep faith and allegiance alive.”<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the goal for the reader is to make everyday life a holy endeavor by pointing people to what God has done in their lives.

In summary, the people of God are to display their love for God in their homes, in the villages, and wherever they go. These written words are just as important today as they were when originally spoken to God’s people. Followers of God were not only to hear these words, but to put them into action. Merrill summarizes by saying, “For, ‘to hear,’ in Hebrew lexicography, is tantamount to ‘to obey,’ especially in covenant contexts such as this. That is, to hear God without putting into effect the command is not to hear him at all.”<sup>64</sup> The people of God were to hear the word of the Lord, trust in Him fully, and love Him only—their families dependent upon it.

### **Commit: Joshua 24:14-15**

There is a point when examining the biblical and theological side of family discipleship that one must make a deliberate decision to commit. Therefore, the final word requires an accompanying action to be taken and decision to be made. No greater passage describes this sentiment than Joshua 24:14-15. The book of Joshua received its name from its primary character and leader, Joshua, of which means, “YHWH saves” or

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<sup>62</sup> Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy*, 98.

<sup>63</sup> Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 140.

<sup>64</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 139.

“YHWH delivers.”<sup>65</sup> The specific passage of examination comes in the final chapter, which ends with a great covenantal ceremony. Joshua calls Israel to consider itself and its destiny in light of its whole history with YHWH up to this point.<sup>66</sup> He begins a historical review, channeling the verbiage of the prophets and reminding them of the worship and covenantal relationships held by their ancestors.<sup>67</sup>

Verse 14 states, “Therefore, fear the Lord and worship him in sincerity and truth. Get rid of the gods your fathers worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt and worship the Lord.” Up to this point, Joshua has been a spokesperson for the Lord, and now Joshua offers an exhortation to the people presented against the background of the prophetic survey previously offered.<sup>68</sup> Marten Woudstra explains, “The [word] ‘therefore’ indicate the legal setting of covenant within which the exhortation is to be seen.”<sup>69</sup> Trent Butler also argues that the “therefore” is used as a transition statement: “The text abruptly changes speakers and mood. The prophetic Joshua now assumes the role of an attorney pleading for the proper verdict for his client.”<sup>70</sup> From the very first word spoken, Joshua sets the tone and reinforces the idea that Israel is in a covenant relationship with YHWH. Joshua then asserts that Israel is to “fear the Lord.” This is a frequent term used in Deuteronomy and it sums up the religious attitude expected of the Old Testament believer.<sup>71</sup> Richard Hess comments, “The word ‘worship’ (Heb. *‘bd*) of

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<sup>65</sup> David M. Howard, *Joshua*, New American Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville: B & H, 1998), 30-31.

<sup>66</sup> Gordon McConville and Stephen Williams, *Joshua*, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 57.

<sup>67</sup> McConville and Williams, *Joshua*, 57.

<sup>68</sup> Marten Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 175.

<sup>69</sup> Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, 175.

<sup>70</sup> Trent C. Butler, *Joshua 13-24*, 2nd ed., Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 7B (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 321.

<sup>71</sup> Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, 175.

the Lord is repeated seven times [in these two verses alone]. Four times it refers to the present generation of Israel.”<sup>72</sup> As the people worship the Lord, they are to do so in “sincerity and truth” (v. 14). David Howard asserts, “The word *tāmîm* (sincerity) connotes the idea of wholeness, blamelessness, integrity, even ‘perfection,’ and thus Joshua’s exhortation is a passionate one that the people should be totally devoted—blameless—in their worship of their God.”<sup>73</sup> Howard explains, “The first part of v. 14 contains a concentration of theologically freighted words: the Israelites should fear (*yr*) the Lord, and they should [worship] (*bd*) him with integrity (*tāmîm*) and truth (*‘emet*).”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, one can see the urgency and importance of the message Joshua is trying to communicate. Butler also adds, “He demands the same type of response to God that God has already shown to his people, that of total loyalty and dedication.”<sup>75</sup> Joshua was ascribing to a high view of God and urging the people to worship YHWH.

In the second portion of verse 14, Joshua says, “Get rid of the gods your fathers worshiped.” Robert Hubbard explicates, “Get rid of” means to “throw away”<sup>76</sup> and “is a stock phrase meaning radically to renounce loyalty to other deities and exclusively to embrace YHWH.”<sup>77</sup> Next, Moses mentions where they specifically worshipped these gods—“beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt” (v. 14). The location of “Egypt” is new information here. Howard comments, “In v. 2 we have learned that Israel’s ancestors had worshiped other gods early on, when they were still in Mesopotamia.

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<sup>72</sup> Richard S. Hess, *Joshua*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 335. Other translations prefer to use the word “service” here instead of “worship.”

<sup>73</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 419.

<sup>74</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 419.

<sup>75</sup> Butler, *Joshua 13-24*, 321.

<sup>76</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 419.

<sup>77</sup> Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *Joshua*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 555. Jacob demanded it of his entourage upon his return to Canaan from Haran (Gen 35:2), and Samuel will do so as well, as evidence of later Israel’s repentance (1 Sam 7:3; cf. Judg 10:16; 1 Chron 33:15).

However, Joshua now stated that this also had been true in Egypt.”<sup>78</sup> This clarification shows that Israel’s ancestors were polytheists and they served multiple gods wherever they went. According to the commands of God and the exhortation of Joshua, “Israel may serve YHWH or their ancestors’ gods, but not both” (v. 14).

In verse 15, Joshua continues, “But if it doesn’t please you to worship the Lord, choose for yourselves today: which will you worship—the gods your fathers worshiped beyond the Euphrates River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living? As for me and my family, we will worship the Lord.” “If it doesn’t please you” is literally, “is evil in your eyes.”<sup>79</sup> In other words, if you find it undesirable to serve YHWH, then choose today who you will serve. Joshua presents two choices to the people in a very urgent manner. His insistence is that the choice be made “today” (this day). The two choices were the gods beyond the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites. The gods of the Amorites represent those of the nation’s surrounding Israel.<sup>80</sup> However, Woudstra contends, the choice Joshua presents “can hardly be regarded a real choice in the light of the Bible’s resolute rejection of all deities except the Lord.”<sup>81</sup> While this might not be a real choice, he understands that the choice to serve other gods or the one true God was very real and this is his main choice. The idea of “choice” is unique to this text. Language about choice is not found elsewhere in the Old Testament.<sup>82</sup> Hubbard maintains, “Normally, God was the one who did the choosing, having chosen Israel from among the nations to be his people (see, e.g., Deut. 4:37; 7:6-7; 10:15; 14:2). But now, Israel was

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<sup>78</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 419. There is no direct reference to such false worship from the narrative texts in Exodus about Israel’s time in Egypt. However, twice reference is made in the Pentateuch to the gods the Israelites worshiped there: (1) Lev 17:7 mentions goat idols that the Israelites had sacrificed to, and (2) in Deut 32:16–17 they are charged with worshipping “demons,” which were foreign gods, idols, which had not been worshiped in Israel until recent times (i.e., in Egypt, or the wilderness).

<sup>79</sup> Hubbard, *Joshua*, 555.

<sup>80</sup> Hess, *Joshua*, 335.

<sup>81</sup> Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, 175.

<sup>82</sup> Hubbard, *Joshua*, 556.

being asked to choose its loyalties, something the pagan nations did not have to do because they could embrace all the gods.”<sup>83</sup> At this important juncture, Joshua famously responds to his own question by asserting his household will serve the Lord. Using the phrase “as for me,” he draws a firm line between his household and worshipping other gods. Joshua wants Israel to know exactly where he stands. Butler declares, “Israel is simply asked to view God’s history and determine if it proves his superiority over other claims to deity. The decision is not one to be made in isolation, for Joshua leads the way, proclaiming that his family has already chosen Yahweh. When Israel chooses Yahweh, they have a leader to show them the way.”<sup>84</sup> This question of commitment is given to the first generation of Israelites to occupy the promised land.

Every decision has a direct correlation. As evidenced by Joshua, a family can never go wrong committing their ways to the sovereign ruler of all history. Joshua 24:14-15 is a pointed text underpinning the importance of pledging allegiance to the one true God. A failure to commit will lead to a failure to disciple one’s family well. Therefore, the words of Joshua also confront each family today: who will you serve?

### **Conclusion**

The Bible is brimming with evidence concerning the importance of discipleship. Parents can disciple their children by using the preceding texts and key words as a guide: followers of Jesus *teach* God’s Word, *model* Christ-like character, *steward* their time and resources, and *commit* to discipling their children. Based upon Psalm 78, parents must utilize their voice to pass on their knowledge of God to their children. Per 1 Timothy 4, their life is to be a model to others, demonstrating progress in their faith as they walk with God. Deuteronomy 6 is the marquee Scripture for family discipleship, showing the importance of maximizing every moment to point children to

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<sup>83</sup> Hubbard, *Joshua*, 556.

<sup>84</sup> Butler, *Joshua 13-24*, 323.



what God has done. Finally, family discipleship will not be accomplished unless parents are committed to doing so, as seen in Joshua 24. There is no one size fits all approach. As Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin articulate, “No matter what your household looks like, your family is the primary instrument and environment for discipleship in all the fantastic and flawed ways that it might be worked out.”<sup>85</sup> Simply put, make every effort to train your children to follow Jesus, for this is the command of God. Chandler and Griffin summarize, “Family discipleship is leading your home by doing whatever you can whenever you can to help your family become friends and followers of Jesus Christ.”<sup>86</sup> Scripture is clear. Parents are to heed the urging of the Bible to be the leading discipleship force in the lives of their children.

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<sup>85</sup> Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Time, Moments, and Milestones* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 17.

<sup>86</sup> Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 30.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Discipling children is much easier as a thought on paper than when juxtaposed with the practical realities of life. The truth today is that many teens who grow up in church and in Bible-believing homes will eventually walk away from the faith. Sarah Cowan Johnson explains this sobering reality by equating walking with Jesus to a coin toss:

Fuller Youth Institute estimates that 50 percent of high school students actively involved in their churches walk away from their faith after graduation. . . . It's not 50 percent of churched high school students or those who attend church occasionally. It's 50 percent of teens who are actively involved in their churches. We are talking about 50 percent of our most committed youth groupers choosing to do life apart from Jesus as adults.<sup>1</sup>

This alarming statistic should motivate parents to evaluate their own discipleship practices. It is no secret that discipleship is a difficult task. In today's culture, there are a number of obstacles and hindrances pertaining to discipleship. This chapter will present the theoretical and practical issues related to discipleship in the home. Contrary to the convenience of culture, parents need to have a healthy view of the church, be equipped to lead, manage their schedule, and adjust to family specific challenges that arise.

#### **Parents Need a Healthy View of the Church**

The church is God's chosen vehicle to spread his name and fame and to dispense his hope and help to a lost and dying world.<sup>2</sup> However, there is a growing disconnect between families and the church regarding discipleship. Moreover, parents have pawned

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Cowan Johnson, *Teach Your Children Well: A Step-by-Step Guide for Family Discipleship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2022), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Dever elaborates on this topic in his classic work on the church. See Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

most, if not all, spiritual responsibility to the church to disciple their children. For example, a 2021 Barna study with Awana found that “the Church alone cannot disciple a child effectively. When asked, 95 percent of ministry leaders said the primary source of discipleship should be in the home, while 51 percent of parents placed that responsibility on the church.”<sup>3</sup> Essentially, over one half of all Christian parents believe that the primary source for discipleship should take place in the church. This disconnect is aided by several factors.

First, family dynamics and relational structures play a large role.<sup>4</sup> Today, most family structures are comprised of both parents working in some capacity. Thus, less time is spent in the home and consequently less time is spent with children. Hundreds of years ago in a completely different society, this was simply not the case. If a child wanted to learn, it was the responsibility of the parent. Over time, this has shifted from parents owning the responsibility of their child’s spiritual engagement, to simply pawning it off to the church. The second factor is that families are busier than ever before. It is difficult for parents to juggle daily activities of everyone in the family, especially when they are overwhelmed by how much they already must do.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, the church as a whole is dealing with the effects of the church growth movement.<sup>6</sup> The church growth movement started in the last couple decades of the twentieth century by Donald McGavran to try and reach

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<sup>3</sup> Lauren Terrell, “How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts: The Importance of Child Discipleship,” National Christian Foundation, December 16, 2022, <https://www.ncfgiving.com/stories/how-shall-the-young-secure-their-hearts-the-importance-of-child-discipleship/>.

<sup>4</sup> See chap. 2, titled “Building Relationships that Bond” in Chip Ingram, *Effective Parenting in a Defective World: How to Raise Kids Who Stand Out from the Crowd* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2006), 21-44.

<sup>5</sup> See section in this chap., “Parents Need to Manage Their Schedule and Routines Appropriately” for further discussion.

<sup>6</sup> Mark DeVries provides a framework for models and movements specific to youth ministry. See Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2004), 21-33.

more people on the mission field by placing an emphasis on evangelism.<sup>7</sup> This movement was not inherently bad, but some of the results that have stemmed from it are still lingering. The movement was basically an initiative to run the church more like a business and to do whatever it took to get people who do not know Jesus to come to church. In *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, Mark Dever asserts that a trademark of this movement is an improper weight upon numbers, which has led to a secularization of the church.<sup>8</sup> He further argues, “The purpose of too many evangelical churches has fallen from glorifying God to growing larger, assuming that numerical growth, however achieved, must glorify God.”<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that God is not moving in large churches nor that God’s blessing is not upon them. Dever concludes, “Biblically, we must realize that the size of what our eyes see is rarely a good way to estimate the greatness of something in the eyes of God.”<sup>10</sup> A healthy view of the church will put the focus back on glorifying the Creator.

Nonetheless, a lot of good has come from this movement—awareness of the church outside of the Christian circles, salvations, community involvement, etc. However, an unintended negative effect of this movement was that it made the church the central place of ministry. The church building became the focal point for every type of ministry and devalued the decentralized parts of ministry that happen on a consistent basis. This culture bled over to a “come and see” versus a “go and tell” mantra. The church, in some

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<sup>7</sup> Elmer Towns, “The Rise and Decline of the Church Growth Movement,” *Great Commission Research Journal* 4, no. 2 (2013): 159-81. The purpose of this project is not to discuss the background of this topic in detail. However, Donald McGavran’s *The Bridges of God* explains his theory in further detail. Towns summarizes McGavran’s focus of the church growth movement in five principles: (1) numerical growth; (2) focus of receptivity in converts; (3) people movements (the homogeneous unit principle); (4) use of science as a tool to determine successful evangelistic principles; and (5) right method guarantees large response. See Donald A. McGavran, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (New York: Friendship, 1955); Towns, “The Rise and Decline of the Church Growth Movement,” 161.

<sup>8</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 31.

places, became more of a production and show rather than a place to gather and worship. The average church person became a consumer rather than a producer. In other words, the heightened production of a Sunday morning worship set cheapened other avenues of worship that take place outside of the church. A healthy view of the church understands that mankind was created to ascribe worship to God by participating in communal and shared practices to honor the Lord. Isaiah 43:7 says followers of God are made for His glory: “Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” Later in chapter 43 God says, “The people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise” (v. 21). Thus, believers worship not just in a gathering on Sunday morning, but by everything they say and do. Paul later states in Colossians 3:17, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Followers of Christ worship God not just by sitting in a church pew, but by being ambassadors for Him at work, at home, and as they go.

This movement also led to a commercialization and professionalization of the pastorate. Timothy Paul Jones explains, “From the perspective of too many parents, schoolteachers are responsible to grow their children’s minds, coaches are employed to train their bodies, and specialized ministers at church ought to develop their souls.”<sup>11</sup> For some, a pastor speaking for thirty minutes on a Sunday morning became the only source of spiritual nourishment in their life. Most parents grew up in churches that had these attributes and underlying realities. Therefore, having a disjointed and distorted view of the local church directly affects how a person disciples his or her family. The disconnect between ministry leaders and Christian parents can be improved by helping families have a theological and practical understanding of how the church is designed to function.

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<sup>11</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, “The Task Too Significant to Hire Someone Else to Do,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 23. Sarah Cowan Johnson explains this truth and provides a blueprint for what she calls “Proactive discipleship.” See her chap., “Proactive Discipleship,” in *Teach Your Children Well*, 91-101.

The disconnect is further demonstrated by a survey of nearly forty-thousand Christian families conducted by FamilyLife. Not only do parents say they believe the church is the primary source of discipleship, but their actions also show they believe it. This survey concluded, “More than half of parents said that their families never or rarely engaged in any sort of family devotional time. Of the minority that did practice some sort of family devotions, one-fourth admitted that these devotional times were sporadic.”<sup>12</sup> What a person believes will eventually be demonstrated in what a person does. Simply put, orthodoxy leads to orthopraxy. One look at what a family does will reveal what that family believes. Clearly, most families do not believe it is their role to be the disciple makers of their children. Further, FamilyLife found, “Approximately forty percent of parents never, rarely, or only occasionally discussed spiritual matters with their children.”<sup>13</sup> The only way to combat this statistic is to ensure parents have a healthy view of the church that leads to a healthy view of God’s design. A healthy view of the church and God’s design will then help foster an environment of discipleship within the home.

Dever asserts, “The church is primarily a body of people who profess and give evidence that they have been saved by God’s grace alone, for his glory alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.”<sup>14</sup> The church is God’s chosen mechanism for believers to gather to worship him, and is his medium to spread the good news of the gospel. The first followers of Jesus were trained in households taught by other believers. Acts 5:42 says, “Every day in the temple, and in various homes, they continued teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.” In the early church, homes were a place of ministry that was supported by the church. Earlier in the book of Acts, Luke states, “They

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<sup>12</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 27. Jonathan Williams practically addresses how to combat this by rooting one’s family in the gospel. See his chapter entitled, “Discovering the Biblical Foundation,” in Jonathan Williams, *Gospel Family: Cultivating Family Discipleship, Family Worship, and Family Missions* (Houston: Lucid, 2015), 5-16.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 157.

devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer" (2:42). Thus, one can infer that the church should teach the Bible, provide a place for fellowship and connection, partake in the Lord's Supper, and pray. This view of the church is best represented by examining the theme verse in the book of Acts, which says, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (1:8).

The church is to be a beacon of hope in the community in which they help point other people back to Jesus, the One who paid it all. A healthy view of the church always comes back to what Jesus has done. Regarding the discipleship of the family, this is why Jones says, "Merely getting families to engage in devotions or discipleship practices isn't even the right goal in the first place. The goal [for the church] is for parents to see themselves and their families in light of the gospel."<sup>15</sup> In other words, it is a dual symbiotic relationship between the institution of the family and the institution of the church. Jones states, "The gospel is rehearsed in families and reinforced at church so that God's truth can be revealed to the world . . . it's about coordinating families around a shared, Spirit-motivated perspective on parents and children."<sup>16</sup> Thus, the responsibility to have the correct view of the church rests on the shoulders of both the church and the family. Jones summarizes, "The church provides a context where parents are equipped to train their children in God's ways, where children learn to live their faith in a larger community, and through which believers are sent to share the gospel throughout the world."<sup>17</sup>

### **Parents Need to be Equipped to Lead**

In considering all the theoretical and practical issues related to discipleship, equipping parents is the category most affected by the local church. Simply put, it is the

<sup>15</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 97. A good resource for cultivating this view is J. D. Greear and Spence Shelton, *Gospel: Recovering the Power of Christianity* (Nashville: B & H, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 59.

<sup>17</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 114.

job of the local church to equip parents to disciple their children effectively. This is where the beautiful partnership of the church enters the scene—supporting, bolstering, and encouraging discipleship in the home. Paul said it best in his letter to the Ephesians: “And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness” (4:11-14). Put simply, the job of the church is to equip its people to do the work of the ministry. However, there is a gap between what parents want to do and are actually doing. Jones asserts, “It seems that parents may intend to develop their children spiritually, but they simply do not know how to engage personally in the discipleship of their children.”<sup>18</sup> Jones argues that a significant reason for parents not knowing how to disciple their children is a result of the church failing to do its job of equipping them. In a survey conducted by Jones, he found that only 7 percent of parents could state without hesitation that their churches helped them prepare to disciple their children.<sup>19</sup> Further, he found that “when asked if any church leader had ever contacted them to help them to engage actively in their child’s spiritual development, two thirds of parents could not recall a single instance in the past twelve months.”<sup>20</sup> Even worse, in a different study of churched parents with children under the age of thirteen, “81% [of parents] said that no church leader had ever spoken to them about how parents could be involved in their children’s development.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, the problem is quite simple—the church is not adequately equipping parents to disciple their own children.

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Recent studies show that parents rarely engage their children in any type of

<sup>18</sup> Jones, “The Task Too Significant,” 16.

<sup>19</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 107.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 108.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 108.



spiritual conversation, much less a conversation centered around discipleship. Lauren Terrel found that “by the time [children become] teens, a survey of 11,000 children conducted by the Search Institute shows, only 12 percent of kids (1 in 8) talk with their mom about their faith and only 5 percent (1 in 20) have regular faith or life conversations with their dads.”<sup>22</sup> These sobering statistics further add to the need for churches to equip parents to disciple their children.

Clearly, a difficult challenge lies ahead. Both the family and the church must support one another to adequately translate what is being taught to being practiced. To equip parents properly is to help them properly understand the gospel. Kara Powell and Chap Clark highlight the importance of comprehending the gospel message: “Faith researchers at the Fuller Youth Institute suggest that a robust understanding of the gospel is one of the key factors in developing a faith that sticks from childhood into adulthood.”<sup>23</sup> A clear understanding of the gospel not only enables parents to begin discipling their children but also empowers children to continue walking in the footsteps of Jesus long after childhood. R. Kent Hughes reminds the church of the impact parents can have through a proper understanding of the gospel:

Parenting—not politics, not the classroom, not the laboratory, not even the pulpit—is the greatest influence. To suppose otherwise is to be captive to the shriveled secular delusion. . . . We must not succumb to the deceptive mathematics of worldly thinking that considers the pouring out of one’s life on a hidden few as a scandalous waste of one’s potential.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Terrell, “How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts.”

<sup>23</sup> Kara E. Powell and Chap Clark, *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2011), 32. Paul David Tripp explains that parents must be ambassadors of the gospel message to their children to not only teach them the gospel but also show them the gospel. Paul David Tripp, *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 16.

This is the mission of the church—equipping family after family to disciple those around them. If the local church does a proper job of equipping the saints, then parents will be well on their way to influencing and discipling their children in a manner worthy of the Lord.

Jones argues that the best way to do train parents is to implement a “Family Equipping Approach,” which takes “existing activities and events and [they] are reoriented to equip parents to disciple their children.”<sup>25</sup> It is not enough to merely throw in a few activities on the calendar that are inclusive of both parents and their children. The best way to equip parents is to shape the calendar according to that very purpose. Further, he argues that four transitions should be made to move a church to a family-equipping church. The first transition is from doing to being. The church is not about programs (what it does) but rather who it is (being). A properly rooted identity in Jesus will lead parents to raise sons and daughters as their children and potentially as their future brothers and sisters in Christ.<sup>26</sup> The second transition is from expecting to equipping. Jones writes, “Instead of expecting that parents already know how to disciple their children, family-equipping ministries reshape existing activities to equip parents with the skills they need to become primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives.”<sup>27</sup> The third transition is from assuming to acknowledging. The church needs to stop making assumptions about parents and their disciple-making habits. Rather, churches need to overcommunicate the biblical role of the parent by intentionally making the most of every opportunity. Acknowledging the role of the parent in the disciple-making process cannot be overstated. The fourth transition is from segmentation to synchronization.<sup>28</sup> This transition should affect the schedule of the

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<sup>25</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 114.

<sup>26</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 116.

<sup>27</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 116. Chap Bettis has a tremendous work regarding this step. He presents a guidebook for helping equip families to become the primary disciple makers of their children. See Chap Bettis, *The Disciple-Making Parent: A Comprehensive Guidebook for Raising Your Children to Love and Follow Jesus Christ* (n.p.: Diamond Hill, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 116.

church and the schedule of the family. The church must utilize every activity “to train and equip families to practice at home what is learned in the larger community of faith.”<sup>29</sup>

The biggest mindset and practical shift occurs in this last transition. Jones concludes by saying, “The church, instead of replacing what happens at home, supplements and reinforces the faith training that occurs in Christian households.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, the activity within the church should not be exclusive of the ministry that happens within the home. God’s design is that both the family and the church benefit from one another.

In conclusion, the church must reorient its focus away from programs and onto the family unit. The hope for equipping families is reminiscent of Moses calling the Israelites to obedience in the book of Deuteronomy:

Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you don’t forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don’t slip from your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren. The day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, the Lord said to me, “Assemble the people before me, and I will let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days they live on the earth and may instruct their children.” (4:9-10)

The church must find ways to continually equip parents to disciple their children—for this is the hope for the next generation. The way forward on the path of discipleship is found in building up the body of Christ, which is accomplished by equipping households, one family at a time.

### **Parents Need to Manage Their Schedule and Routines Appropriately**

Families are busy. A recent study by VisitAnahem concluded that 60 percent of parents describe their family lives as “hectic.”<sup>31</sup> It is no secret that the intertwined lives

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<sup>29</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 116. Jason Helopoulos provides helpful distinctions in the different types of practices and how they all correlate together in the worship of God. Jason Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 116.

<sup>31</sup> Visit Anaheim, “Quality Time—a New Visit Anaheim Study,” April 26, 2021, <https://www.visitanaheim.org/articles/post/visit-anaheim-study-reveals-american-families-spend-the-most-quality-time-together-while-on-vacation/>.

of parents and their children are complex moving pieces driven by tightly packed schedules bouncing from one activity to the next. This study concluded, “American families get just 37 minutes of quality time together per day.”<sup>32</sup> The schedule of a particular family is one of the foundational pieces that sets the groundwork for effective discipleship to take place in the home. It is impossible to properly disciple a child without spending adequate time together. Thus, if parents want to effectively disciple their children, they must learn to appropriately handle routines and manage their schedule to properly facilitate intentional space for discipleship to take place.

One of the most practical yet theological books on “schedules” is *Habits of the Household* by Justin Whitmel Earley. He explains in this book, “Our routines become who we are, become the story and culture of our families.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, one look at the schedule of a family will reveal what is most important. Further, the schedule a family keeps now will eventually shape the way the family looks in the future. Jason Helopoulos puts it this way: “Everyone lives for something. Some people live to accrue a large savings account . . . some live for [their children] . . . some live for relaxation and self-pleasure . . . some live just to get through the day. . . . Everyone lives for something and this something shapes our daily activities.”<sup>34</sup> Mankind was created to live for God, but since the fall of man in Genesis 3, mankind has chosen to live independent from God and to live for his or her own selfish interests. This is why it is so vital for families to appropriately schedule time to be actively involved at church, have family meals, have intentional conversations, have family devotions, and point one another to the Lord Jesus. Otherwise, selfish interests will take over and severely limit the time in which a parent has to influence the family. Jonathan Williams writes, “Every family has a leader, someone or

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<sup>32</sup> Visit Anaheim, “Quality Time.”

<sup>33</sup> Justin Whitmel Earley, *Habits of the Household: Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 5.

<sup>34</sup> Helopoulos, *Neglected Grace*, 19.

something they follow, and any leader not following Christ is nothing short of an idol.”<sup>35</sup>  
A family’s schedule will determine whom they follow.

Moreover, discipleship is often best practiced in the micro moments as well as the macro moments. In other words, discipleship can take place within the family rhythms that are already in place. Small, everyday habits are indicators of a much larger worldview. Earley argues that habits are actually forms of worship: “Habits are kinds of liturgies. They are little routines of worship, and worship changes what we love. Habits of the household are not just actions that form our families’ routines, they are liturgies that form our families’ hearts.”<sup>36</sup> Simply put, habits are the roadmap to the heart. Earley continues, “When it comes to spiritual formation, our households are not simply products of what we teach and say. They are much more products of what we practice and do.”<sup>37</sup> Children are watching as much as they are listening. Thus, parents should show their children rhythms that are worth emulating.

Earley provides ten habits in his book in which to integrate the story of God into everyday family rhythms. For the purposes of this project, four of these habits will be briefly examined to provide some applicable solutions for this practical issue. First, one must consider what they do when they first wake up. Everyone has a routine when they wake up. What a person does when he wakes up is a small reflection of who he is. Earley suggests that the morning time is a perfect time to let the light in: “If the light of the morning is what wakes us to the day, then the light of Christ must be what wakes us to reality.”<sup>38</sup> A few minor changes to a person’s morning routine can make all the difference in family discipleship. First, before a person gets out of bed, he should say a simple prayer. This small act moves selfishness to the side and submission to God at the

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<sup>35</sup> Williams, *Gospel Family*, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 36.

very forefront of the mind. The writer of Hebrews says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness” (12:9). By praying first thing in the morning, parents acknowledge that God is ultimately in control, and they are living under His authority and grace. Second, Earley says to “make a habit of looking to the Scriptures before looking at your smartphone.”<sup>39</sup> Seemingly small habits of “worship” in the morning are a great way to begin the day: “In turning our gaze to Scripture, we turn our gaze to the face of God, and find him looking back at us.”<sup>40</sup> Lastly, “practice a short moment of gathering and sending the family.”<sup>41</sup> Before walking out the door, everyone should take time to encourage each other and pray for one another as the family is “sent out” into the world. This act can help reinforce the idea that each family member has a purpose to fulfill each and every day. “This is how [families] imitate the missional movement of the body of Christ; the Lord draws us near to send us far.”<sup>42</sup> The morning routine sets the tone for the rest of the day. So, families need to structure their mornings in a way that glorifies God from the very outset of the day.

The second habit to consider is mealtimes. Earley notes that the Bible talks about food in a spiritual sense: “In the story of God, eating is not just some daily routine of cramming food that allows us to survive, it is a ritual of communing with others that allows us to thrive.”<sup>43</sup> The study of the concept of food in the Bible shows that God provides and is generous, and we should hunger and thirst for righteousness. The problem is that fewer and fewer families are eating and conversing together. Don Everts in *The Spiritually Vibrant Home* writes, “Three-quarters of all self-identified Christians have

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<sup>39</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 36. See also Andy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017).

<sup>40</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 40.

<sup>41</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 44.

<sup>42</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 47.

<sup>43</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 53.

fewer than ten spiritual conversations a year. This includes a conversation with anyone about faith. . . . Our tables are pretty quiet.”<sup>44</sup> Everts would go on to assert, based upon his findings, that spiritually vibrant homes have what he calls “loud tables.” This essentially means that these families have regular times together in which they converse over a shared meal. However, family meals are often not practical in today’s busy culture. It is much easier to let everyone eat a microwave dinner on their own. Yet, this is valuable time that parents have to influence their children. Thus, to maximize their schedule, families need to make an effort to have regularly scheduled meals together at the same place at the same time. Everts concludes, “At the end of the day, our tables are our most important piece of furniture.”<sup>45</sup>

The third piece of the schedule puzzle is family devotions. Earley says, “When it comes to family devotions, it is not about perfect practice, it is about doing something rather than nothing.”<sup>46</sup> He continually stresses the importance of being okay with the “mess” that could be created during this time. Family devotion time will not be perfect. There will be interruptions and distractions. Scripturally speaking, Jesus demonstrated that dealing with the mess was worth it. Matthew 19 and Luke 18 both depict accounts where parents were bringing their kids to Jesus. The Bible went to great lengths to make the point that God loves messy things and broken people. Earley says, “Understanding grace in the story of God means that we understand that our mess doesn’t stand in the way of connecting with God, it is the means by which we connect with God.”<sup>47</sup> Suffice it to say, family devotions are honoring to the Lord despite the mess. Earley offers two

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<sup>44</sup> Don Everts, *The Spiritually Vibrant Home: The Power of Messy Prayers, Loud Tables, and Open Doors* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 110.

<sup>45</sup> Everts, *The Spiritually Vibrant Home*, 116. A seminal work on this idea was written by Rosaria Butterfield. She shares her compelling story of being on mission to her neighbors and how it radically changed her life. See Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 127.

<sup>47</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 120.

applications to help during the devotional time. First, teach simple truths. Family devotions should not be weighed down with fancy words or self-consciousness. The most teachable and memorable truths of Scripture are the most simple. Second, pray short prayers. Short prayers help children learn to talk to God. Earley explains, “I somehow forget over and over that Jesus tells us to come to him like children do. Full of simple desires and short words. No pretenses.”<sup>48</sup> The goal of family devotions is to point the family back to Jesus. Earley concludes by saying, “You are not trying to create a perfect moment, or even teach a well-planned lesson. You are just trying to create moments where you and your children, wrestle with Scripture and pray out loud together.”<sup>49</sup>

The final category to be discussed is conversation. This is often one of the areas of struggle between parents and their children. Healthy families find moments in time to engage one another in deep conversation. Earley argues, “Conversation is the rhythm that turns family into friends and friends into family.”<sup>50</sup> Part of managing the routine of the family is to look for opportune times to facilitate conversation. More specifically, families should look for one-on-one conversation moments. On a practical note, the author suggests using the car, early mornings, late evenings, household chores, and special outings to facilitate one-on-one conversation. Earley writes, “But that’s the practical lens. When we look at it through the liturgical lens, this is not just a moment, it’s the beginning of a rhythm that shapes us.”<sup>51</sup> Conversation forms the character of both the speaker and the listener.

Managing a schedule is all about intentionality. The fight for a schedule and the fight for the family is worth it. Put most poignantly, Earley states, “To steward the habits

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<sup>48</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 124.

<sup>49</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 128.

<sup>50</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 189. Also see Jimmy Scroggins, Kristin Scroggins, and Leslee Bennett, *Full Circle Parenting: A Guide for Crucial Conversations* (Nashville: B & H, 2021).

<sup>51</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 181.



of your family is to steward the hearts of your family.”<sup>52</sup> Families would be wise to heed the words of the apostle Paul: “Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—making the most of the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15).

### **Parents Need to Adapt to the Challenges of Living in a Postmodern Age**

Postmodernism presents many different types of challenges. Johnson argues that prior to the twenty-first century, there were only two types of cultures—Christian and non-Christian.<sup>53</sup> After the turn of the century, postmodernism was introduced. She states that some distinctives of postmodernism include:

(1) a particular adeptness in deconstructing the Christian worldview; (2) an interest in the values of the kingdom (e.g., justice, the dignity of all human beings, etc.) without the authority of the King; (3) a sense that the moral high ground has shifted from the religious sector to the secular sector (for example, the Christian sexual ethic used to be seen as peculiar, perhaps, but a generally moral way to live); and (4) an almost pharisaical judgmentalism toward the way of Jesus when it cuts against the grain of mainstream culture.<sup>54</sup>

Postmodernism has changed the world and will continue to do so in years to come. David Wells writes, “Postmodern culture inclines people to see the world as if it had been stripped of its structures of meaning, of its morality, of any viable worldview that is universal, and it collapses all of reality into the self.”<sup>55</sup> On the one hand, this is very dangerous thinking, but on the other hand it clearly explains why the postmodern movement is indifferent to and even hostile in some areas to the things of Jesus—it all centers around the self. Wells goes on to explain that proponents of postmodernism argue that the problem with this world is that people are “insufficiently educated or insufficiently

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<sup>52</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 8. See also Prov 3:5-6; 4:23; Matt 6:21.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, *Teach Your Children Well*, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, *Teach Your Children Well*, 13.

<sup>55</sup> David Wells, “The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World,” in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 42.

governed.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the solution to the problems of this world is not a Savior, but rather more education and more government. This type of logic can only head down the path of destruction. Postmodernism leads to the “autonomous self” as Wells calls it: “This is the self that is not subject to outside authority and into which all reality has been contracted. The result is a radicalized individualism with a deeply privatized outlook and a mood that is insistently therapeutic.”<sup>57</sup> Translation—it is only going to get worse. This is why Jimmy Scroggins and Kristen Scroggins encourage Christian parents “to have rock-ribbed conviction, nerves of steel, tender hearts, and open arms—all accompanied by a fantastic poker face. . . . [They] have to find a way to have crucial conversations from a biblical perspective and distinctly Christian worldview.”<sup>58</sup> Postmodernism presents a difficult task for parents to disciple their children.

The first issue to address within postmodernism is the culture at large. Culture has a way of infiltrating people to the point of taking over their very lives. Chris and Melissa Swain focus on this issue by reverting to a huge player in world history—Alexander the Great. They state,

He didn’t come to destroy the societal norms and traditions; he came to celebrate them. But there was a caveat: he introduced exciting new elements to the mix. Mr. The Great was ok with whatever it is you held as important, he just wanted to share some intriguing new stuff that your people were sure to love. And by doing so, he introduced four specific means by which he ultimately integrated you into his empire: [entertainment, information, sports, and education].<sup>59</sup>

First, entertainment was a huge part of Alexander’s plan just as entertainment is a large industry that shapes the minds of culture today. The entertainment industry provides so many subtle messages intended to infiltrate the hearts and minds of not only students but also adults. Entertainment can be comprised of movies, television, music, and celebrity

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<sup>56</sup> Wells, “The Supremacy of Christ,” 56.

<sup>57</sup> Wells, “The Supremacy of Christ,” 30.

<sup>58</sup> Scroggins, Scroggins, and Bennett, *Full Circle Parenting*, 3-4.

<sup>59</sup> Chris Swain and Melissa Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts: Practical Help for Discipling Your Kids* (Epsom, England: Good Book, 2022), 17.

“news.” They continue, “While often indirect, entertainment is most commonly a commentary on the culture.”<sup>60</sup> In other words, one look at the entertainment world and one will have a pretty good idea of where the culture stands or at least where the culture is going.

Second, information was also a contributing factor in Alexander’s plan. In today’s culture, information is more easily accessible than it has ever been. A couple of touches on your iPhone and you can gather any information you want. However, things worked much slower in Alexander’s day. Swain and Swain comment, “Couriers had to deliver messages from town to town. Often, critical information would take days or weeks to reach various cities. It isn’t hard to imagine the power someone could wield if they had control over this information network.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, Swain and Swain observe that Alexander quite literally controlled what information was shared down to the specific courier: “Not only could he determine when people heard what was going on, he could also help shape the narrative.”<sup>62</sup> Today’s world is not much different. People can listen to the type of news they want, listen to the commentators they want, filter information that leans their way politically, and so forth. Information helps shape the narrative of the surrounding culture.

Third, sports had a major impact for Alexander. This area gave people something to strive for within the arena. Sports became a spectacle, time consuming, and a major topic of conversation. Swain and Swain note that Jews spent their “free time filled with elements that engrained in them what it meant to be Jewish. When Alexander the Great brought sports into the culture, the focus shifted from things of eternal consequence to the story of the fastest runner in all the known world.”<sup>63</sup> Alexander never

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<sup>60</sup> Swain and Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts*, 18.

<sup>61</sup> Swain and Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts*, 18.

<sup>62</sup> Swain and Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts*, 18.

<sup>63</sup> Swain and Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts*, 18.

forced anyone to overtly do anything. He leaned upon “giving people options,” in which they would eventually give in to what he wanted them to be involved in. Culture today also has signs that sports are on the throne. Any person living in the south knows that Saturdays are reserved for college football games and tailgates. Sundays are for Fantasy Football and the NFL. Weekdays are consumed with practices, games, and travel from sporting events. Sports dominates the landscape of American culture.

The final piece of Alexander’s plan was education. Swain and Swain state, “When children learned in Jerusalem, they learned of their heritage. They were taught the Torah as well as important moves of God through the ages.”<sup>64</sup> They argue that Alexander did not tell Jewish people to not teach this, but to encourage them to teach other beliefs about other gods as well. This is why institutionalized education always has a narrative behind it. Swain and Swain conclude, “Alexander knew that if he could reach children, generations to come would move farther away from their existing culture to embrace his new one.”<sup>65</sup> These easy assimilation tactics were so effective that they made Alexander the Great one of the world’s most successful rulers.

Alexander’s tactic was not necessarily to overtake the culture by force, but rather to provide other options with an ulterior motive in which the people would eventually give way and be won over by the culture. Swain and Swain argue that we too have been taken captive by a modern version of Hellenism introduced by Alexander the Great. In other words, someone is disciplining your children. The question is, who?

The second issue that is closely attached to the culture of post-modernism is the beast of technology. Author Andy Crouch asserts, “Technology is the number one

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<sup>64</sup> Swain and Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts*, 19. Instructions for teaching children the truth about God can be seen throughout Scripture.

<sup>65</sup> Swain and Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts*, 19. Hughes and Hughes encourage parents to develop a plan for what they want to pass on to their children in order to combat the grip of culture on the family. For further discussion, see their chapter entitled, “Discipline of Establishing Heritage,” in Hughes and Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family*, 21-28.

reason parents believe raising kids today is more complicated than in the past.”<sup>66</sup> The world is constantly changing. Technology is moving at such a rapid pace that parents are struggling to keep up. Crouch continues, “Monitoring technology usage tops the list of what [parents] perceive contributes to this difficulty. Beyond that, parents seem to most often identify with issues out of their control and that are global in scope: a more dangerous world or a lack of a common morality.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, parents are essentially stating that their jobs are more difficult now as a result of living in a post-modern age. Part of that post-modern age comes the demands of technology—phones, tablets, TVs, etc. While the focus of this project is not to examine the effects and dangers of technology, it would be amiss to ignore the technological reality in which parents live. Technology is a major inhibitor to health, family relationships, and especially family discipleship. Simply put, families must steward technology well in order to have the best chance to point their children to Jesus. To summarize his work on technology and the family, Crouch offers several practical tech wise commitments for families to steward technology in today’s society, six of which are uber important point out in support of the claims made in this chapter.<sup>68</sup> First, “We want to create more than we consume. So, we fill the center of our home with things that reward skill and active engagement.”<sup>69</sup> Second, “We are designed for a rhythm of work and rest. So [we regularly] turn off our devices and worship, feast, play and rest together.”<sup>70</sup> Third, “We wake up before our devices do, and they ‘go to bed’

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<sup>66</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 26.

<sup>67</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 26.

<sup>68</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 41-42. These apply specifically for the context of technology as it relates to post-modernism. Crouch’s other four commitments can also be found on pp. 41-42. First, “We develop wisdom and courage together as a family” (41). Second, “Car time is conversation time” (42). Third, “We learn to sing together, rather than letting recorded and amplified music take over our lives and worship” (42). Lastly, “We show up in person for the big events of life. We learn how to be human by being fully present at our moments of greatest vulnerability. We hope to die in one another’s arms” (42).

<sup>69</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 41.

<sup>70</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 41. This is also the model given by God in the creation account found in Gen 1-2.

before we do.”<sup>71</sup> Fourth, “We aim for ‘no screens before double digits’ at school and at home.”<sup>72</sup> Fifth, “We use screens for a purpose, and we use them together, rather than using them aimlessly and alone.”<sup>73</sup> Sixth, “Spouses have one another’s passwords, and parents have total access to children’s devices.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, the goal is not to take away technology, but rather to steward it appropriately. Stewarding technology is much more than social media or screentime. It is “about how to live as full, flourishing human beings . . . and [putting] technology in its proper place can help.”<sup>75</sup>

There are many challenges associated with living in today’s society. While it is a difficult road, rest assured this is not cause for concern, discouragement, or hopelessness. The Bible is filled with promises of how God will take this broken and sinful world and make things right. Why? Because we are not made for this world. We are made for another world. Williams puts it this way: “Because Adam ushered in death, Jesus will bring forth life. Because Adam broke intimacy with God, Jesus will reconcile sinners to God. Because Adam ate from the tree, Jesus will hang from the tree. This is the gospel of reconciliation.”<sup>76</sup> Believers can have hope for the future, despite today’s arduous circumstances.

### **Conclusion**

Many theoretical and practical issues pose a threat to the implementation of family discipleship within the home. The path of family discipleship is not easy, but it is a biblical command that parents have been given. Churches and parents must come together

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<sup>71</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 41.

<sup>72</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 42.

<sup>73</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 42.

<sup>74</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 42.

<sup>75</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 40.

<sup>76</sup> Williams, *Gospel Family*, 49. See also 2 Cor 5:16-21.

to raise up the next generation that they might know the Lord and His glorious deeds. This will not be an easy undertaking, but discipling children is a noble task worthy of significant time and attention. Contrary to the convenience of culture, parents need to have a healthy view of the church, be equipped to lead, manage their schedule, and adjust to family-specific challenges that arise within today's society.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum for Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Georgia, that equips parents to disciple their children within the home. Previous chapters gave the biblical and theological foundations for family discipleship and examined the present-day challenges and practical issues in trying to effectively disciple those inside the home. The aim of this chapter is to outline the methodology for implementing a generational discipleship course taught at Cross Pointe Church.

The first goal of this project was to assess the current understanding and application of family discipleship of NextGen parents at Cross Pointe Church. A pre-survey was given to analyze the current state of discipleship taking place within the home. The second goal was to develop a curriculum to provide the theological and biblical framework for family discipleship. I developed a curriculum taught over six weeks that was vetted by the staff of Cross Pointe Church. The third goal was to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum taught to NextGen parents by teaching it over a six-week period. A post-survey was given to analyze the effectiveness of the discipleship curriculum.

This project consisted of both the preparation and the implementation of the project. The preparation stage included the development of the curriculum, feedback on the curriculum, revision of the curriculum, planning of the class, formulation of the class, and the marketing to the church. The implementation involved teaching the curriculum and the execution of the pre- and post-surveys for analysis. The results and analysis of the project are found in chapter 5.



## Preparation

I began preparing the foundations of the project in the spring of 2023. In March and April, I conducted research on the topic of family discipleship.<sup>1</sup> The beginnings of this project were formulated through reading a foundational set of books on family discipleship, including *Family Discipleship* by Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Habits of the Household* by Jason Whitmel Earley, *Write It on Their Hearts* by Chris Swain and Melissa Swain, *A Neglected Grace* by Jason Helopoulos, *Family Ministry Field Guide* by Timothy Paul Jones, and finally, *The Spiritually Vibrant Home*, by Don Everts.<sup>2</sup> These books along with several others provided the baseline knowledge for creating the curriculum. Other research was conducted online that assessed various articles and videos addressing the issues Christian parents face in discipling their children today. I also researched several churches across the country with already established family discipleship plans to learn about the development of their curriculum. This process was helpful to better understand how they synthesized a large swath of material and made it into smaller, digestible portions for parents to comprehend. Finally, I searched the Scriptures to get a more educated grasp on what the Bible says regarding family discipleship. Much time was spent in prayer to be able to produce a streamlined family discipleship curriculum that was scripturally sound, and text driven.

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<sup>1</sup> I was aided in my initial research by the NextGen staff at Cross Pointe. I wanted to garner their support in the general direction of my project before diving deeper into the material. The reason was that I wanted to create a course we could all own as a church.

<sup>2</sup> Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Time, Moments, and Milestones* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020); Justin Whitmel Earley, *Habits of the Household: Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021); Chris Swain and Melissa Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts: Practical Help for Discipling Your Kids* (Epsom, England: Good Book, 2022); Jason Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013); Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011); Don Everts, *The Spiritually Vibrant Home: The Power of Messy Prayers, Loud Tables, and Open Doors* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020). These books were selected because they contained the best material regarding family discipleship as a whole. Other resources were used, but these proved the most helpful.

In May and June, I developed the curriculum. Through the study of Scripture and reading widely on the topic, several key biblical texts emerged as bedrock passages for the family discipleship curriculum.<sup>3</sup> These texts strongly admonish and exhort parents to be the primary disciple makers of their children. As a result, four Scripture passages anchored the discipleship curriculum: Psalm 78:1-8, 1 Timothy 4:11-15, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and Joshua 24:14-15. Once I landed on these texts, I spent time deciding how to order the texts. I felt that Psalm 78 was best to begin with due to its strong language harking back to the failures of the Israelites. Then, I wanted 1 Timothy 4 to come second for its emphasis upon being a “model” and backing up what one talks about. Further, I desired for Deuteronomy 6 to be placed third because it is the strongest biblical text supporting discipleship of the family. Finally, Joshua 24 went last for it possesses the strongest call for families to commit to discipleship. Therefore, these Scripture passages, along with an introductory lesson and concluding lesson were placed into a logical framework to best package the material in a learnable curriculum. The framework was fleshed out in six main sessions: (1) Introduction; (2) Teach; (3) Model; (4) Steward; (5) Commit; (6) Conclusion.<sup>4</sup> Once the framework was complete, I prepared each lesson. During this stage of preparation, I thought through other supporting Scripture passages, inserted illustrations for clarity and levity, and developed main points and sub-points in an effort to make the material as simple to learn and implement as possible.

After completing the course curriculum, I gave it to the expert panel of ministry leaders on staff at Cross Pointe for evaluation. This panel was chosen to evaluate the curriculum while knowing the context and culture of Cross Pointe Church. They used the Curriculum Evaluation Tool<sup>5</sup> to offer feedback on the developed curriculum. Then, I took

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<sup>3</sup> The books all centered on one or more of the passages selected from Scripture.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 3. The compiled material was developed specifically for families with kids up to age 18. However, the material favored families with younger children in an effort to help give families a rudimentary understanding of family discipleship.

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

the feedback given and revised the curriculum accordingly. The evaluation and revision process took place in July and early August. The curriculum was evaluated in four areas—biblical accuracy, scope, pedagogy, and practicality—in which each evaluator responded with one of four options: (1) insufficient; (2) requires attention; (3) sufficient; (4) exemplary. There was also an open section at the bottom entitled, “Other comments.” I provided each panel member with a paper form and compiled their responses in a separate document. The panel members provided helpful and constructive feedback. Their evaluations asserted that each of the lessons met or exceeded the goal of 3.5/4.0 sufficiency according to the rubric.<sup>6</sup>

Next, I focused in on the population of our church and determined who might be best suited to attend the class. The targeted participants for this project were families of preschool, children, and student ministries at Cross Pointe Church.<sup>7</sup> However, due to the context of the church, other members who are not parents were allowed to participate as well.<sup>8</sup> However, only parents who completed both the pre- and post-assessment form were included in the analysis of the results via *t*-test to ensure accuracy of the results. I received approval from the Ethics Committee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to use human subjects in research to the project.

As I approached the start date for the course, I worked in conjunction with the communications department to develop a discipleship booklet to hand out during the sessions. This booklet summarized the full curriculum into palatable portions to make note taking easier and material retention higher. Visual aids such as fill-in-the-blanks,

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<sup>6</sup> Two pastors gave me helpful criticism. One pastor gave me a “3” on “practicality” because he felt it was not clear at the end which takeaway was most important. Another pastor gave me a “3” on “pedagogy” because he felt the “Turn and Talk” portions were good but “could be further developed in days to come to make more complete for the learner.”

<sup>7</sup> Most of the class was comprised of parents from the preschool and children’s ministry.

<sup>8</sup> The staff felt it was best to include non-parents who wanted to attend to help push a discipleship emphasis in the fall. Thus, the class was comprised of predominately parents, but also included a few participants who were not parents.

objects, and different colors were also included to emphasize main points. The booklet was designed as a turn-key guide for parents to disciple their children, regardless of their age.<sup>9</sup> Thus, a main goal of creating this booklet was to provide participants with something tangible that would outlast the six-week class. This booklet was developed in late August and finalized in early September.

At the beginning of September, the course was marketed to the church through several mediums. First, I personally invited a select group of parents by sending a letter to them informing them about the class. This group consisted of key leaders from the preschool ministry, kids' ministry, middle school ministry, and high school ministry. Second, the department leaders of the NextGen ministries invited their parents via email and text message, and the course information was also included on the weekly churchwide email. Third, the lead pastor, James Merritt, made an "all-call" announcement the Sunday prior to the course starting encouraging parents to attend. Fourth, I included promotional handouts with information about the class at the Next Steps table in the lobby.

### **Implementation**

Implementation of the project began on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, and continued for six consecutive weeks, concluding Wednesday, October 25. The course was taught in conjunction with the regular mid-week programming of children and students from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The curriculum was taught on Wednesday nights to maximize the number of people who would attend. Currently, the church does not offer any programming for parents on Wednesday nights, only children and students. Therefore, the strategic decision was made to create an avenue to equip and resource parents during this time.

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<sup>9</sup> While the curriculum contains lots of familial language, the booklet (and full course material) is also adaptable enough for a believer to disciple another believer.

We met in the “Corner Theater” each week to make it easily accessible for parents to attend. Participants could either pre-register online or sign up for the class on their way in. Upon arrival, each person was checked in and given a name tag and discipleship booklet. This was the same check-in process for each of the six sessions. After checking in, parents were seated at round tables. This decision was strategic for several reasons. First, I felt that sitting at round tables would encourage conversations before and after the meeting times. Second, I felt that sitting at tables made note taking easier and also encouraged participation. Third, and most importantly, I felt that sitting at tables was the best method to accomplish the embedded “Turn and Talks” within the curriculum. Each lesson had specified stopping points where I would stop teaching and allow individuals to interact with the material by discussing the topics with peers at their table. This helped people immediately take what was being taught from stage and practically think through how they could implement the topics into their family discipleship context. As mentioned, booklets were provided to encourage note taking. Further, ProPresenter slides shown on the projector screens were crafted to support the material in the discipleship booklets. The slides made the environment more aesthetically pleasing and provided a space to highlight information that was crucial for a proper understanding of family discipleship.

The course was launched with a brief welcome and an appeal for participants to complete the Family Discipleship Assessment (FDA). I provided instructions on why the assessment was given to them, how to fill out the assessment, and provided a general overview of some of the questions. I stressed the importance that completing this survey would be helpful, but it was not mandatory. The FDA established a baseline for the current level of family discipleship habits taking place. The FDA, written by Timothy Paul Jones, was copied from *Family Ministry Field Guide* and was used by permission.<sup>10</sup> Although

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<sup>10</sup> Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 215-18.

this survey was developed for parents, the survey was also given to all adults who attended the course, including grandparents, singles, and married. Each of the pre-survey results were identified with a number in the top left corner and carefully logged in an Excel spreadsheet.

Most every week flowed in a similar fashion. I arrived at least ninety minutes early to complete set up, which included turning on the mechanical elements of the meeting room, inserting notes slides, displaying booklets, and setting up check-in for data collection. Walk-in music was played to create a welcoming environment for participants. I stood at the entrance of the room to greet each person who attended. This allowed me to meet several new families in the church and have side conversations surrounding discipleship. I began the class with a general welcome, followed by a prayer, and included any announcements given to me by the church staff. Also, each week began by briefly recapping the previous weeks and providing a general overview of what we would be learning that particular session. Each week ended by sending parents back into their homes to practice what they learned.

During the last week of the course, after the teaching concluded, each participant was given a post-course FDA. I also provided instructions on why the assessment was given to them, how to fill out the assessment, and provided a general overview of some of the questions. I stressed the importance that completing this survey would be helpful, but it was not mandatory. Each of the post-survey results were identified with a number in the top left corner and carefully logged in an Excel Spreadsheet under the “post-test tab.” Although this survey was developed for parents, the survey was also given to all adults who attended the course, including grandparents, singles, and married. However, only those who indicated they were a parent of children in the NextGen ministry at Cross Pointe Church were included in the *t*-test results. Also, only those who successfully completed both the pre- and post-survey were included in the *t*-test results to ensure the most accurate results. A *t*-test for dependent samples was conducted to determine if there

was a statistically significant positive increase in the level of discipleship taking place in the home. The *t*-test used the pre- and post-course survey responses to analyze the results. The outcomes were recorded and logged in a separate tab within the Excel Worksheet.

### **Content Overview**

Each lesson had a specific question to answer along with one main word that best summarized the lesson at hand.

Lesson 1 asked, “Where do I start?”<sup>11</sup> The one-word summary was simply, “Introduction.” Starting in the wrong direction will lead a person to the wrong destination. The aim in this lesson was to provide a basis for discipleship by examining Luke 14. The foundation of this lesson was derived from Walter Henrichsen’s *Disciples Are Made, Not Born*.<sup>12</sup> Henrichsen portrays Luke 14 as a discipleship discourse from Jesus himself. Using this as a roadmap, I used Luke 14 to provide eight principles of a disciple. Further, I examined the four major areas that shape people’s worldview today: entertainment, information, sports, and education.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the class had a moment of interaction where participants discussed factors that prohibit discipleship from taking place. The takeaway from this lesson was, “You can’t disciple others unless you are first a disciple.” I personally challenged the attendees to place an extreme importance on walking with Christ themselves before pouring it into their family. This opening session was the foundational set of principles linking each session together. Without having a personal walk with Jesus Christ, it is impossible to disciple one’s children.

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<sup>11</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>12</sup> Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Swain and Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts*. This book was helpful in articulating the challenges parents face today.

Lesson 2 asked, “Why is discipleship important?”<sup>14</sup> The one-word theme for this lesson was “Teach.” The aim in this lesson was to stress the importance of teaching children the truths of Scripture. The bedrock text is found in Psalm 78:1-8. This particular Scripture passage places an importance on passing the knowledge of the faith down from one generation to the next. I challenged the participants to know their Bible and to continually keep the Bible in front of their family. A supporting passage was used in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, showing the example of faith Timothy had in his mother and grandmother. I used this scriptural example to show that discipleship never stops, even when one generation ends. The gospel is the chain linking generation after generation. I concluded this session by asking each person to list the top three things their family consistently talks about. The takeaway from this lesson was “You can’t teach what you don’t know.” To effectively disciple one family, one must know the teachings of Scripture. The underpinning of “teaching the next generation” is the scarlet thread running through each book of the Bible. Scripture memory was also encouraged as a simple family practice everyone can do.

Lesson 3 asked, “How do I practice discipleship?”<sup>15</sup> The one-word theme “Model.” This lesson was built around the words of Paul in 1 Timothy 4 and 1 Corinthians 11 in which he implores his audience to be a model and example to others. Thus, the backing of this lesson reverts to the first session of having a personal walk with the Lord. It also further builds upon the second lesson in that if all one does is “teach,” but fails to live out what they teach (model) then their efforts are in vain. The aim in this lesson was to demonstrate that you ultimately model to others what is most important to you. Therefore, I pushed participants to write a list of what they currently model, both good and bad, and then made a top ten list of things they want to model for their children. The

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<sup>14</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>15</sup> See appendix 3.



goal of being a model is to eventually be more like Jesus and to make progress in one's spiritual journey. The takeaway from this lesson was "Children are imitators. So, give them something great to imitate."

Lesson 4 asked, "When do I practice discipleship?"<sup>16</sup> The one-word theme for this lesson was "Steward." I defined stewardship as "Using every opportunity to make much of Jesus." Therefore, the aim of this lesson was to show that discipleship can happen anywhere—in the home, in the car, at the restaurant, everywhere! Thus, to disciple well is to steward one's time, opportunities, and resources. The idea of "when" in today's culture usually means, "how little can I do?" The biblical call to steward pushes back this notion and invites all Christ followers to make the best use of their time. Discipleship must take place in the normal, everyday rhythms of life. The emphasis here was to demonstrate that everyone should be a good steward because believers are repeatedly commanded to do so in this passage. The takeaway from this lesson was imploring people to maximize every moment and to use every opportunity to make much of Jesus.

Lesson 5 asked, "What now?"<sup>17</sup> The one-word theme was "Commit." The aim of this lesson was to engage people in the room to "commit" to a life of discipleship. A life of discipleship is not one you can do half-hearted. Being the primary disciple maker in the home means committing to this process. The theological backing for this is found in Joshua 24:14-15 when Joshua exhorts the people to serve the one true God. Every great leader is able to define the challenges in front of them and present the choices to the people they lead. Joshua does this very thing in chapter 24. In this session, the aim was to get people thinking long term about discipleship. The takeaway of this lesson was to simply go "all-in" for discipleship.

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<sup>16</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>17</sup> See appendix 3.

Lesson 6 asked, “Who should I disciple?”<sup>18</sup> The one-word summary was “Practical.” The aim of this lesson was to be as practical as possible and enable people to develop plans for how to carry out their discipleship. The majority of the time spent in this session was devoted to writing out plans for how participants would carry out what they learned. I first asked participants to develop a soft plan for how they would disciple their family and then gave them a weekly schedule and encouraged them to write down times and places for when they thought discipleship would best emerge. The takeaway of this lesson was “Discipleship will cost you something, but it will be worth it.”

I ended the course by encouraging participants to visit the resource table. This table included several resources to aid them in their discipleship journey, including books, podcasts, articles, and websites.

### **Conclusion**

This project was designed to both evaluate and improve the level of discipleship taking place within the homes of participants. The theological and biblical background for family discipleship undergirded the entire project. Parents were given ample resources, tools, and ideas to disciple their children effectively. The lessons intended to encourage families to stay in the battle and to constantly remember to rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

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<sup>18</sup> See appendix 3.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

When implementing any new idea, project, or emphasis, it is imperative to properly reflect on the implementation steps both individually and collectively. This chapter will evaluate the project to determine its effectiveness. This review will not only help Cross Pointe Church as it further engages in family discipleship efforts but will also aid others as they implement similar projects in their local context. First, an examination of the research purpose and stated goals will be reviewed. Second, both the strengths and weaknesses of the project will be examined to help with future iterations. Finally, this chapter will conclude with reflections of the project, including what I would do differently, what I learned about God, and what I learned about myself through the time, effort, and energy dedicated to this project.

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

The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum for Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Georgia, that equips parents to disciple their children within the home. This purpose was developed by assessing the current culture and context of Cross Pointe Church. This project aimed to allow parents to see their role as the primary disciple maker in their child's life and to further equip them to raise their children in a way that is honoring to the Lord. This purpose was birthed at Cross Pointe out of a need to further equip parents to effectively disciple their children. One desire of this project was to help shape parents' theology and worldview. A large portion of parents at Cross Pointe Church viewed the church as the primary disciple-maker in their child's life. Through participation in the discipleship course, several family units noted that their perception of discipleship

had changed, indicating their desire for a better familial approach. Further, the main demographic of parents that the church is currently reaching has little to no developed view of the Scriptures. Thus, another aim of this project was to resource, equip, and train parents to be theologically sound and practically adept. The chapter 2 of this project examined four main biblical texts to establish a baseline for family discipleship: Psalm 78:1-8, 1 Timothy 4:11-15, Deuteronomy, 6:4-9, Joshua 24:14-15. This project repeatedly grounded its claims in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture and parents were versed in this as well. Moreover, most parents engaged at Cross Pointe tend to prioritize their child's morality over their child's spirituality. So, another intention of this project was to push families to place a greater emphasis on spiritual growth rather than academic, athletic, or extracurricular growth. Based on the pre- and post-surveys, families grew in their biblical worldview and elevated the level of attention given to their child's spiritual health and growth.

A considerable amount of time was also given to acknowledge the difficulty of discipling children in the context of modern culture. Of all the topics this project discussed, this particular topic, primarily in chapter 3, seemed to resonate with parents the most. During our meeting times together in class we discussed how to have a healthy view of the church and how the church can better resource parents to be equipped to lead their family well. The most practical moments were devoted to families managing their schedules effectively in contrast to the busyness and pace of life, and also briefly examining the challenge each family unit faces simply by living in a postmodern world. These two topics seemed to resonate and connect with parents because, to an extent, they all have felt the same pressure of time and culture constantly pressing down upon them. Thus, the heartbeat of this project was to be theologically sound and practical at the same time. Theology is best utilized when it is regularly practiced in everyday rhythms and routines.

## Evaluation of the Project's Goals

This project contained three main goals to adequately measure its effectiveness. Each of the goals will be examined in this section.

### Goal 1

The first goal was to assess the current understanding and application of family discipleship of NextGen parents at Cross Pointe Church. To determine the current understanding and application of discipleship taking place in the home, families were given the Family Discipleship Assessment.<sup>1</sup> This goal was to be considered successfully met when 75 percent of the parents attending the curriculum sessions completed the Family Discipleship Assessment. In the first class session, 49 parents were in attendance, though only 36 parents completed the Family Discipleship Assessment. Thus, 73.4 percent of the parents completed the survey, just shy of the stated goal. Therefore, this goal was not considered successfully met.

Several factors are acknowledged for why this goal was unsuccessful. First, I went a few minutes over on my allotted teaching time during the first night of the course, causing many parents to have to rush out to grab their children from their designated NextGen areas of the church. This caused them to rush to go pick up their child instead of filling out the survey on site as requested. A few minutes does not sound like much, but to a parent of a young child who is trying to make it home for their bedtime routine, those extra minutes can be significant. Second, non-parents were allowed to attend the course to see what it was about and grow in their own discipling endeavors, even though the class was primarily geared toward parents. I believe this extra padding of people caused some parents to assume that plenty of surveys had already been turned in, and consequently they felt they did not need to respond. In hindsight, I should have made a concerted effort for parents to fill out the survey. Third, in a similar vein, I think several parents were simply

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

apathetic. The survey was clearly communicated as optional to fill out and they did not want to take an extra step unless someone clearly pushed them to do so. Fourth, a few new parents came because they were invited by their peers. This was the first time they had stepped foot on our church campus. Most of these people did not fill out the survey, and my hypothesis is that they were not comfortable giving their information to a church and people group they did not know. Lastly, I believe this goal would have succeeded if I had an online option to coincide with the paper copy. This would have also allowed me to send follow up emails and text messages to ask parents to fill out the survey if they forgot to do so on the first night. For these reasons, the goal failed.

## **Goal 2**

The second goal was to develop a curriculum to provide the theological and biblical framework for family discipleship. The aim of developing this curriculum was to teach parents the importance of family discipleship and equip them to disciple their children in their home. The curriculum was shaped to best fit within the organized structure of the church, being taught on Wednesday nights over six consecutive weeks. The curriculum took a couple of months to develop from start to finish. Research was incorporated from the books I read as well as textual evidence from Scriptures. Upon completion of the curriculum, the content was evaluated by the pastoral staff team at Cross Pointe Church, consisting of Senior Pastor James Merritt, Executive Pastor Mike Daniels, Administrative Pastor Bruce Hardy, Communications Pastor Austin Drummond, High School Pastor Ryan Garvin, Family Pastor Greg Westmoreland, and Worship Pastor David Walker. Each person used the Family Discipleship Curriculum Evaluation rubric to evaluate the curriculum.<sup>2</sup> This rubric primarily examined the context based upon theological accuracy, biblical support, scope, pedagogy, and practicality. After garnering several notes of feedback, revisions were made to the curriculum, and it was completed.

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

This goal was to be considered successfully met once the staff evaluated the curriculum and the average staff rating given was at least 3.5/4.0. After receiving the staff feedback, answers were recorded, and the average rating given was 3.96/4.0.<sup>3</sup> Thus, this goal was considered successfully met.

### **Goal 3**

The third goal was to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum taught to NextGen parents by teaching it over a six-week period. This was accomplished through the six-week family discipleship course on Wednesday nights from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. These meetings consisted of lectures, table discussions, and personal reflection times. The instrument used in the measurement of this goal was a *t*-test, comparing the pre- and the post-survey results. The pre- and the post-survey contained the same questions written according to the six-point Likert scale, with answer choices ranging in value from 1 to 6. This goal was to be considered successfully met when a statistically significant positive increase was noted regarding the level of family discipleship taking place within their home as demonstrated by the *t*-test.

The usage of the Family Discipleship Assessment indicated there was a positive significant difference. The mean total score of the pre-surveys was 71.909, while the mean total score of the post-survey was 77.545.<sup>4</sup> The teaching of the Family Discipleship course to parents at Cross Pointe Church made a statistically significant difference, resulting in the increase of their doctrinal knowledge ( $t_{(21)} = 3.298, p < .003$ ).<sup>5</sup> Therefore, this goal was successfully met in developing a curriculum to help equip parents at Cross Pointe Church to disciple their children.

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 6.

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

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 4.

## **Strengths of the Project**

There were several strengths associated with the development and the implementation of this project at Cross Pointe Church. There can be no doubt that our church, our families, and our parents are further equipped in discipleship and are in a better place spiritually as a result of their engagement in this project.

The first strength of the project was the development of the discipleship arm of Cross Pointe. The Family Discipleship curriculum developed in conjunction with this project has become the foundation of the discipleship component of our mission. As previously mentioned, Cross Pointe carries out its mission by worshipping, discipling, serving, and sending. Our lead pastor, James Merritt, has always said that he founded this church with families and the next generation in mind. This project strengthened that mission by further equipping and resourcing parents to disciple their children in the years to come. Previously, discipleship had been confined to joining a group that is orchestrated by the church meeting on the church property or in a home. However, this project was able to expand the scope of discipleship by articulating and outlining what it means to disciple children within the home.

A second strength of this project was the increase in the level of discipleship taking place within the home. Numerous parents shared with me their stories of success (or failure) at how they are slowly implementing discipleship practices in their home. These stories have a wide range in meaning. One story shared came from a parent of a high school student who was convicted about the time she had left with her son. She was burdened to make the time count by reading books together and soaking up the remaining time they have together. Another story came from a mother who felt the need to start reading Scripture with her three-year-old. Other conversations included parents sharing the desire to maximize car rides, initiate spiritual conversations, and make memories together. Discipleship is not a sprint; it is a marathon. This project encouraged parents to implement discipleship practices into their family life.



A third strength of this project was the increase in awareness of the need for discipleship. More than anything, the Family Discipleship course demonstrated the need for a slight change in mindset. Parents were able to understand the biblical truth that they are the primary disciple-maker in their child's life. This understanding pushed against the narrative that discipleship is primarily the church's responsibility. The course demonstrated that the immense responsibility of family discipleship cannot be pawned off to a tutor, a grandparent, or the local church. This office of discipleship has always been and always will be held by parents.

A fourth strength was derived from a strategic move during the six-week course. In part of the planning of these six sessions, ample time was set aside to establish what I called, "Turn and Talk" sessions. In these moments, specific and pointed questions were asked of parents to have them reflect on what is going on in their life in this season. I asked direct questions like, "What does your family talk about most?" "What opportunities for discipleship do you have that are unique to your family?" "What do you think God is trying to teach you right now?" In garnering feedback from the course, parents loved this component because they got a chance to discuss what was happening in their lives and to help shoulder the burdens other parents face. This portion of the course became a tactical point where thoughts could be articulated, and material could be better applied. Many parents were able to share similar frustrations happening in their lives and then brainstorm with one another to create avenues of discipleship in their specific context.

A fifth strength was the course's ability to further connect the church. The facilitation of this course brought together almost 50 parents on a weekly basis from different "sections" of the church, including preschool, kids, and student ministries. Outside of the main worship service, there are not many other avenues in which these parents can connect. During the sessions, each parent wore a name tag and sat at a table to encourage connection and further engagement. This was a huge win for the culture of the church.

A sixth strength of this project was the formation of the discipleship booklet.<sup>6</sup> This booklet took the printed material and brought it to life. The booklet allowed people to better remember what was taught by making it more visually appealing. Further, the booklet serves as a guide to discipling one's child, and in most cases is easily adaptable to disciple another believer. Thus, the project that was designed for parents now has the capacity to spill over into the lives of believers throughout the church.

A seventh strength of this project was the church's ability to bridge the gap between NextGen parents. I do not want parents to feel as if they are out on an island all alone when it comes to discipling their children. The staff of Cross Pointe Church believes that our church must channel Ephesians 4:12 every day to best equip parents to disciple their children within the rhythms of their everyday lives. This project stood in the gap on behalf of parents to push back the weight and temptations of the surrounding culture. This project provided parents with biblically sound, theologically strong, and practically healthy ammunition to place into their discipleship tool belt.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

While this project was successful in many ways, it also has its share of weaknesses. The first weakness was the lack of prayer during the session. While I talked about prayer consistently in the developed material, I failed to allocate significant portions of time to pray as a group. Looking back, this was a mistake and a missed opportunity to model this for parents. I had every intention of making this a priority, but I caught myself wanting to squeeze every ounce out of the proverbial discipleship lemon that I failed to uphold that desire on a weekly basis. I was personally convicted after the course was completed and felt I should have allotted more time falling at the feet of Jesus to ask for his help.

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<sup>6</sup> A huge thank you to Hannah Benson for her tireless work in making the material visually appealing.

As stated in the assessment of goal 1, the second weakness was the lack of engagement from parents regarding the family discipleship survey. I hoped to get a larger percentage of parents to complete the survey to collect more data, but this did not materialize.

A third weakness was a lack of depth regarding family worship. During the course, I talked a lot about spending time with children, teaching them the Bible, and living on mission for Jesus, but upon reflection, a more enhanced study surrounding family worship and family devotions would have been helpful for parents. In other words, a developed guide of ideas for facilitating family worship/devotions would have been another great addition in parents' discipleship arsenal. Further, I could have included more devotion-specific resources for parents at the resource table.

A fourth weakness was the lack of a follow-up plan. One of the key truths in each discipleship book I read focused on the fact that one class cannot completely teach someone how to disciple their family. Discipleship is a process that takes time, effort, training, and lots of practice. So, this project could have been strengthened with a detailed follow-up plan to have the staff of Cross Pointe Church check in on parents after the course to encourage them and remind them of the items taught in the six-week course. In hindsight, a comprehensive follow up plan could have not only extended the course's lifespan but also magnified its impact.

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

There are several things I would alter to improve the significance of this project. First, I would specifically ask parents individually to complete the survey. I think this would have gotten better results instead of just casting the net wide for everyone in the room. For clarity, I still would have cast the net wide to include non-parents, but I should have also sent several follow up texts, phone calls, and emails asking people to complete the survey and send it back to be electronically.

Also, in reference to the survey, a second change would be to develop an electronic version of the Family Discipleship Assessment to send out to parents in addition to the paper copies. This would have made it easier to compile the results and analyze the data. Further, I could have met the first stated goal if this electronic option was available during the first session of the course.

As stated in assessing the weaknesses of the project, a third change would be to design a comprehensive follow up plan. This would be helpful to both the church and to the family as it would expand the longevity of the course. Moreover, to properly implement the material presented in the curriculum, family discipleship must be part of the DNA of the church. This logic and process must be pushed from the pulpit on down. Therefore, continual follow-up and check-in metrics are needed to further ingrain family discipleship into the culture of a specific local church.

A fourth alteration would be to make the sessions available online. It was challenging to get parents to attend for six straight weeks due to conflicts in their schedules, work, and especially sickness. Thus, having an option to catch up on missed material from the previous week would allow continuity within the course structure and allow parents to feel less behind.

A fifth change would be to implement one major object lesson per week. It would have been a great opportunity to provide an object to take home and place it somewhere to remind them of the material taught. Object lessons naturally help remind people what they have learned when they can see the object in their everyday course of life. Anytime I teach, I try to craft my material to help the main points “stick” with the listener. Adding one main object lesson per week of the class would have increased material retention and extended the course material.

Lastly, I would have included specific parents in good standing with the church in the review of the discipleship material. All the staff personnel who reviewed the material

had older or grown children and having a parental, lay persons eyes on the material beforehand would have bolstered the curriculum even more.

### **Opportunities Stemming from the Project**

In working with any major project, it is important to be cognizant of other opportunities that might become available as a result of working on the project. Upon deep reflection, several opportunities came to mind. These opportunities were beyond the scope of this project but could be addressed in the future to bolster family discipleship endeavors at Cross Pointe Church.

While this project was designed for parents of students from birth to high school, the main demographic this project applies to is parents with younger children. In essence, if a parent can grasp the concepts within the material at an earlier age, the easier it will be to implement into their family rhythms and structures. With that in mind, there is an opening to further use this material to engage with older parents, particularly those in high school. During this stage of family discipleship, many other challenges would need to be addressed, including phone usage, social media, dating, career, sending children out of the home, etc. The purpose of this project was not to cover this specific age range in detail, but there is an opportunity to press into these parents moving forward due to the difficulties of parenting and discipling students in the high school demographic.

Further, another opportunity would be to package this material into a weekend intensive format. This would extend the life of the project to outlast the moment of the initial course. This would allow the material to be taught in a condensed format over a weekend rather than over a six-week time period. Also, it would allow me to take small groups, couples, and new families through this material in the years to come.

Moreover, this material is suited to be inserted into the new members class, called Starting Pointe. The Starting Pointe class dedicates a whole session to discuss the “discipleship” pillar of the church and thoroughly explain what we want our church

members to do as a result of what we believe. This is a great opportunity to integrate this family discipleship material into this major pillar of the church.

Lastly, I have a vision to take the curriculum and make a detailed plan specifically tailored for fathers. I have a heart to see fathers lead their family, disciple their children, and make a visible impact on the life of our church and beyond. I have a dream to begin this endeavor by creating a list of the top forty dads under age forty called, the “Top 40 Under 40.” Obviously, I would not stop with just these men, but I feel compelled to take advantage of this opportunity to engage dads in our church. Fatherhood is huge and every family needs a dad who is equipped and resourced to disciple his family.

### **Theological Reflections**

Through the research, study, and application of this project, I had the opportunity to learn and grow in my theology. This project allowed me to be more immersive in God’s Word and to work diligently to search the Scriptures for what God has to say regarding the discipleship of the family. As a result of developing and implementing this project, several theological reflections rise to the surface.

First, I was reminded of the biblical importance of the family. In many ways, the family is God’s mechanism in which to showcase his grace, love, and affection to a lost and broken world. Moreover, the family is constantly under attack by today’s culture. The importance of the family is demonstrated in both the Old and New Testament. The Bible provides household rules, generational reminders, and firm exhortations for how each family member should conduct themselves (Deut 6:4-9; Eph 5:22-6:4; Ps 78:1-8). As I continue to grow as a pastor and shepherd, I need to remind myself of the biblical importance of the family.

Second, one of the main ways people experience God and enter a relationship with him is through the family. This principle was derived primarily from a deep study in Psalm 78:1-8. Prior to my work on this project, I was unfamiliar with this rich theological text. In reading the introductory verses, the reader becomes strongly aware of the necessity

to pass down the truths of Scripture. Failure to do so would be to live in direct opposition to the Word of God. On the contrary, God commissions believers to pass the truths of Scripture down from generation to generation so that people will continue to hear the good news of what God has done.

Third, the responsibility to disciple children is primarily on the shoulders of parents. Parents are biblically commanded to raise their children in a way that is honoring to the Lord, and one in which will give them the best chance to enter into a relationship with Christ. From the beginning of time, God has ordained parents to carry out this mission of pointing others back to Him. There are few things more honoring and glorifying to the Lord than when a parent consistently leads their child to the Lord.

Fourth, this project revealed the danger of ascribing to a postmodern way of thinking. The surrounding culture is toxic and desires to disrupt the family and tear it apart. While I remain optimistic about the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am not hopeful about the direction of today's culture. By interacting with material on the challenges parents face today, I am now more convinced than ever that churches need to partner with parents to resource, equip, and encourage them in the endeavor of raising their children. The darker the surrounding culture becomes, the brighter the lights of Christian homes can shine.

Fifth, I was reminded of the need for spiritually vibrant families in the communities surrounding Cross Pointe Church. Each family is to be light in their neighborhoods and ambassadors for the Lord. Followers of Jesus have a command to reach the lost and disciple them into the faith. I am deeply encouraged because I believe God will continue to use families to shine the light of the gospel in this dark world.

### **Personal Reflections**

This project stretched me theologically, spiritually, and emotionally. After spending some time in solitude, I noted several personal reflections.

First, I learned that my calendar is often a scan showing the spiritual condition of my heart. The passage in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 rocked my world by showing me that I am to be a steward for the Lord Jesus no matter where I go. During the months I poured over this project, it became abundantly clear that I need to slow down and do an audit of my time. We are all given the same amount of time per day, and I realized I need to steward my time in a way that honors the Lord Jesus.

Second, I learned that to be a successful student pastor, my job is not to just look out for my students, but also my students' parents. Parents are the key to a successful student ministry and a successful church. Thus, I have already begun implementing strategies to connect more with parents with the hope to continue equipping parents to be the primary disciple makers of their children.

The third personal reflection centers around my future kids. At the time of this writing, the Lord Jesus has not chosen to bless us with children. My wife and I are asking the Lord daily to make a way for us to have children so we can start a family. Through the intensive work on this project, I have been encouraged to have a plan to disciple our children and to give them the best chance to encounter the Lord Jesus. I do not want to be like the ancestors Asaph refers to in Psalm 78 who did not teach their children what God had done. If there is one thing I want to be remembered for in the eyes of our future kids, it is that I did all I could to point them to Jesus, the hope of the world.

Fourth, this project has made me a better pastor. While I hopefully have decades of ministry ahead of me, the labor dedicated in constructing this project aided me in my pastoral duties during this season of my life. I feel better trained to engage parents and push them to be better models for their children. I feel emboldened to exhort parents to talk with their children about what God has done in their lives. I feel prepared to encourage parents to steward their time for the glory of God. This project has made me a better staff member at Cross Pointe Church. I am excited to continue to pastor these people and be energized by the working of the Holy Spirit in our midst.



Fifth, this project has made me a better husband. Through the examination of Scripture and the survey of many books, I have felt a profound responsibility to continue to invest in my marriage. The healthier my marriage, the better my wife and I can practice family discipleship one day. The healthier my marriage, the more I can spiritually pour into other relationships, including students, peers, and parents.

Sixth, now more than ever I recognize and trust in the sovereignty of God. Sitting in class as a junior in high school, I used to dream of what God would do in my life and where he would take me on both an experiential and educational level. In my dreams, I envisioned what ministry would entail, the people I would encounter, and the places I would go. However, I never imagined what it would be like to get a doctoral degree. This is best described as the providence and sovereignty of God on display. Obtaining this degree cannot be described any other way. I am so grateful and thankful to have had this amazing opportunity provided to me by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I am incredibly indebted to Cross Pointe Church for encouraging me to pursue my doctorate for the glory of God.

Lastly, and maybe most notably, the work on this project has made me eternally thankful. I am forever grateful to my parents, Steve and Leisa Ledford, for demonstrating how to model a life of discipleship. Day in and day out, my parents constantly led my brothers and I back to the Lord. Everything we did as a family was filtered through the lens of Scripture. I am a living example of how God can work through godly parents to save that which was lost. It is my hope that I can one day continue this legacy of family discipleship.

### **Conclusion**

With the conclusion of this project, I have a sense of encouragement and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. I pray for the members of Cross Pointe Church both now and in the future, that parents will obey the words of Scripture and disciple their

children accordingly. I pray that the staff of Cross Pointe Church continues to place an emphasis on the family by equipping parents to disciple their children.

The Family Discipleship Curriculum was designed to aid the precious parents of Cross Pointe Church to better disciple their children. I hope that the theological principles taught in this project continue to ruminate in the lives of parents and encourage them in this holy task of raising kids to follow Christ. I trust in the sovereignty of God, that he will continue to work in the lives of parents.

As I continue in ministry in the years to come, I pray that the lessons learned throughout the course of this project are never forgotten. It is my aim to continue to equip parents by reminding myself of the centrality and lordship of Christ. By His grace alone, I pray many children come to Christ as a result of the influence of godly, faithful parents. May the Holy Spirit continue to work in the lives of Cross Pointe parents in the years to come.

APPENDIX 1  
FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY

The following appendix is the Family Discipleship Assessment (FDA) written by Timothy Paul Jones of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.<sup>1</sup> The survey consists of sixteen questions to be answered by parents to assess the discipling practices of the families at Cross Pointe Church. The first set of questions deals with perceptions and beliefs of parents. The second set deals with the practicality and implementation of family discipleship.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 215-18. Used by permission.

## Family Discipleship Assessment

### Agreement to Participate

This survey is given in attempt to conduct research to assess the level in which discipleship practices are taking place within your family structure. This research is conducted by Micah Ledford for the purposes of his DMIN project under the direction of the Professional Doctoral Studies office at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This research is meant to be introspective in which you will self-assess discipleship practices within your home. Please note that any information that you provide will be held strictly confidential and that at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation in this survey is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By completing the survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research. It would be helpful to the pastoral staff if you add your name below, *but it is optional.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gender:                      Male                      Female

### Please circle all that apply:

Parent (kids < 18)                      Parent (kids > 18)                      Grandparent  
 Single                      Married

**Directions:** Answer the following questions by placing a check mark in the box that most closely represents your current practices or beliefs.

The scale is as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat,  
 AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

#	Question	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.						
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.						
3	The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.						

#	Question	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.						
5	I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.						
6	Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.						
7	Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.						
8	My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.						

**Directions:** Please mark the answer that best describes your family context. The following questions will ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

0 = never

1 = once

2 = a couple of times

3-4 = three or four times

5-6 = five or six times

7+ = seven or more times

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

0                      1                      2                      3-4                      5-6                      7+

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

0                      1                      2                      3-4                      5-6                      7+

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

0                      1                      2                      3-4                      5-6                      7+

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?

0                      1                      2                      3-4                      5-6                      7+

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

0                      1                      2                      3-4                      5-6                      7+

14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?

0                      1                      2                      3-4                      5-6                      7+

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?

0                      1                      2                      3-4                      5-6                      7+

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?

0                      1                      2                      3-4                      5-6                      7+

## APPENDIX 2

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following is a rubric for the family discipleship curriculum developed for Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Georgia. This curriculum was reviewed by the pastoral ministry staff at Cross Pointe.

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

<b>Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently addresses a principle derived from the text and is clearly presented.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical understanding and practice of family discipleship.					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each lesson was clear, containing a main idea pertaining to family discipleship.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum clearly details how Scripture views parents as the primary disciple maker in the home.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better practice family discipleship.					

Other Comments:



## APPENDIX 3

### SIX-WEEK FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM

The following appendix is the Family Discipleship Curriculum developed for Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Georgia. This curriculum was taught over a six-week period beginning September 20, 2023, and ending October 25, 2023. The content was examined and supported by the pastoral ministry staff at Cross Pointe.

## Week 1: A HEALTHY VIEW OF DISCIPLESHIP

Question: What is discipleship? Where do I start?

Introductory Survey:

Please take your time and fill this out. Do not rush. I am not trying to give you something else to do, but rather I hope it will be a helpful exercise for you to complete to assess the current state of discipleship taking place in your life. **This will not be shared with anyone.** Optional. Leave them on your table and I will collect them at the end.

Let me give you a visual of where we are going. Think of a **sandwich**. Any kind of sandwich—turkey, ham, roast beef, etc. **In order to have a sandwich, you have to have bread on both ends, with the meat and sustenance in the middle.** This is the approach that we are going to take over the next 6 weeks. **Week 1, we are going to take the 30,000-foot view of discipleship** as a whole in order to drill down on generational discipleship specifically.

Then, we will spend 4 weeks looking at 4 main components of family discipleship with supporting Scripture passages and their 4 implications for us regarding family discipleship. Finally, **the last week will be very practical.** In other words, it will seek to address how we can apply all that we have walked through over these 6 weeks.

**TURN AND TALK INSTRUCTIONS:** Throughout our time together, we are going to have several moments for discussion. These are called Turn and Talk's. These aren't meant to be weird, awkward, or forced. They are meant to **facilitate discussion** and to make you think... They won't be long, so be ready to jump in!

Let's practice for a few minutes... turn to your table and introduce yourself... name, how long you've been at CP, and what you want to learn from this course.

So, we are now entering the discipleship sandwich.

The starting point for discipleship is crucial. ***Starting in the wrong direction will lead you to the wrong destination.*** Every year my family goes to the beach. We beach it up, play golf, and eat tons of food. It has been a family staple for 26 years. 2 years ago, we were on the way back home early on Saturday morning. There is a fork in the highway VERY EARLY IN THE TRIP in which you can **take I-20 or stay on I-26**, which is the faster way. We were driving along minding our own business when I get a call from my mom who is a few miles ahead of me. She asked me where I was. I told her "Somewhere on I-26." I then panicked, because I looked around and didn't recognize where I was... Little did I know, I was 80 miles past the fork where I was supposed to get on I-26.

**Starting in the wrong direction will lead you to the wrong destination.**

Start with the facts and with discipleship...

"At this moment in the United States, the odds of our **children** walking with Jesus are equivalent to that of a coin toss. The Fuller Youth Institute estimates that 50% of high school students actively involved in their churches walk away from their faith after

graduation... it is not 50% of churched high school students or those who attend church occasionally. It's 50% of teens who are actively involved in their churches. We are talking about 50% of our most committed youth groupers choosing to do life apart from Jesus as adults.”<sup>1</sup>

We want to push back this trend. **We want to develop disciples of Jesus.** In order to do that, we need to learn a little bit about discipleship.

TURN AND TALK: What do you think has contributed to this trend? Think both large scale and small scale... social and family hindrances...

*What is discipleship?*

“Discipleship is the process of devoting oneself to a teacher to learn from and become more like them. For the Christian, this refers to the process of learning the teachings of Jesus and following after his example in obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Discipleship not only involves the process of becoming a disciple but of making other disciples through teaching and evangelism.**”<sup>2</sup>

The word “discipleship” never occurs in Scripture. **In our context, it can mean your discipleship, meaning that you follow Jesus, or it can mean you are helping others (your kids) become disciples of Christ by helping them grow in their walk with God.**

In the Bible...

**Although the word “discipleship” never occurs in Scripture, the word “disciple” does. The word disciple is used in the New Testament 269 times whereas the term Christian is only used 3 times.**

In order to understand generational discipleship, you must understand discipleship itself. **“You can’t disciple others unless you are first a disciple.”**

Walter Henrichsen wrote a book entitled; *Disciples are Made Not Born: Helping others Grow to Maturity in Christ*. He does a masterful job of allowing us to see **the cost of discipleship and the marks of a disciple as seen in Scripture.** He draws **8 principles** from Luke 14 based on Jesus’ own roadmap for discipleship. Let’s walk through the text together.

**Principle 1: The disciple is one who in every area of His life is shaped by Christ and not his circumstances.**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Cowan Johnson, *Teach Your Children Well: A Step-by-Step Guide for Family Discipleship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2022), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Byrley, “Discipleship,” in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014), Logos.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2018), 33.

*Luke 14:1 “One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.”*

Jesus was watched no matter where he went. They wanted to see how He acted, how He reacted, and to see if He was genuine or just a smoke screen for something else.

**You are being watched by someone as well.** They are tracking your move watching to see how you handle life. Your kids are watching you. Your family is watching you. Your friends are watching you. Your co-workers are watching you. The list goes on!

Jesus lived by principle and never by circumstance.<sup>4</sup> He was guided by his convictions... beliefs... mission... and not what was around him. What about you?

Jesus wasn't an emotional roller coaster. He wasn't super high on the highs or super low on the lows. He kept everything in perspective... Why? He was in control! He was on mission by the Father... WE TOO are on mission. We too can be rooted in who Jesus is and not by our outer circumstances.

Think of your day to day... *Would those watching you say you are shaped by Jesus?*

**Principle 2: The disciple is one who is in constant touch with people in need.**<sup>5</sup>

*Luke 14:2 And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.*

Dropsy = swollen with fluid.

You would be hard pressed to **flip through the gospels** and go a couple of chapters without seeing **Jesus helping someone in need.** He was drawn to it. One of the interesting portions of Scripture is when the Bible mentions that Jesus was “moved with compassion” (Matt. 9:36).

Your kids need you. Your neighbors need you. Your co-workers need you. Your friends need you.

We have an obligation to the least of these... **Jesus wasn't constantly in touch with the rich, the affluent, or the people with power. He was constantly in touch with people in need.**

James 1:27: *“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”*

Disciples have an obligation to the least of these... to the orphans... to the widows...

*Matthew 25:40: And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’*

<sup>4</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 34.

If someone were to sit down and watch a recording of your life, would they find you helping those in need around you?

**Principle 3: The disciple knows the commandments of God are designed to help us, not hinder us.<sup>6</sup>**

*Luke 14:8-10 “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, 9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.*

Jesus is in the house of a prominent Pharisee (religious leader). He tells them this parable to teach them about **pride and humility**.

In an **honor/shame society, table settings were crucial**. People were seating by the pecking order of social status. **Jesus teaches them to sit at the lowest seat and not the highest seat. Why? Because either way they will be asked to move. One will be a move of exaltation (low to high) and the other will be a move of shame (high to low).**

By using this parable, **Jesus is reminding them of the shame that comes with self-exaltation, self-promotion, and pride**. Their self-serving actions were a result of direct disobedience to God. **Note that following God’s commands will eventually have a noticeable effect on the way that we think, act, and live**. A disciple leaves their pride at the altar.

*John 14:15: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”*

God’s commandments are meant to be **guardrails in our lives, not roadblocks**.

TURN AND TALK: Of the first 3 principles, share which one is the most difficult for you? (To live out).

**Principle 4: The disciple understands that a person cannot get without giving or live without dying.<sup>7</sup>**

*Luke 14:11 “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

First, there is **nothing wrong with ambition or desire** because those are given by God himself. Wrong ambitions and desires are what get us in trouble.

<sup>6</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 36.

**What Jesus is saying here is that we have to do it His way.**<sup>8</sup> This is like the Burger King commercial... 1970's... "Have it your way." Life is not about your way. Life is about submitting to God's way. Being a disciple is not about God letting you do what you want. Being a disciple is about God doing what He wants THROUGH you.

**In order to be first, you have to be last. In order to get, you must give. In order to live, you must die.**

Jim Elliot was one of the most well-known missionaries to ever live. **He was an American missionary and 1 of 5 people killed during an operation** to evangelize an unreached people group in Ecuador.

**Jim Elliot:** *"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."* Anything we gain on this earth is temporary! No Brinks truck will enter heaven... Jim Elliot had it figured out... he put all his hope in eternal things! He knew that anything done in accordance with the will of God was of eternal significance.

What have you done that is worth eternal significance?

**God has designed this world for His glory and our good.** Don't miss this...

**The world says take, God says give. The world says be first, God says be last. The world says live it up, God says die to self. Sometimes, we often want to do the right things, but do not want to pay the price to get them. This is the beauty of the gospel message: in order to truly live, we must die to self.**

**Principle 5: The disciple is one who is in tune with the voice of the spirit of God.**<sup>9</sup>

*Luke 14:15-24 "When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"<sup>16</sup> But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.<sup>17</sup> And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'<sup>18</sup> But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.'<sup>19</sup> And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.'<sup>20</sup> And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'<sup>21</sup> So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'<sup>22</sup> And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'<sup>23</sup> And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.<sup>24</sup> For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"*

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<sup>8</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 36.

<sup>9</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 39.

This parable is a representation of the kingdom of God. People make excuses all the time for not being a disciple, or a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God is made up of all types of people... the lame, the blind, the crippled and the poor. Jesus invites all people to the banquet, but not everyone except his invitation.

This is one of the more **famous parables that Jesus teaches**. This parable is obviously talking about **the invitation of God to all people that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13)**. Everyone is invited, yet **many people reject** the will and the way of the Lord.

The sad part of the parable is the **excuses that were given. Field; cattle; married, etc. What excuses do we give today?**

*Time; sports; work; etc.*

*John 10:27: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”*

It is so easy for us to become wrapped up **in our own selfish desires, wants, and dreams**. *A disciple is one who accepts the invitation of Christ and listens to His voice.*

Most of us in the room are probably not good listeners... a disciple is one who **listens** to the voice of the Holy Spirit!

**Principle 6: The disciple has a spirit of desperation burning deep in the soul.**<sup>10</sup>

*Luke 14:25 Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them...*

*Luke 15:1: Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.*

Later in Luke 15:1, the Bible mentions that the **tax collectors and sinners drew near to Him**. They are outcasts of society. No one likes them. They are despised. Looked down upon.... Yet, Jesus spent time with them. He had an innate desire to surround himself with people who needed a message of good news.

It has been said that “Christianity is a religion of rescue.”<sup>11</sup> We are gloriously rescued from our sin by a Savior who has never given up on us! **It is designed for those who crave something more than themselves.**

This idea of craving “something more” is also seen in Luke 4:37....

*Luke 4:37: And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.*

**You don’t just leave your way of life to follow a man you barely know unless there is a desperation to know there is something more out there.**

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<sup>10</sup> Henriksen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 40.

<sup>11</sup> Henriksen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 40.

**Tom Brady, after winning his 3rd Super Bowl with the New England Patriots, was interviewed and said something very striking.** He said, “I just feel like there is something more out there.” This is a man who is the **best in his sport**; he has all the **money** you could ever ask for; he was **married** to a super model wife at the time; he had a couple **children** and yet he still is not satisfied.

Notice that he said, “what makes me happy is my family and my friends.” If all that “makes you happy” is family and friends, you have missed the point. *You will never long to disciple others unless you first long for Jesus.*

Question: *But what if I don't feel it?*

**A disciple is able to recognize they don't have the spirit of desperation** and is willing to ask God for it...

A true disciple has a **desire to follow God burning within them.**

**Principle 7: The disciple knows that you finish what you start.**<sup>12</sup>

*Luke 14:26-33: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup> For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ <sup>31</sup> Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*

Jesus is imploring the people to **count the cost of discipleship.** They need to know what they are about to commit to. Do not start something unless you are willing to finish it!

Jesus explains that you must first get your **priorities straight.** Father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, or your own life.... He encourages the people that they must **forsake all other loyalties** for the cause of Christ—including your family. Nothing should stand between you and Jesus. You must **count the cost of discipleship.**

Most of you have probably been 30 minutes up to road to one of the biggest lakes in Georgia, called **Lake Lanier.** If you drive up near the northern shore, you will find a **monstrosity of a house** that was never completed. For whatever reason, they started, but never finished. Similar to this, Jesus uses a story of a building not finished and a war general not accounting for his troops to illustrate his point.

Jesus is urging the people to understand that following Him is not for the faint of heart. It is not all sunshine and happiness. Disciples finish what they start. The end goal of

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<sup>12</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 42.



discipleship is not for you to live a good life. The end goal of discipleship is not for you to be happy. The end goal for discipleship is not so that you get into heaven by the skin of your teeth. The end goal of discipleship is for you to come to the end of your life and say:

*2 Corinthians 4:7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

**You must bear your cross and become a student, a disciple, a learner of the Lord Jesus.** A disciples is one who finishes what He starts. Are you in?

**Principle 8: The disciple knows in order to move forward; you must burn the ships.**

*Luke 14:34-35: "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? <sup>35</sup> It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

I have long misunderstood this passage to mean that Christians are the flavor of the world. While this is true, it is not the point of the passage.

This illustration of salt is actually a **picture of a believer who refuses to make other disciples**. In other words, it is the **complacent** Christian. This picture is of a believer who goes back on his commitment and is good for nothing. **"You can't save him; he is already saved. You can't use him; he is unavailable. He is like savorless salt. THROW IT OUT."**<sup>13</sup>

This person is the **example of what not to be**. It is the picture of a person who refused to pay the price. There is no turning back. **"Resolve in your heart today that whatever the price for being His follower, you are willing to pay it."**<sup>14</sup>

To illustrate the point, I want to take you back to 1519... The Spanish conquest of the Aztecs in Mexico... Hernan Cortes rallied his troops and set sail for Mexico. When **Cortes landed at Vera Cruz** in 1519 to begin his dramatic conquest of Mexico with a **pocket-sized force of 700 men**, he purposefully **set fire to his fleet of 11 ships**. His men on the shore watched **their only means of retreat sinking** to the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico. With no means of retreat, **they could only move forward** into the Mexican interior to meet whatever might come their way.

Once you become a follower of Jesus, you can only move forward. You can't retreat. You can't turn back.

*2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*

<sup>13</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 44.

<sup>14</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 45.

You are of worth. Of value. You are a new creation. You have a purpose. That purpose is... Great Commission. Matthew 28:19-20... “Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you**. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Do you want to know what a disciple does? He makes other disciples by teaching them to observe what Jesus has commanded...**

*When was the last time you taught someone to observe the teachings of Jesus?*

The disciple knows that in order to move forward, you have to **burn the ships!**

TURN AND TALK: How do you practically burn the ships? (Delete all social media, remove all devices, removing yourself from the softball team) Think about where you “retreat to” when things get tough...)

*Are you leading your children to become more like Jesus? This is our guiding thought...*

These 8 principles were obviously taken from Scripture... some of you might be asking... so what about today? Discipling is more challenging and more nuanced today... Let's look...

In an increasingly postmodern and secular society, discipleship is pivotal. **Society is continuing to move further and further away from Jesus**, not closer to Him. The further society moves from Jesus, the more that your light should shine! **The darker the night the brighter the light.**

**“Whoever wants the Next Generation most will get them.”**

**\*Not just kids & students... Anyone below you in spiritual maturity\***

Here is the reality... **if you are not actively being disciplined, then you are being disciplined by something... especially students/kids...**

Alexander the Great:

He used a **brilliant method to conquer the culture**. He didn't come to destroy the societal norms, and traditions; **he came to celebrate them**. But there was a caveat: he introduced exciting new elements to the mix. He was “okay” with whatever you held as important, he just wanted to share some intriguing new stuff that your people were sure to love. And by doing so, he introduced **4 specific means by which he ultimately integrated you into his empire.**<sup>15</sup> **All of these are still true today...**

<sup>15</sup> Chris Swain and Melissa Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts: Practical Help for Discipling Your Kids* (Epsom, England: Good Book, 2022), 16.

Who is discipling your children?<sup>16</sup>

1. Entertainment.
  - a. Shared experiences that fostered a new mindset.
    - i. Anything you do with people.
  - b. Entertainment is a commentary on culture.**
  - c. Alexander had plays, dramas, shows, and other unique forms of entertainment to draw people in... distraction...
  - d. Who is crafting the commentary? Agenda...
    - i. Movies
    - ii. TV Shows
    - iii. Netflix
2. Information.
  - a. Alexander had messengers deliver the “news” that were called “couriers.” He quite literally controlled what people said and the messages they delivered.
  - b. No news outlets, notifications on iPhone, no email...
  - c. He had people who would quite literally go all over the place spreading whatever news he wanted... at the speed at which he wanted...
  - d. He shaped the narrative.**
    - i. YouTube
    - ii. Social Media—Twitter (X), Facebook, Insta, Tik Tok, Snapchat, Be Real, etc.
    - iii. News outlets and news articles
3. Sports.
  - a. He brought sports in the picture, **the focus shifted from things of eternal consequence to the story about the fastest runner in all the known world.**
  - b. Thoughts lead to distractions.
    - i. Watching them (arenas were built)
    - ii. Playing (people dedicated time and energy)
    - iii. Subtle Messages (they became vehicles for certain agendas)
      1. Athletes are advertising things all the time...
      2. Sports and entertainment go hand in hand... all about \$.
4. Education.
  - a. He told people to continue to worship their gods.
  - b. He encouraged them to think about other gods that were worshipped as well.**
    - i. School system—what are they teaching...
    - ii. Material
    - iii. Friend Groups

*Alexander knew that if he could reach children, generations to come would move farther away from their existing culture to embrace his new one.*

<sup>16</sup> Swain and Swain, *Write It on Their Hearts*, 16-28.

This is why discipleship into godly things is so crucial. You can't swing and miss on this... Why? If you are not discipling your family, kids, neighbors, roommates, friends, etc.... someone is... "whoever wants the next generation most will get them."

- **What are problems or issues related to discipling your children?**

1. Church Growth Movement.

- **Central place of ministry.**

- Not inherently bad...
- 80's & 90's.
- Come and see vs. go and tell.
- Culture shift of the way families view the church.
- Consumers vs. Producers.
- Professionalization of discipleship...
  - Teachers, physical trainers, tutors, dietitians, etc.
- Church goal: *Ephesians 4:11-13: <sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.*

2. Schedules, routines, and busyness of life.

- Work.
- Sports.
- Family.
  - **A recent study by VisitAnaheim concluded that 60% of parents describe their family lives as hectic.<sup>17</sup>**
  - **This study concluded that American families get just 37 minutes of quality time together per day.<sup>18</sup>**
  - If this is the case for family, imagine how much less we spend with the Lord Jesus...
- Other kids.
- We want to change this mindset to... "You don't have time NOT to disciple others." You can't afford not to.

3. Family dynamics.

- Every family is different, so there is not cut and paste formula.
- 2 parents, 1 working.
- 2 parents, both working.
- Single moms.
- Single dads.
- Blended families with kids from previous marriages.

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<sup>17</sup> Visit Anaheim, "Visit Anaheim Study Reveals American Families Spend the Most Quality Time Together While on Vacation," March 1, 2018, <https://www.visitanaheim.org/articles/post/visit-anaheim-study-reveals-american-families-spend-the-most-quality-time-together-while-on-vacation/>.

<sup>18</sup> Visit Anaheim, "Visit Anaheim Study Reveals."

#### 4. Postmodern Culture.

- “Distinctives of postmodernism include: (1) a particular adeptness in deconstructing the **Christian worldview**; (2) an interest in the values of the kingdom (e.g., justice, the dignity of all human beings, etc.) **without the authority of the King**; (3) a sense that the moral high ground has shifted from the **religious sector to the secular sector** (for example, the Christian sexual ethic used to be seen as peculiar, perhaps, but a generally moral way to live); and (4) **an almost pharisaical judgmentalism toward the way of Jesus when it cuts against the grain of mainstream culture.**”<sup>19</sup>
- “Postmodern culture inclines people to see the world as if it had been stripped of its structures of meaning, of its morality, of any viable worldview that is universal, and it collapses **all of reality into the self.**”<sup>20</sup>
- Jimmy Scroggins offers a solution: You need to “to have rock-ribbed conviction, nerves of steel, tender hearts, and open arms—all accompanied by a fantastic poker face...[they] have to find a way to have crucial conversations from a biblical perspective and distinctly Christian worldview.”<sup>21</sup>

Discipleship is not easy, but it is always worth it.

- **Goal**

1. You might be wondering, “Why am I here?”
2. We want you to have a **theological basis** for discipleship allowing you to see the need for discipling your children.
3. We want you to be **equipped** to disciple your sphere of influence (or at least begin the journey).
4. At the end of the day, it is your life, and you can make whatever decisions you want regarding how intentional you are. Our hope is that you will **hear the calling and accept the responsibility God has given you** to be a disciple who makes other disciples.
5. We want you to leave with a **sense of urgency** yet bracing for longevity.

*What can you do today?*

1. Pray. Pray that God will begin a work in your heart. Pray that God will begin a work in your spouse’s heart. Pray that God would begin a work in your life.
2. Be a disciple of Jesus first. This is where it starts!
3. Decide to get off the bench, and get in the game!

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<sup>19</sup> Sarah Cowan Johnson, *Teach Your Children Well: A Step-by-Step Guide for Family Discipleship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2022), 13.

<sup>20</sup> David Wells, “The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World,” in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 42.

<sup>21</sup> Jimmy Scroggins, Kristin Scroggins, and Leslee Bennett, *Full Circle Parenting: A Guide for Crucial Conversations* (Nashville: B & H, 2021), 3-4.

Homework: Read Psalm 78:1-8 once per day for the next week.

\*\*\*SURVEY\*\*\* Please leave your pre-surveys on the table and I will collect them.

Let's pray.

## Week 2: TEACH

Question: WHY is generational discipleship important for me? What is the basis of generational discipleship?

Last week, we covered what it means to be a **disciple personally**. If you want to practice generational discipleship well, then you must first be a disciple yourself. Leading yourself... and being self-fed in a spiritual sense.

Today, is all about “TEACHING.” You can’t properly disciple someone unless you open your mouth. You can’t accurately disciple someone unless you are actively talking, teaching, and instructing.

This reminds me of the old adage:

**“You can’t teach someone something that you don’t know.”**

When I say the word TEACH, some of you immediately **got nervous**. Your hands are sweating. You are thinking of **faking a phone call and walking out of here...** please, hang with me.

*TURN & TALK: What is something that you vividly remember teaching your kids, your younger siblings, neighbors, friends, etc.?*

We teach our children how to do lots of things—**walking, talking, reading, writing, sports, fly-fish, dance, think, all kinds of things**. I can remember my mom teaching me how to tie my shoes. **I felt like a magician once I finally figured it out...** I can remember my dad teaching me how to **tie a tie...** I can remember my grandfather teaching me how to **mow the yard...** we all have those unique things that we were taught... **This included them telling me how to do it, but also showing me...**

**The most important thing you can teach others is to follow the Lord.**

3 different Scripture passages tonight... There is a passage of Scripture in the Old Testament that you are probably **not super familiar with**, but it has GREAT truths regarding teaching your children and the next generation.

The word “**teach**” **occurs 214** times in the Bible.

Our first passage...

Context for Psalm 78: is a hymn of history. It is written by **Asaph who recounts the unhappy days** of disobedience of Israel which characterized the Jews during their

rebellion and wandering. **Throughout the psalm, Asaph contrasts God’s faithfulness and patience with Israel’s failure and unbelief.**<sup>22</sup>

The beauty of the Bible— it provides instructions that are **timeless truths** that applied to Israel thousands of years ago and still apply to us today.

**Psalm 78:1-8**

*Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth!  
2 I will open my mouth in a parable;  
I will utter dark sayings from of old,  
3 things that we have heard and known,  
that our fathers have told us.  
4 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.  
5 He established a testimony in Jacob  
and appointed a law in Israel,  
**which he commanded our fathers  
to teach to their children,  
6 that the next generation might know them,  
the children yet unborn,  
and arise and tell them to their children,  
7 so that they should set their hope in God  
and not forget the works of God,  
but keep his commandments;  
8 and that they should not be like their fathers,  
a stubborn and rebellious generation,  
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,  
whose spirit was not faithful to God.***

***Main point: You need to teach and reach your children with the truth of Scripture.***

You cannot fully teach someone without reaching them and you can’t reach someone without teaching them. **You don’t teach in a vacuum.** You teach other people. **You cannot reach other people unless you teach them!** This is where it all comes back to the Word. You must have a good grasp on the Bible and what the Bible says. This is why frequently we are going to reference all of the material in Week 1, because you can’t lead your children where you have never been!

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<sup>22</sup> Chuck Swindoll, “The Ghost of Ephraim, Part One,” Insight for Living Ministries, August 11, 2017, <https://insight.org/resources/daily-devotional/individual/the-ghost-of-ephraim-part-one>.



What do we learn about teaching from this passage?

**1. PAST: What God has done (1-6).**

Verses 1-2 open with him saying: “Give Ear!” In other words... Listen. This is for all people everywhere. This is not just for certain age groups of people or for a certain demographic of people. This is for all... so God says LISTEN.

Verse 3 gives us a glimpse of how **we are to know the things of the Bible** AND how **God has worked in their life**: “[the] things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.”

Their fathers told them. It was the passing of the torch from one generation to the next. You have a responsibility to tell others about the Good News of what Jesus has done.

Verse 4 uses lofty language for God: “his glorious deeds, and his might, and wonders God has done...”

Do you realize that our God is glorious? He is mighty? He has done many wonders? Sometimes we can forget... Doc said this a few sermons back... “God is not just the main upstairs.” We can easily lose a sense of “Awe.” God is our supreme ruler. He is not “dope” or our “homeboy.”

What has God done for you? When is the last time you spoke of the works that God has done in your midst?

*Psalm 66:16: “Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.”*

What has the Lord Jesus done for your soul? For you personally? For your family? For your friends? Kids? Grandkids? Write that out...

*5 He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, **which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children...***

Verse 5 states that “teaching is a command.” It is not optional. There is no choice. The Bible says DO IT. Every parent has an obligation to teach their children the Bible. Every believer has an obligation to teach others around them the Bible.

While this passage can be applied to everyone, the author zeroes in on parents... he is commanding parents to teach their kids specifically about what God has done.

**The Bible has no room for parental neutrality.**

If we don’t teach our kids, grandkids, friends, co-workers about our God and what He has done... then who will?

How will children know what the Bible says? Look at verse 6...

***6 that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children...***

Parents are supposed to teach children the things of Scripture so that they will know them. Then, the cycle doesn’t stop. Their children will tell their children and so on. The generational discipleship process includes every single family member!

Again... Yes, this is for parents... but also for every single believer. We don't get a free pass!

TURN AND TALK: What has God taught you in the past? Who did you teach that to?

(i.e., Who do you expect to teach your children to... make their bed? Wash the dishes? Clean their room? Why would we expect something different when it comes to spiritual matters?)

## 2. PRESENT: What God can do (7).

*“So that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.”*

Asaph, the author of the Psalm gives them some practical things they can do RIGHT NOW. The implication for us, is that we can do these very things as well.

Verse 7 is the main idea of the “theme” of the Psalm shown in three parts that comprise one's faith:

- (1) **personal trust** “they should set their hope in God,”
  - a. What is your hope in? Where do you find security in life?
  - b. A disciple knows that **everything minus Jesus = nothing, but Jesus plus nothing = everything!**
- (2) informed and **humble thinking** “and not forget the works of God,”
  - a. Don't forget what God has done for you...
  - b. Tell others, write them down, make a list.
  - c. Very practical: **sit down by yourself, or with your spouse, or with your family this week and write out all the things that God has done...**
  - d. Thank him continually!
- (3) and an **obedient will** “keep his commandments.”<sup>23</sup>
  - a. Last week I asked you if you listen to the spirit of God... today let's take it a step further... do you listen to the spirit of God and then step out in obedience?
  - b. Even when obedience isn't fun, are you living under the authority of God?

Part of being a disciple is trying to discern what God is trying to teach you in certain periods of your life....

TURN AND TALK: What is God teaching you *right now* in this season of life? Priorities... Rest... Patience... Manage time... Press into relationships...

## 3. PROBLEMS: What God has forgiven (8).

*“And that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.”*

<sup>23</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 16 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 311.

God is a forgiving God. Even though their fathers had messed up, been disobedient, and did not pass down the truths of Scripture, God had not given up on them.

Asaph looks back on Israel's tenure and sees families that were not faithful to God, they were always complaining, and were stubbornly disobedient.

Maybe you walked in here today and you haven't even thought about what it means to disciple. Maybe it wasn't modeled for you, and you are just doing what you know to do which is to be at church and that is it... **You can't change your past, but you can start TODAY by teaching others the Bible.**

We want you **to be the opposite of verse 8**. If you replace verse 8 with **antonyms** of their words, here is how it should read if generational discipleship is done well:

*“And that they **should be** like their fathers, a **submissive and loyal** generation, a generation whose heart was **steadfast**, whose spirit was **faithful** to God.”*

Failure to disciple others will lead to stubbornness, rebellion, and a new generation that will turn their back on God. This is exactly what is depicted in verse 8. **This does NOT mean that if you do generational discipleship well, your kids/friends/co-workers will automatically accept Christ and follow Him. However, this is the greatest chance that they will have.**

**Teaching your children the Word of God is living in obedience to God. Failure to teach others the Word of God is living in disobedience to God.**

Don't believe me? Believe the Bible:

*Deuteronomy 11:19: You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

More on this later... teach no matter where you go!

*Proverbs 22:6: Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Train means to educate, to teach, to instruct. You are literally telling them how they should act!

*Ephesians 6:4: Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

Like an athlete would discipline themselves in a physical sense, we should discipline ourselves and our children from a spiritual sense.

*Matthew 19:13-14: Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”*

Jesus believed in teaching the little ones!

TURN AND TALK: What happens if you *don't* teach your children the Bible? Parents what happens if you don't teach your kids the Bible? At your tables, paint a picture...

\*Whiteboards\*

Psalm 78 summary—we must teach others what God has done in our past and what he is doing in our lives right now...

Our second passage...

Another great example of teaching is found in the life of Timothy. Paul wrote him 2 letters during the early part of his ministry encouraging him and giving him instructions on what to do.

### **2 Timothy 3:14-17**

*14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Verse 14 instructs us to “continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.” Paul is talking to Timothy here instructing him to **stand firm and abide in what he has become convinced of—which was the gospel message**. Paul uses this as a moment of encouragement.

This instruction was contrary to what the **false teachers of the day were doing**. It was their constant mission to find **something new, cutting edge, and to get credited for it**. This is why Timothy is to be satisfied with what he has already received because it is the timeless truth of the gospel.

The same analogy can be **applied** to teaching your children the Bible or teaching others the Bible. **Leading others well does not require you to have the latest fads and fashions. It does require intentionality and discipline to hold fast to the Scripture.**

Dr. Merritt always says this regarding opportunities: **“you either take them or you make them.”** In other words, if an opportunity comes, you take it, but if it doesn’t come, then **find a way to make one happen**. It is all about intentionality.

Reflect: What natural opportunities within your family structure has God given you? Within home? What opportunities can you manufacture to teach others the Word of God?

Make:

Devotion with moms with kids on soccer team...

Lunch meetings at work...

Weekly walk with a neighbor or two...

Here is **why** Timothy could be secure in what **he had learned...** **“and from whom you learned it.”** Anyone know who he learned it from? His mother and his grandmother!

2 Timothy 1:5 “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”

“Since Timothy knew well the **integrity not only of the apostle Paul, but also of his own mother and grandmother and others who had helped him arrive at an understanding of Christian truth**, he may rest assured that he has not himself been deceived.”<sup>24</sup> Translation... discipleship matters! Parents... you matter! Grandparents... you matter! Friends... You matter!

We know from Scripture that **Timothy was discipled from a young age and was taught the things of God. Verse 15 expounds** upon the last point. Timothy was brought up around the sacred writings, otherwise translated as the *Holy Scriptures*.

His mother and grandmother made sure of this! **The best thing you can do for your children is to not raise them up morally, is not to contribute to their college fund, and is not to set them up for success. The best thing you can do for your children is to bring them up in the nurture of the Lord. Immerse them in Jesus.**

I grew up in a small country church. I was called to ministry at the age of 16 and as a result I got the opportunity to preach periodically. I was preaching at a local church in the area of my hometown and a man stopped me before I went up to preach and he looked at me and said, **“Give ‘em Jesus!” I have never forgotten that...** Your words matter. Your discipleship matters. People matter...

TURN & TALK: What family member, friend, or mentor has helped shape you spiritually? How?

2 Timothy—people in your life matter. Paul’s grandmother and mother had a great influence and impact on his life—**because they taught him the Bible!** Who would say that about you?

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> and final passage...

**Background:** Moses is standing before the Israelites delivering a speech to the people demanding obedience to the Lord. He presents a theological argument for why they should surrender to the Lord.

#### **Deuteronomy 4:9-10**

9 *“Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. **Make them known to your children and your children’s children—** 10 how on the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, the Lord said to me, ‘Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, **and that they may teach their children so.’**”*

In verses 1-8, Moses uses the phrase “Hear, O Israel” or “And now, O Israel.” This phrase occurs repeatedly in Deuteronomy **highlighting the significance** of what is to

<sup>24</sup> Donald Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 180.

follow. In verse 2, **he warns them to follow the Scripture strictly and to not add or take away from the law they have been given (2).** Further, he reminds them that a **nation is great not because of the number of people or the opportunities it offers, but rather because the core of the nation is rooted in God’s Word (6-8).**

Spiritually speaking... a church is not great because of the number of people that it has or the opportunities that it offers, but rather because the church is rooted in God’s Word. This is one of the main reasons of why I love my church!

We have a pastor who faithfully stands before our church and preaches God’s Word! We have a staff that preaches and teaches God’s Word! We have volunteers who faithfully serve according to God’s Word!

So, we get to verse 9 and Moses shifts his attention to how this will be practically carried out—through the family. **“Family” in our context means immediate—mom, dad, children. However, families and households looked a little different in Scripture...**

**\*Families in the Bible included immediate family, extended family, and close friends. In fact, in some parts of Israel, it is still like this today! So, this is not just applying to a parent and child... but to a grandparent... an aunt and uncle... a cousin... a friend... and even a neighbor...\***

Turn & Write: Dolphin lesson... Dolphins are great animals to study because they are always working in teams. US Navy used dolphins to develop Sonar Technology. They eat 33lbs of food each day. They are very relational animals. They are highly protective of one another. They live in complex social structures called pods. Dolphin’s travel in pods of 12.<sup>25</sup>

Taking some dolphin lessons... who is in your pod? Write down 12 people that you are closest with that are in your pod... Start there... what can you teach them? How can you disciple... If the biblical family is much more than mom, dad, and kids... then we need to identify who would be in our pod today!

Verse 9: *“Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. **Make them known to your children and your children’s children.**”*

The way it is written in the **Hebrew is reflexive to show that even though Moses is speaking to Israel as a whole, this is meant to hit each person on an individual level.**

Moses is telling the people to listen and pay attention to their lives, so they **don’t forget what God has done in their midst.** They have just been through the **exodus from Egypt, the wilderness wanderings, and God providing for them** over and over... If they do not listen and keep watch, they will depart from the Lord.

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<sup>25</sup> Adapted from Student Leadership University’s 101 Curriculum. SLU 101 in Orlando, Florida, July 15-19, 2023. “Dolphin Facts,” Student Leadership University 101, 18.

The message is clear: **if we do not teach our children... or teach the next generation... or teach those around us... they will depart from the faith.**

*“If we don’t teach others to follow Christ, the world will teach them not to.”*

Remember the personal challenge here: YOU make them known to YOUR children and YOUR children’s children. **Teaching the things of Scripture does not stop when your kids grow up. You have a responsibility to your grandchildren. Teaching the things of Scripture does not stop when your grandchildren grow up. You have a responsibility to the next generation. You never get subbed out of the discipleship game as a believer in Jesus.**

This is why we say generational discipleship, not just family discipleship...

**Discipleship never stops.** We have a responsibility to let those around us know what God is doing in our midst!

Football: There is a thing in football that a player does when he gets tired and needs to be subbed out... typically, he will look over to the sideline and tap his helmet, letting the coaches know that he needs a breather... and he is usually subbed out of the game...

Spiritually speaking, there are no substitutes... no time for you to get out of the game... Biblically speaking, we should all rest. We should all have moment to recharge our physical and spiritual batteries. However, never are we commanded in Scripture to stop our engagement completely!

Verse 10: *How on the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, the Lord said to me, ‘Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.’*

Moses gets really practical and tells them to remember when they stood before God at Horeb... **Another name for this is Mt. Sinai. What happened here? The 10 Commandments were given.** It was the moment when God’s people now had a law and the place where they **entered into a covenant with God.**

Moses says this once again to evoke a response in Israel in which he says the only appropriate response is: **to fear God! Do you fear the Lord?**

**Listening led to remembering. Remembering led to obedience. Obedience leads to discipleship.** The main act of discipleship is teaching others about the Lord our God!

What do we teach our children?

1. The Bible.
  - a. It is amazing what happens when you just teach the Bible... transformational.
  - b. *Psalm 119: 11: “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”*

2. The importance of the local church.
  - a. Membership.
  - b. Community.
  - c. Serve.
  - d. Gathering of believers.
  - e. Giving. (\$10 raking leaves... dad took \$1 church, \$3 tax, \$3 savings, \$3 left!)
3. How to share Christ.
  - a. Bad News, Worst News, Good News, Best News!
4. How to spend time with God.
5. Spiritual application.
  - a. Orthodoxy must become orthopraxy—RG.
    - i. You must MAKE IT PRACTICAL.
6. Teach what you are learning...
  - a. Rabbi's would recruit followers that would "train" by going wherever they went...
  - b. Have someone walk in your shoes.

TURN & TALK: List the top 3 things you/your family talks about. How can you strategically engage in spiritual conversations? Where can you begin to TEACH?

*What am I trying to say?*

**Read and teach the Bible to your children.** Your co-workers. College students. Young singles. Young marrieds. Do not be boring. **Read it with passion and enthusiasm. Explain the text. Clarify the text.**

**Start small...**

"The younger the children, the more you will want to use narrative passages and read shorter sections. As the children get older, set a goal to read through other portions of Scripture."<sup>26</sup>

**Make it fun...**

Charles Spurgeon: "No reason exists why the preaching of the gospel should be a miserable operation either to the speaker or to the hearer."<sup>27</sup>

*What can you do today?*

1. Read your Bible yourself, THEN read your Bible with others.
2. Tell others about what God has done and is doing in your life. STORY.

**Homework:** Read 1 Timothy 4:11-15 3x a day for the next week.

<sup>26</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 44-45.

<sup>27</sup> Drew Tillman, "12 Spurgeon Quotes on Preaching," The Spurgeon Center, May 2, 2019, <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/blog-entries/12-spurgeon-quotes-on-preaching/>.



### Week 3: MODEL

Question: HOW do I best practice generational discipleship?

**Week 1:** Personal discipleship. You can't disciple others unless you are first a disciple. 8 different characteristics of what a disciple looks like. There are 4 ways the world is discipling you... entertainment, information, sports, and education. You must lead yourself!

**Week 2:** Teaching. Psalm 78 was our bedrock text. You can't teach what you don't know. The most important thing you can teach someone is to follow the Lord. Discipleship never stops. It is a chain linking one generation to the next!

TURN & TALK: What has been your biggest takeaway from the first two sessions?

Today is about modeling. If we, as followers of Jesus, are going to talk the talk, then we need to walk the walk.

If you have been around young people—whether you have kids, grandkids, or you have worked with that age group—then you will know this statement is so true...

James Baldwin: "Children have never been good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."<sup>28</sup>

#### 1 Timothy 4:11-15

*11 Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.*

1 Timothy is a book written from the apostle Paul to his protégé, Timothy. **He is writing to ensure Timothy that he has everything that he needs for a successful ministry.** After giving general ministry advice in verses 1-10, Paul then turns directly to Timothy himself. This alerts us because this means it is *personal* for us as well.

Specifically in chapter 4, Paul is making sure Timothy deals with **opposition** that will inevitably arise from exalting Christ.

No one likes to be opposed. It isn't fun to deal with. Timothy was dealing with people that opposed him, his character, and consequently his ministry. So, Paul is taking a moment to encourage him in his walk with Jesus as he continues to fight the good fight of discipling others around him.

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<sup>28</sup> Janice Shaw Crouse, *Children at Risk: The Precarious State of Children's Well-Being in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2010), 165.

*How do you silence the critics around you?* Be firm in your character—which is exactly what Paul instructs Timothy to do. He writes in verses 11-15 exactly what he is to MODEL to those around him. The words of Paul are foundational to us today...

Let's walk through this together...

**Verse 11:** Paul exhorts Timothy to “*command and teach these things.*” In other words, Timothy is to teach with the authority given to him **first by God** and **second by Paul** who previously ministered there.

**The command for each person in this room is to teach the next generation.** This was our whole hour and a half conversation last week—you can't disciple if you do not teach. More specifically if you are a parent, you are commanded to teach your children about what the Lord Jesus has done. If you are a grandparent, you have an obligation to your grandkids. If you are a young single adult, you have an obligation to teach the people in your sphere of influence.

Often times in Scripture we are commanded to wait to see what God would have us do... this is NOT one of those times. Paul told Timothy to “command and teach these things.” **There was no option. There was no choice. It was expected...**

**“Stop waiting for a call when you have been given a command.”**

Once again... Who are you teaching? What are you teaching? How are you teaching it?

**Verse 12:** *12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*

Timothy is to let no one look down upon him for his age. He was a young man with older eyes looking down on him for his lack of experience. Paul tells him to not take this! He essentially tells Timothy—run right past them. Don't take it. Be committed to the plan I have for you.

Timothy was to **set the tone, the pace, and the example for everyone around him.** Think of it this way... when you walk into a room, does the temperature in the room go up or down? Do you bring life to the room? Do you bring encouragement? Do you bring wisdom? Do you bring hope? You can set the tone and the example for ALL others around you.

College Football Coach PJ Fleck says this to his football team every single day... “*If you are juiceless, then you are useless!*”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Andy Greder, “Gophers Coach P. J. Fleck’s Specialty Is Mixing Fun with Football,” *Pioneer Press*, September 6, 2019, <https://www.twincities.com/2019/09/06/gophers-coach-p-j-flecks-specialty-is-mixing-fun-with-football/>.

What does he mean by this? We should have an energy about us that sets the spiritual temperature around us at a high bar. Why? We are believers. We have been saved. We have been redeemed. We have been bought with a price...

We should not be the ones that are negative Nancy... Debbie downers... Or the person that is always complaining... Of all people on this earth, we should have HOPE//Joy.

Parents: you are the spiritual tone setters for your family.  
Grandparents: you are the spiritual tone setters for your family.  
Singles: you are the spiritual tone setters for your family.  
Married: you are the spiritual tone setters for your family.

TURN & TALK: What is the tone of your home?

Paul mentions 5 ways we are to set the example for those around us: *“speech, conduct, love, faith, purity.”*

The first two (speech and conduct) are public and more behavioral in nature. These are the more outright observable things. How you talk, live, and act.

Speech: What kind of things do you talk about? Our theme word of the semester for our student ministry is EDIFY. We hear enough students grumbling, and complaining, and fighting, and arguing and tearing others down... what we don't hear enough of is other students building each other up and encouraging one another.

Ephesians 4:29: Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Colossians 4:6: Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

James 1:26: If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

*Does your speech edify others?*

Conduct: Is your conduct worth emulating. Could I take a walk over to our children's ministry right now and tell each of our little kiddos to “go and be just like you?” Are you living above reproach? Self-controlled?

**Galatians 5:16-24:**

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those

who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If you want to be a disciple who makes other disciples, you need to be someone that lives a life worthy of following—not because you are perfect, but because of the one we are following—Jesus. In other words, because your actions back up your words.

Food for thought: Does your speech match your conduct?

The next three are private qualities. They are less observable in nature. Things like... Your walk with God, your character, and matters of the heart.

Love: Do you love others? You are what you love... Credit Card statements and calendars reveal what you love the most...

Faith: Do you have a deep faith in God? Or is church and a discipleship course simply a checklist for you? Is it a central part of your family?

Purity: Are you blameless before God? Living above reproach?

**Verse 13:** *13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*

There are 3 things in which Timothy must devote himself to until the arrival of the apostle Paul.

**(1) The public reading of Scripture.** “The public reading of Scripture was important because **it was the means of a large number of people being able to hear the text, because only a few would have had personal access to the text, or have been able to read it.** For a considerable time to come the scarcity of manuscripts would make the **public reading of Scripture essential to the life of the church.** The Old Testament Scriptures must here be in mind. The church carried on the synagogue practice and made it a **basic element of Christian worship.**”<sup>30</sup>

**(2) Exhortation.** As in the synagogue so in the church, the reading of Scripture was followed by **an exhortation** (*paraklēsis*, NIV preaching) based upon it.<sup>31</sup> **In other words, the person wouldn’t read it and dismiss everyone for the day. It was read and then used to challenge, encourage, and embolden people.**

In other words—in light of what we have just read, what are we going to do about it? When you teach the Bible (as discussed last week), give those who you disciple something to go and do! Motivate. Encourage. Equip.

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<sup>30</sup> Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 111.

<sup>31</sup> Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 111.

Scripture is alive! It is sharper than any two-edged sword cutting through bone and marrow—it should have an effect! It should change us!

**(3) Teaching.** In Christian worship a special place was reserved for teaching (*didaskalia*) **which consisted of instruction in the great truths of the Christian faith.**<sup>32</sup> This was the realm in which more theology was taught, and things were discussed.

The teaching portion is where the grappling of the faith occurs. We wrestle with tough issues in Scripture.

Application: you need to read Scripture to others. You need to exhort them and embolden them to live for Christ. You need to teach them and wrestle with the Scripture...

\*All of this reflects back to session 1: you can't read others Scripture if you don't read it yourself. You can't exhort others if you aren't being exhorted. You can't teach others the Scripture if you don't know what it says.\*

**Verse 14:** *14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.*

The gift which Timothy must not neglect appears to be the spiritual equipment given to him by God that was affirmed by the elders who laid hands on him. In part, **this is a call to reflect back and remember that God has equipped him for this very moment.**

The laying on of hands is essentially an affirmation by the elders of the calling and gifting into the ministry. This is similar to what we did with Ryan Garvin a couple of weeks ago on Sunday night. We had a service of ordination—commissioning him into the ministry as a way of affirming God's call and giftings on his life.

Precious moments to not forget his commissioning... Ryan... "To the ends of the earth."

Paul is reminding Timothy that he too has been called and he is equipped for ministry!

The word "gift" draws attention **to the part played by the Holy Spirit** in Timothy's ministry.<sup>33</sup> This was God's doing. His Spirit was upon him to carry out the tasks at hand. On the other side, he tells him to "not neglect this gift" which shows the responsibility that Timothy has to carry it out!

"God's gifts, the talents he has given us, must never be left unused."<sup>34</sup>

My fear is far too many people at Cross Pointe Church have SO MANY giftings they can offer to the church, yet they are going unused... teaching... giving... administration...

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<sup>32</sup> Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 111.

<sup>33</sup> Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 111.

<sup>34</sup> Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 111-12.

service... organization/events... leading a small group... babies/children... bilingual @ CarePointe.

TURN & TALK: What tools has God gifted you with? What gifts are you using? What gifts are going unused?

Verse 15 is also chopped up into three sections. *15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.*

**First, he should “practice these things.”** This implies spiritual sweat. (Disciplines of A Godly Man/Woman/Family.)

An extreme work ethic is required. He is “to be diligent in these things” or to “ponder on them.”<sup>35</sup> The idea here that he becomes close to these things, he knows them like the back of his hand, and they are second nature to him.

*Are you practicing the things of God? Do you have a desire to improve your prayer life? Do you have a desire to improve your biblical literacy?*

Being a disciple-maker means that you need to put in the effort to be an appropriate role model for others!

**Next, he should, “immerse yourself in them.”** The literal translation is “be in them.”<sup>36</sup> The idea is to absorb. This reminds me of **jumping into a pool from a diving board**. Once you are in the air, you are headed for the water below and once you are in the water below, it is all encompassing around you!

A lot of believers today want to dip the toe in and make sure they are comfortable and ease in... Scripturally—you are in or out. Immerse yourself in these things—faith, love, purity, speech, conduct, reading of the word, exhortation, teaching...

“The mind is to be as immersed in these pursuits as the body in the air it breathes.”<sup>37</sup>

TURN & TALK: How would you practically immerse yourself? What would this look like for your household?

**Finally, he does these things “so that all may see your progress.”** A Christian leader is in the **center of the spotlight**. He is constantly under the public eye and open observation. **Paul wants Timothy to impress others with his development as a Christ follower—not his attractiveness, his personality, or anything else apart from the work of Christ in his life.**

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<sup>35</sup> Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 111-12.

<sup>36</sup> Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 111-12.

<sup>37</sup> Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 111-12.

Progress is the broken-down definition of **sanctification**. The lifelong process of becoming more and more like God. This verse is huge for generational discipleship. Why?

**You are not perfect, nor will you ever be. Therefore, you can't expect to be a perfect person. You must strive to live in such a way that others notice your progress.**

The goal:

“Dad isn't who he used to be.” “Mom is so much more patient with me.” “My friend is very kind.” “My brother is very respectful.”

*Modeling Christ well will eventually lead to you making progress in your spiritual life.*

Short verse... yet foundational to the topic of being a good model...

### **1 Corinthians 11:1**

*11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*

Paul is writing to the Corinthian church when he gives one of the most quotable statements in all of Scripture.

Embedded in this short verse is the understanding that we are following Jesus together. This is why he didn't just say, “Imitate me.” He said, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.”

**“Imitators”**: earns one who follows. “Mimetes” basically means to copy or imitate someone's behavior and has many related words in English – “mime” (one who acts out an imitation of another person).<sup>38</sup>

“A **mime** is one who acts out a story without using words. That is a good reminder to us as Christ followers (Christ imitators) to let our actions speak louder than our words. Of course, we are to speak words, especially Gospel words, but our life should back up the authenticity of our Gospel message. Those who are lost and without Christ are watching Christ in our life in everyday situations and looking to see if our life is one of integrity.”<sup>39</sup>

We talked at length last week about how we use our voice and speak biblical truth to others. That **MUST** be paired with actions that back up what we say we believe.

Parents:

*“Children are great imitators. So, give them something great to imitate.”*

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<sup>38</sup> Precept Austin, “1 Corinthians 11:1 Commentary,” August 2, 2021, [https://www.preceptaustin.org/1\\_corinthians\\_111\\_commentary](https://www.preceptaustin.org/1_corinthians_111_commentary).

<sup>39</sup> Precept Austin, “1 Corinthians 11:1 Commentary.”

This is not the only passage of Scripture commanding us to live a life worthy to be followed (6x):

1 Corinthians 4:16: I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

Let me show you the way... who is your mentor? Who are you mentoring?

Ephesians 5:1: Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

We are God's children trying imitate our Father!

Hebrews 6:12: so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Modeling well takes time! Faith and patience...

1 Thessalonians 1:6: And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit...

Even in times of difficulty, through the Holy Spirit we can model a godly lifestyle!

1 Thessalonians 2:14: For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews...

We imitate on a personal level and also a corporate one! We imitate the Church of God!

Sometimes we might not feel like it... or we have the wrong view... I heard a story one time that demonstrates this wrong view....

“Charles Francis Adams, son of President John Quincy Adams and grandson of President John Adams, kept a diary. He took some time to take his little boy fishing in a nearby pond. In his journal he wrote: **“Went fishing with my son today—a day wasted.”** He was known as a working man and saw this as a waste of his time.

His son, Brook Adams, also kept a journal, which is still in existence. On that same day they went to fish in the nearby pond, Brook Adams made this entry: **“Went fishing with my father—the most wonderful day of my life!”** The father thought he was wasting time while fishing with his son, but his son saw it as an investment of time.”<sup>40</sup>

Never underestimate the influence you have on others just through your actions. They are going to imitate something you do... GOOD or BAD.

What can you model?

1. Prayer

- a. Corporate prayer vs. private prayer.

- b. Praying the Bible (Donald Whitney).<sup>41</sup>

2. Reading your Bible

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<sup>40</sup> Silas Stillwell, “Wasted Day,” September 1987, <https://bible.org/illustration/wasted-day>.

<sup>41</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).



- a. Dad would be in his study every morning when I woke up...
- 3. Being engaged in church
  - a. Producer vs. Consumer.
  - b. Is this just A church for you or MY church.
- 4. Tithing + giving
  - a. Working to give sacrificially to the Lord.
- 5. Words + attitude
  - a. There is something about people who are pleasant to be around because they have a great attitude. Yes, they are tired, stressed, anxious, but these people radiate Christ.
  - b. 2 Corinthians 4:7-11: 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 6. Actions + reactions
  - a. How you handle certain situations in life! Things go bad? Lose a loved one?
- 7. How you treat others
  - a. Phone calls, at sporting events, at work, with your boss, with your friends, etc.
- 8. Work Ethic
  - a. Set the pace for working hard!
- 9. Consistency
  - a. This one is crucial. You can't turn the discipleship switch on and off. You must live it consistently. Others around you need to see you building good habits over and over.
- 10. What we watch... what we listen to... what we read...

TURN & TALK: Of these 10 categories, which one do you model well? Of these 10 categories, which one do you NOT model well?

As you begin to model well and imitate Christ, never forget that we are ambassadors for Christ. Our job as ambassadors is to point people back to Jesus.

*2 Corinthians 5:20: "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."*

The sad fact is that many parents lead their children astray as a result of their actions. Many people lead their friends astray because of their actions. They talk it but don't live it... Jesus had strong language to say about this...

### Matthew 18:5-6

*“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, <sup>6</sup> but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.*

Jesus is speaking here.

In order to understand this passage, we must understand how the Jewish people used the word “child.” William Barclay says they used it in a double sense:

“They used it literally of the **young child**; but regularly **a teacher’s disciples were called his sons or his children. Therefore, a child also means a beginner in the faith**, one who has just begun to believe, one who is not yet mature and established in the faith, one who has just begun on the right way and who may very easily be deflected from it. *In this passage, very often the child means both the young child and the beginner on the Christian way.*”<sup>42</sup>

So, we are talking to **new/young believers as well as little children here.**

Do not miss the significance of what Jesus is saying... if you cause a little child or a new believer to stumble early in their walk with God, it is better for you to be cast into the depths of the sea with a millstone around your neck. Jesus is using hyperbole to make his point...

Discipleship is serious. Discipleship is not something to take lightly. The way that you live is a model to others!

“In my name” or “On my behalf” suggests that the person who welcomes the little children as Jesus would be quite literally **an extension of Jesus himself**.<sup>43</sup> You are DOING kingdom work.

TURN & TALK: How does this understanding that you “are an extension of Jesus” shape how you view your “activity” throughout the day?

“Whoever receives one such child” has a deep impact into the way that we should model our lives to our children and our peers. The wording here suggests that we **can see Christ in the child.**

Barclay: “To teach unruly, disobedient, restless little children can be a wearing job. To satisfy the physical needs of children, to wash their clothes and tend their cuts and soothe their bruises and cook their meals may often seem a very unromantic task; the cooker and the sink and the first-aid kit have not much glamour; **but there is no one in all this world**

<sup>42</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 3rd ed., New Daily Study Bible (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 2001), 206.

<sup>43</sup> Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 206.

*who helps Jesus Christ more than the teacher of the little child and the harassed, hard-pressed parent in the home. All who take on these tasks will find a glory in the grey, and discover wonder in the ordinary, if in the child they sometimes glimpse none other than Jesus himself.”<sup>44</sup>*

There is no one in this world better suited to model what it looks like to follow Jesus than you! There is no one better equipped to disciple a little child or a new believer than YOU! You are their only hope...

TURN & TALK: Take a few minutes... write out a list of the top 5 things that you want to model to others. Put it in your Bible, your journal, your bathroom mirror, or somewhere that you can see it.

Howard Hendricks: “You teach what you know, but you reproduce what you are.”<sup>45</sup>

*What can you do today?*

1. Pray. Pray that your walk matches your talk.
2. Write out a list of ways that you can better imitate Christ.
3. Read *Deuteronomy 6:4-9* 3x per day for the next week.

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<sup>44</sup> Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 207.

<sup>45</sup> Will Mancini, “Epic Quotes on Discipleship & Influence from Prof Howard Hendricks (1924-2013),” February 21, 2013, <https://www.willmancini.com/blog/epic-quotes-on-discipleship-influence-from-prof-howard-hendricks-1924-2013>.

## Week 4: STEWARD

Question: WHEN should I practice generational discipleship?

Personal Discipleship: you have to lead yourself before you can lead others...

TEACH: You have to open your mouth and talk about the Bible to others... Scripture is a big part of your everyday vernacular.

MODEL: You can't just talk the talk, but you must walk the walk. You are literally an extension of Jesus. We asked you to write down the top 5 things you want to model to others... *Howard Henricks: "You teach what you know, but you reproduce what you are."*

TURN & TALK: Last week we ended by talking about things we wanted to model... what did you include on your list of top 5 things you want to model? Warm up and share with your table.

The word stewardship has recently fallen on hard times and has been hijacked. **Too many people say that stewardship is just about money. Wrong. Money is only a small part.** Some of you when I say steward think of a fundraising campaign, some think of a giant thermometer showing the progress of the goal made, some of you think of a flight attendant... the list could go on...

Full transparency, **we debated on this word.** But it's such a good word, both biblically and historically, that **it deserves to be revived rather than buried.** So, we are going to hijack our word back.

*"A steward is someone entrusted with another's wealth or property and charged with the responsibility of managing it in the owner's best interest."*<sup>46</sup>

We simply define stewardship as simply, **"using every opportunity to make much of Jesus."**

Let me draw your focus to the words of **Scripture found in Deuteronomy 6.** Right before **crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land**, Moses gathers the people of Israel to **remind** them of a few things. He gives them God's words of instruction on how he wanted them to relate to God and be his people. This was to be their guide for how they are to live and maximize their time. God gives them these foundational words:

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

*4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by*

<sup>46</sup> Ben Patterson, *The Grand Essentials* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 17.

*the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

**Main Point: Maximize. Every. Moment.**

In order to maximize every moment and to steward well, you must THINK. You need to be able to place yourself in a position to make right decisions.

Maximizing every moment implies a “when” mentality. You have to be able to work through things happening in your life and prioritize them to your liking. **Stewardship is about making time. It is about “when” you can practice discipleship...**

**The sad reality is the word “WHEN” in today’s culture means “how little can I do?”** How little can I do and get away with it? You just do something to check the box, to look “okay in someone’s eyes,” to get approval on social media, and just to survive. You aren’t doing it out of conviction.

This can’t be the bare minimum. This must be a maximization of every moment.

### **1. An Invitation Directly to You**

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.*

Verse 4 opens with **an invitation to respond to God with the same love that God had displayed for his people.** In the Hebrew, it is only **4 words.** It is literally, “**Yahweh, God, Yahweh, One.**”<sup>47</sup>

Whatever translation is chosen the essential meaning is clear. **Yahweh was to be the sole object of Israel’s worship, allegiance and affection.**<sup>48</sup> This was the case for Israel and the case for us today!

TURN & TALK: What things in your life fight for your worship, allegiance, and affection?

In using the word “one,” monotheism is implied—**only one God.** So, he opens by saying this to remind the people of one of the key commandments—**to have no other gods before the ONE TRUE God.**

*5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

Verse 5 shows us why they should **act in obedience** and have no other gods before them. It was to be done out of **love.** Obedience is not to come from legalism, need, or obligation. **Obedience was to spring forth as a result of their love for God.** Israel was

<sup>47</sup> J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1974), 137.

<sup>48</sup> Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

to love God with their **whole being**. It is not just something that you do... it is who you are.

This is why verse 5 says they are to *“love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”* This phrase occurs repeatedly throughout the book of Deuteronomy. This phrase gives us **insight into the reasoning** in that day and time.

*The heart* was regarded as **the seat of the mind and will** as well as of a wide range of emotions. The term **soul** is difficult to define, but it seems to refer to the source of **life and vitality**, or even of one’s ‘being’. **The two terms heart and soul between them indicate that a man is to love God with unreserved devotion.** To give **more weight** to the demand a third expression is added, **with all your might**, i.e. ‘with all your strength’.<sup>49</sup>

The author is showing you that in order to become a good steward on behalf of the Lord Jesus, you must first love the Lord! **Remember in week 1 we talked about the importance of having a personal walk with Jesus—this should feed your love for God. If you love God, then your priorities will be in line, which will allow you to live in a posture of stewardship.**

Stewardship essentially holds on to everything you have **loosely in the palm** of your hands and says... God use them for your glory... use my family, use my job, use my resources, use me... all for your glory... more on this later...

Verse 6 *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.*

The ten commandments were given on **stone tablets**. Moses is telling the people that in order for them **to truly obey, they must love. To truly love they need to be in relationship with God.** The truth had to go from the **engraving of the stone to become engraved on their hearts.**

The test of someone’s love for God rests in the fact that **he or she keeps his commands.** This phrase is inserted to remind them of their **wholehearted devotion** that was needed.

**Anything less than wholehearted devotion and allegiance would lead to a shared allegiance—which is not true love at all.**<sup>50</sup>

On your heart... it is what you think about... it is what you do... it is how you live... if you want to know what is truly on your heart, then **show me where your feet are and what your tongue has to say!**

*7 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>49</sup> Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 138.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 138.

Verse 7 record the **actions** of obedience to God as a result of one's love for God. Here is what we should do as disciples of the Lord Jesus... **Here is how we steward...**

Not only were the people **to personally love God and obey Him**, but they were to impart these truths to the next generation to maintain the attitude of love and obedience among the people of God.

## 2. Steward your time. (7a)

- a. Teach your children//others... model this to them... both of these are accomplished through stewarding. You teach and you model by managing your time effectively.
- b. **“Diligently”**—doing anything diligently requires a **significant time investment**.
  - i. Spending one hour a week on a Sunday morning in the Bible is not stewarding your time well. That will leave you **spiritually malnourished**.
  - ii. If the only time you read the Bible or pray is at church, you are massively missing the mark.
- c. To steward your time is to make time for things that matter...  
CHURCH/Family devotions/small group/culture of hospitality.
- d. You only have so much time with your children...
  - i. The church has less time than the family.
  - ii. 52 hours vs. 8,760 hours

Stewarding your time requires you to be **organized** and to be **intentional**.

*7 You shall teach them diligently to your children...*

One of the themes of the book of Deuteronomy is **the importance of teaching the family/those close around you**.

While Deuteronomy 6 is a clear instruction for teaching, it is also a guide for how to go about discipleship. The word here is steward. **Discipleship is all about stewarding one's time and maximizing moments for the glory of God.**

TURN & TALK: Outside of work and sleep, list the top 3 things you spend your time doing.

### **“Visual//9.36 Pennies”<sup>51</sup>**

- 936 weeks from birth to graduation.
- 624 weeks left from the time they hit Kindergarten.
- 468 (1/2) weeks left from the time they start 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- 312 weeks left once they start Middle School.

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<sup>51</sup> Eryn Lynum, *936 Pennies: Discovering the Joy of Intentional Parenting* (Grand Rapids: Bethany, 2018).

- 156 weeks left once they start High School.
- Less than 100 weeks once they get their license.”

Time is valuable. **How are you stewarding your time at home?** How are you stewarding your time with your children//others?

You have to steward your time well. Failure to properly steward will ensure you will never have the time to be a disciple who makes other disciples.

### 3. Steward your opportunities. (7b)

“...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.”

Make opportunities, **don’t wait for them.**

- a. When you sit in your **house.**
  - i. With what little time you have at home... what do you do? Binge Netflix? Scroll social media? Watch TV?
- b. Walk by the **way.**
  - i. When you are on the go... **in the car, when you are at the ball field, when you are out with friends, when you are at dinner...**
  - ii. Do you use those **moments to steward your time** and point people back to Jesus?
- c. When you **lie down.**
  - i. What is the last thing you think about before you go to bed? When you wind down for the day and you come home, what do you do? When you get your kids ready for bed, how do you maximize that time?
- d. When you **rise.**
  - i. What is the first thing you think about when you get up?
- e. **List of opportunities: waking up, car rides, mealtimes, dinner time, sports, conversations, vacations, bedtime.**
  - i. “The greatest spiritual work happens in the normal moments of domestic life.”<sup>52</sup>
  - ii. *Habits of the Household*, Justin Whitmel Earley.<sup>53</sup>

**There is no one-size-fits-all for discipleship. It is to happen in the course of your daily rhythm.**

You cannot separate discipleship from what you do on a daily basis. Now, this does mean that you might have to make some changes to your schedule and your routine, but by in large, we believe that discipleship is best practiced in **the everyday rhythms of life...**

<sup>52</sup> Justin Whitmel Earley, *Habits of the Household, Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 24.

<sup>53</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*.



Matthew 28:19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” The English translation says “go” but the Greek says, “As you are going.” In other words, you make disciples in the normal rhythms of life—at the dinner table, at practice, in the car, at church, with family, with friends, etc.

You are to practice discipleship and teach others according to Scripture. You should do it “when you sit in your house” and “when you walk by the way” and “when you lie down” and “when you rise.” In other words, **at all times. When you see a moment take it.**

TURN & TALK: What opportunities do you have that are unique to your family? How can you maximize them?

*Chuck Swindoll: “Each day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children.”*<sup>54</sup>

Every day in the lives of someone else, you are making tiny deposits of the impact that you can have... what kind of impact are you having in the lives of those around you?

#### **4. Steward your resources. (8-9)**

*8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

- a. Frontlets, doorpost, house, gates.
  - i. Think of what you have materially...
    1. House? Car? Phone? Things you can touch... how are you leveraging these things for Christ?
  - b. Missional living: is your home a place of ministry?
    - i. Habits of the Household<sup>55</sup>
      1. ***Family adopted a 30-year-old single who took the opportunity to love on an entire family. Tuesday night spaghetti dinner and he came to the kids’ games... that is all it takes!***
    - ii. The Gospel Comes With a House Key: Rosaria Butterfield<sup>56</sup>
      1. **Once you enter in the front door of a home, it breaks down barriers to engage in conversation.** Meals are a great way to bond and spend time with one another.
      2. Our homes should be places of refuge and safety, where people can experience love, grace, and the presence of Christ.

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<sup>54</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, “Charles R. Swindoll Quotes,” BrainyQuotes, accessed June 1, 2023, [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/charles\\_r\\_swindoll\\_106981](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/charles_r_swindoll_106981).

<sup>55</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*.

<sup>56</sup> Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in our Post-Christian World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

3. Radical, ordinary hospitality is when you open your heart and home to your neighbors, sharing meals and your life. It's about practicing the presence of Jesus in your community.

*iii. The Spiritually Vibrant Home: Don Everts.<sup>57</sup>*

1. In a spiritually vibrant home, faith is not just a Sunday event but an everyday reality.
  2. Prayer and conversation are the threads that weave together the fabric of a spiritually vibrant family.
- c. What resources has God given you to use?
- i. Even if you don't have kids.
- d. Physical Resources & Giftings
- i. Leverage to disciple the next generation.

*8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Verses 8-9 explain how to further practically do this. **Jewish people take this literally and they have them bound on their arms and as a frontlet between their eyes as they pray.** They are called phylacteries. However, we view this as a metaphor.

You write them down. You have the Scripture near you. You talk about it in your house. You surround yourself with it.

This passage is a tremendous **example of a biblical worldview**. You must view culture and the things around you through the lens of Scripture. **Following God is not a la carte. You must be ALL IN.**

TURN & TALK: What resources are at your disposal that you need to leverage to aid in discipling your children?

**Patek Philippe:** Has anyone ever heard of the company called Patek Philippe? They are a **Swiss watch company**. In fact, they are the **only family-owned watch company left in Switzerland**. They have made some of the **best contributions to the watchmaking industry in the history of mankind:** to name a few...

- “In 1845, they patented a **keyless winding and hand setting system**.
- In 1889, they patented a **perpetual calendar mechanism for pocket watches**.
- In 1956, they created the world's **first all-electronic clock**.
- In 2023, they set the record for **most expensive wristwatch auctioned online at \$5.8 million**.

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<sup>57</sup> Don Everts, *The Spiritually Vibrant Home: The Power of Messy Prayers, Loud Tables, and Open Doors* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020).

- In 2019, they set the record for **most expensive pocket watch auctioned at a scorching \$31 million.**<sup>58</sup>

They have been in the business a LONG time and they know what they are doing. In 1996, they came up with a campaign designed to stress the importance making sure the value of their watches continued to increase for decades to come. They named their campaign the “**Generations**” campaign.

The key slogan for the campaign was: “*You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next generation.*”<sup>59</sup>

The same thing is true with stewardship. There is only one owner of anything in this world—the **Lord Jesus Christ**. The rest of us are merely stewards of what He has given us. We are only looking after it...

Grandparents... what are you “looking after” for your grandkids?

Parents... what are you “looking after” for your kids?

Singles... what are you “looking after” for your friends?

Marrieds... what are you “looking after” for your neighbors?

The idea of stewardship is that you are passing the baton of faith!

Passing the **Baton** of Faith:

Hebrews 12:1-2: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

I think this passage closely aligns with our main stewardship passage from Deuteronomy 6. To run well is to steward well...

The author of Hebrews encourages believers to run the race well... Running the race well will require you to implement certain practices in your life...

### 1. Lay aside...

- a. In order to steward your time well, you might have to put certain things down.
  - i. Hobby (or turn it into a discipleship opportunity), extra details at work, sport, or activity, social media.

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<sup>58</sup> Patek Philippe, “The History of Patek Philippe from 1839 Until Today,” accessed June 1, 2023, <https://www.patek.com/en/company/history#1839-1877>.

<sup>59</sup> Roberta Naas, “Patek Philippe Celebrates 20 Years of Its Iconic Advertising Campaign,” *Forbes*, December 9, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertanaas/2016/12/09/patek-philippe-celebrates-20-years-of-its-iconic-advertising-campaign-you-never-actually-own-a-patek-philippe/>.

- b. **Sometimes good things have to be laid aside to pave the path for great things.**

## 2. RUN!

- a. We are to run with endurance.
- b. Don't quit or give up!
  - i. What do you think God is calling you to do?
  - ii. What can you do today to practice running and stewarding spiritually?

Gatorade Commercial: When I was growing up, Gatorade ran a series of ads pushing Gatorade over any other sports drink and especially water. They would have people hooked up to machines running on a treadmill and show them outlasting and running faster and farther than a person drinking water or another sports drink. They wanted you to think that Gatorade was the secret to the success!

Spiritually, you run with endurance. You never give up! Run the race that God has set before you. You need to submit to his authority. You need to obey his will! **You can't run someone else's race, you must run your race!**

## 3. Focus!

- a. This is all accomplished by keeping our eyes on Jesus...
  - i. This is what we do as believers.
- b. **No runner in a race runs in any direction they want. They run to the finish line.**
  - i. Believers do not run aimlessly... we run with our eyes fixed on the one who paid it all!
- c. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
  - i. Jesus went through all that he had to go through, so that He could relate to you!

Screen Time: Most of you probably have iPhones. Each week they will give you a report of your Screen Time. This is a good indicator of your focus. It will show you down to the very minute how much you use an app. It will tell you the time of day you use it. It will even give you options to lock certain apps after using it for a certain amount of time.

**Spiritually speaking, you need to do a thorough examination of where your spiritual focus is.**

**How are you leveraging your time, opportunities, and resources to make the biggest impact you can make in someone's life?**

Teaching and modeling can only be implemented in your life if you steward your time well!

*To steward well is to run well and to run well is to finish well...*

Akhwari: You may have heard the story of John Stephen Akhwari, the marathon runner from Tanzania who finished last at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. No last-place finisher in a marathon ever finished quite so last.

Injured along the way, he hobbled into the stadium with his leg bloodied and bandaged. It was more than an hour after the rest of the runners had completed the race. Only a few spectators were left in the stands when Akhwari finally crossed the finish line.

When asked why he continued to run despite the pain, Akhwari replied, "My country did not send me to Mexico City to start the race. They sent me here to finish."<sup>60</sup>

The attitude of that athlete ought to be our attitude as we grow older. There is a "race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1), and we are to **keep running** until we reach the finish line.

May we all steward our time for the glory of the Lord Jesus so that we can keep running toward the finish line—to King Jesus. The author and perfecter of our faith.

*What can you do today?*

Homework:

1. Pray that God would show you in which aspect of your life you can become a better steward.
2. Invite someone over to your home this week to share a meal.
3. Read Joshua 24:14-15 3x per day for the next week.

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<sup>60</sup> Olympics, "Marathon Man Akhwari Demonstrates Superhuman Strength," October 18, 1968, <https://olympics.com/en/news/marathon-man-akhwari-demonstrates-superhuman-spirit>.

## Week 5: COMMIT

Question: WHAT do I do now?

REVIEW:

Week 1—you must be a **disciple**. Luke 14.

Week 2—you must **teach** the next generation what God has done in your past and is doing in the present. Psalm 78.

Week 3—you must **model** following Jesus to others. Your talk must match your walk. We are to imitate Jesus. 1 Timothy 4.

Week 4—you must **steward** everything you have for the glory of God. We steward our time, opportunities, and our resources. Deuteronomy 6.

TURN & TALK: Were you able to have someone in your home this week? If so, how did it go?

Teach, model, and steward lay the foundation for generational discipleship. Compare discipleship to a house. Teaching, modeling, and stewarding are essentially laying the foundation, putting up the walls, adding the roof, inserting furniture, etc. The house is move in ready... the question is, *are you ready to grab the keys?*

This house is not yours yet... It is not yours until **you commit**. You don't live at a house until you pack up the boxes and... MOVE IN!

In other terms, are you ready to commit?

**Woodrow Kroll: “When it comes to God’s commands, the issue is not clarity, it is commitment.”<sup>61</sup>**

Dabo Swinney: “All-In”

When Clemson head football coach Tommy Bowden was fired in the fall of 2008, there was an up-and-coming interim that filled the head coaching vacancy with the interim title on October 13, 2008. His name was Dabo Swinney. His introductory press conference spews vision. He was all about getting his players, coaches, and staff members to buy in to the football program at Clemson.<sup>62</sup>

You'll notice that Clemson football has the phrase “All-in” on t-shirts, gear, and the teams football helmets. This is no accident. Dabo made a comment in **one of his first press conference as interim head coach** in which he challenged his team to either go “all-in” or get their stuff and walk out.

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<sup>61</sup> Bobby Lamb, “Total Commitment,” Life’s Most Important Question, March 19, 2015, <https://lmiq.org/total-commitment/#:~:text=Woodrow%20Kroll%20says%20it%20like,committed%20to%20God%20His%20way>.

<sup>62</sup> ClemsonTigerNet, “Dabo Swinney Named Interim Head Coach at Clemson in 2008,” YouTube video, 24:04, accessed June 3, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAy3xEnbO4Y>.

All-in is what week 5 is all about. In fact, there is a scene in Scripture that perfectly sets the tone for exactly what I am talking about.

TURN & TALK: Describe a time in your life when you had to go “all-in.”

Background:

**After going in to possess the Promised Land, Joshua called all the leaders together in effort to remind them of a few things.** In this meeting, he reminds them of **God’s covenant** with His people, that **God gave them the land**, the crossing of the Jordan showed **God’s power**. So, after **reminding them of the past, he states his iconic statement, one that would ring throughout the history of Israel forever...**

### **Joshua 24:14-15**

*14 “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

**The idea in these two verses that is our theme for tonight... you need to draw a line in the sand. In other words, there is going to be a moment where you are going to have to set clear boundaries if you are going to be a disciple who makes other disciples.**

Parents... you are going to have to draw a line in the sand for your children.

Grandparents... you are going to have to draw a line in the sand for your grandchildren.

Married... you are going to have to draw a line in the sand for your spouse.

Single... you are going to have to draw a line in the sand for your friends.

**These two verses are some of the most famous verses in all of Scripture.** Joshua is addressing the nation of Israel at a place called Shechem in which he establishes the **reasons for why they should be loyal to the one true God based upon the past events.** Verses 14-15 are “God’s demands—the laws or stipulations by which Israel should live. The key is for the people **to choose to serve the Lord only.**”<sup>63</sup> Joshua essentially gives the people a choice.

The choice is to **serve other gods or the One true God.**

**Verses 11-13 mention all the “ites.”** Joshua mentions a bunch of other nations... **that they already defeated...** not by military prowess, but by the hand of God! **God says repeatedly it was not by the sword or bow, but by the hand of God!**

The choice is... *“Do you want to serve God or do you want to serve the gods of the other nations we have already defeated?”*

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<sup>63</sup> *Holman Study Bible*, NKJV ed. (Nashville: Holman Bible, 2013), 375n.

What are we committing to?

**1. Commit to fear the Lord. (14)**

14 *“Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.*

**To fear the Lord is to worship him.** The Bible uses the word fear in reference to God over **300 times**.<sup>64</sup> This is not something that we can just gloss over and move on.

We fear the Lord by serving/worshipping him in sincerity and faithfulness.

*Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

To fear the Lord is to truly begin to understand and to realize what life is about!  
Your life doesn't truly begin until you start following Jesus.

*Proverbs 3:7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.*  
Fearing the Lord is to turn away from evil.

Let's read our verse again...

14 *“Now therefore **fear the Lord** and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.*

Joshua says to fear the Lord is to serve him in (1) sincerity and (2) faithfulness.

TURN & TALK: What do you think it means to serve Him in sincerity and faithfulness?  
*A deep commitment and a true commitment.*

**The best test of sincerity and faithfulness is NOT given in times of stress and hostility—this often braces up the energies of combat and makes your faithfulness clear. You have to be trained and focused in these moments.**

**The best test of faithfulness to God in most cases is our course of conduct when the excitement of the conflict is removed, and we have to contend with the deceptive allurements of everyday life.**

Show me what someone does when things are going well, and that person has options... that will show you the true test of if someone fears the Lord in sincerity and faithfulness.

There was a problem. The problem then is a problem that is running rampant today. If the problem did not exist, then Joshua would not have felt the need to address the issue...  
The problem was this...

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<sup>64</sup> JoHannah Reardon, “What Does It Mean to Fear God?,” *Christianity Today*, February 19, 2013, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/bible-answers/spirituallife/what-does-it-mean-to-fear-god.html>.



For they already worshipped him with **words** and **deeds**. In other words, their ritualistic practices gave the false appearance that they worshipped God on the outside, but their hearts were far from God.

If you listened to Doc's message on Sunday, this is the entire message of Matthew 5:8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

This is where all scripture dovetails together. All Scripture in some way, shape, or form, points back to who Jesus is and what He has done.

**Some of them might even have had idols that were still existing in their homes, tucked away in a closet somewhere.** The outside of their lives might have looked okay, but their hearts, however, were not given completely and undividedly given to the Lord, but still clung to the foreign gods, which their fathers had worshipped beyond the river and in Egypt. These they were to **"put away** and to worship God with entire and sincere heart..."

Joshua is making it very plain—you need to renounce all other gods and fear the one true God.

**Like many other instances in Scripture, it wasn't necessarily what they said or what they did, it was what no one else could see but God—the condition of their heart.** They might have said all the right things and practiced all the right things, but their heart was divided.

Let's get really practical: **this is not just true for the Israelites; this is true for us today as well.** Even though we can talk "Christianese"... we "come to church"... we "read our Bible" every now and then... **we can still have a divided heart.**

We can say we fear God... yet travel sports can rule our schedule...

We can say we fear God... but we are not giving to the church, serving in the church, or sharing our faith outside of church...

We can say we fear God... but we rarely have spiritual conversations in our homes...

Here is the scary truth for us today: **you can fool me, you can fool your family, you can fool your church, you can fool your friends... but you can't fool God.** He knows your heart.

Fearing God in sincerity and truth means that you live for an **audience of one.** Your life is lived with **integrity towards him.** You are marked by **fearing the Lord.**

This belief of "fearing the Lord" **should lead to an action...** They were to "put away the gods of their ancestors..." "Put away" means **change direction, get rid of, quit or remove.**

Fearing the Lord in sincerity and truth **will always lead to a change in action...** you must DO something about it. This is the whole idea of "committing." Committing is not

something that you think about. **Committing to discipleship is a conscious, daily decision.**

Each day when you wake up you: decide to shower, decide to brush your teeth, decide to go to work, decide to eat, decide to \_\_\_\_\_.

Why would anything be different on a spiritual level? Each day when you wake up you: **decide** to pray and talk to God, **decide** to read God's Word, **decide** to have a family time of discipleship, **decide** to put away anything that divides your heart from God, **decide** to commit to fear the Lord...

Every single day, we wake up and decide, "today I will follow the Lord (Week 1)."

Every single day, we wake up and decide, "today I am going to TEACH someone what I am learning in Scripture (Week 2)."

Every single day, we wake up and decide, "today I am going to MODEL Christ to others (Week 3)."

Every single day, we wake up and decide, "today I am going to STEWARD all that I have for God's glory (Week 4)."

Every single day, we wake up and decide, Lord, today I commit to you!

If we are going to be disciples who make other disciples, we need to fear the Lord.

## **2. Commit to serve the Lord. (15)**

*15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."*

The whole focus of verse 15 is put upon the last few words... SERVE THE LORD.

Why? Let's unpack...

"If it is evil to serve the Lord..." **Joshua was supposing that they had decided not to serve God...** and he called them then to choose between the **gods their fathers had abandoned (Evil option 1), and those which they had found in the land (Evil option 2).**

We are now introduced to the word serve...

Service: these two verses contain the word "**serve**" **7 times**. It either refers to the present generation of whom Joshua is speaking to, or it is used to challenge the people to decide who they will serve.

Clearly, serving the Lord is about obedience to Him. One of the ways that we practically apply this at Cross Pointe, is by creating avenues of service for people in our church. We might serve in kids, students, in first impressions, etc., but ultimately, we are serving the Lord and His Kingdom through that area.

Part of committing is being ALL-IN...

TURN & TALK: Where do you serve at Cross Pointe Church? Why do you enjoy serving there? If you are not currently serving, where do you think you might want to serve?

**Joshua was not inviting BUT demanding that Israel serve the Lord.** The choice he laid before them **only existed if they refused his demand.** The issue was whether to obey or to choose. **If they refused to obey the Lord, they had to choose which pagan god to serve.**

Our contemporary pluralistic society presents us with a **confusing display of values, goals, and lifestyles.**

Notice the phrase, “the gods of the Amorites.” Most of you are probably thinking, “oh great, **another -ite in the Bible.**” **However, I think there is a deeper meaning here than what is on the surface.** The Amorites *represented the nations surrounding Israel.* In fact, after Joshua’s death, they chose to worship their gods despite Joshua’s call to worship the one true God. **So, don’t look too much into the people group, but think much more in line with the phrase, “surrounding Israel.”**

The things that *surround us can easily entrap us.* The things that are **closest** to us can have a **tremendous effect on how we think, what we say, and how we live.**

What do you let around you? What do you let in?

Notice how Joshua ends his appeal—it is personal. “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” The English uses a future tense for this, but the Hebrew expresses the phrase much better. It does involve future, but it is much more than that. Effectively, Joshua is saying, **“I have chosen to serve the Lord, I am serving the Lord, and I will continue to serve the Lord.”**

Joshua could make this statement because he had lived a life that continuously chose to serve the Lord...

- “Joshua chose to fight against the Amalekites – **choosing when it might have cost everything.**
- Joshua chose to reject the golden calf – **choosing when the flesh might have been satisfied.**
- Joshua chose to serve the Lord by serving Moses – **choosing a humble place.**
- Joshua chose to believe God’s promise about the Promised Land – **choosing against the majority.**
- Joshua chose to recognize the leadership of the Captain of the LORD’s army – **choosing surrender to God.**
- Joshua chose to take leadership of Israel and lead them into the land – **choosing faith instead of unbelief.”**<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> David Guzik, “Joshua 24—The Covenant Renewed,” Enduring Word, accessed June 4, 2023, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/joshua-24/>.

A life of serving God is a life of choosing God.

This is why we as a **staff have chosen the word “commit.”** **Committing is not a corporate decision, it is a personal one.** I cannot decide for you to commit to discipling someone. Only YOU can.

Scripture shows us that Joshua was among the minority to do this. **The others decided to go along with the surrounding culture and do what they were doing.** Yet, Joshua remained steadfast in his faith in the Lord and his commitment to his family serving the Lord.

Joshua in this moment was showing that **he was not just a man of God, he was a man of his household.** He knew they would be tested in the **small, everyday details of life** and he was prepared to lead his family through whatever challenges arose.

One commentator says...

**“It’s worth noting that in the land they were about to possess, homes were filled with small statues of god’s placed in niches in the walls. Joshua knew the everyday domestic temptations they would face and so stood up with his household to decide how they were going to live every day by serving God.”<sup>66</sup>**

TURN AND TALK: What is your home filled with? What content is on your TV? What information is on your phone? *Has anything taken the rightful place of God?*

If you choose to take up the mantle of discipleship, **you are going to be in the minority.** It is not going to be the popular choice. Not everyone will do it. People will have questions. They will think you are **weird.** They will have their opinions, but our hope is that you will say, **“as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”**

*Psalm 37:5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.*

Committing your way to God means that He will give you **people to invest in, opportunities to take advantage of, and resources to use.**

When you commit, you commit everything, not just some things...

“A certain man wanted to sell his house. Another man wanted very badly to buy it, but because he was poor, he couldn’t afford the full price. After much bargaining, the owner agreed **to sell the house for half the original price** with just **one stipulation:** He would **retain ownership of one small nail protruding from just over the door.**

After several years, the original owner wanted the house back, but the new owner was unwilling to sell. So, the first owner went out, found the **carcass of a dead dog,** and hung it from the single nail he still owned. **Soon the house became unlivable, and the family was forced to sell the house to the owner of the nail.**

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<sup>66</sup> Don Everts, *The Spiritually Vibrant Home: The Power of Messy Prayers, Loud Tables, and Open Doors* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 27.

**If we leave the Devil with even one small peg in our life, he will return to hang his rotting garbage on it, making it unfit for Christ's habitation.”<sup>67</sup>**

Matt Chandler defines discipleship... **“All of life for all of life.”<sup>68</sup>** Everything you have for the whole of your life.

We want you “All-In.” Why? Jesus demands it. All in starts with YOU.

**Prayer Time:** At your tables... I want you to take the **next 10 minutes** or so and pray for one another... Everyone sitting at your table should hopefully have enough time to pray. Pray for the people at your table to be ALL-IN. Pray that God would give you a passion for making other disciples.

*What can you do today?*

1. Pray. Ask God to help give you a passion for discipleship.
2. Host a family//household meeting to encourage one another to look for ways to begin discipling someone.
3. Homework: Memorize Psalm 37:5

Next week: by far the most practical week... we will wrap our time up together!

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<sup>67</sup> Dale A. Hays, “One Nail,” *Leadership* 10, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 35.

<sup>68</sup> Matt Chandler, “All of Life for All of Life,” The Village Church, June 4, 2023, <https://www.thevillagechurch.net/resources/sermons/all-of-life-for-all-of-life>.

## Week 6: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Question: WHO am I going to disciple?

Survey: On your table... hopefully you have made some progress through our time together and over the past 6 weeks have been able to start implementing some practices into your life... that was the goal of this course—to help you gauge your level of discipleship and then improve upon it.

What have we discussed?

Personal walk with God... starts with you.

Teach: Psalm 78... open the Bible...

Model: 1 Timothy 4... must walk the walk and talk the talk... eyes...

Steward: Deuteronomy 6... time... opportunities... resources...

Commit: Joshua 24... go all-in... leave nothing behind...

All that is left is to simply implement these things and put them in to practice!

How many of you have heard of the basketball player named **Allen Iverson**?

The **2001-2002 season** was an across-the-board **disappointment** for the 76ers. One year after Iverson won a scoring title and willed Philadelphia within three wins of a championship, the Sixers **barely finished above .500** and were **knocked out of the first round of the playoffs by the Celtics**.

**After dealing with a confrontation with his coach outside the basketball facilities, Allen Iverson stepped to the microphone to address the Philadelphia media, who questioned his practice habits and work ethic...**

\*Allen Iverson: VIDEO\*<sup>69</sup>

We talking about practice today! The only way you are going to start getting better at generational discipleship is to practice!

The question is not **can you do it, but rather are you willing?** Let's look at a few foundational texts before we spend the bulk of our time getting practical tonight.

*1 Timothy 4:15: Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.*

I won't spend a whole lot of time here considering we covered this verse in our "model" session. Immerse = jump in!

There are those that dip their toe in the water and those that jump in! Immerse yourself. Read. Ask good questions. Make this your life. Make this the practice of your life—pouring you life into other people.

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<sup>69</sup> "Iverson Practice!," YouTube video, 2:22, accessed June 15, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGDBR2L5kzI>.

*James 1:22-23: But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was.*

James is known for the great explanation of works. This is not a works-based salvation, but that **if you have faith in the Lord Jesus, it will be manifested in what you DO.**

Disciples HEAR and DO. Otherwise, you are like a person who looks at themselves in the mirror, walks away, and then forgets what he looked at... People who just hear the Bible... they come to church and listen to the message... then walk away and do nothing with it...

*2 Timothy 2:15: Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*

Once again, the Paul and Timothy relationship is on display. Practicing these things means you are not ashamed. You are not afraid of messing up or making a mistake. You are ready!

**Rightly handling Scripture will lead you to discipling well.** You need to know the word. To know the Word is to be in the Word.

*Philippians 4:9: What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

Practice these things... Remember: **The Lord will be with you when you do them...** Put them into practice. You will be at peace because you are serving the God of peace.

TURN & TALK: What do you think will be the biggest obstacle to you discipling your children?

In the space below, I want you to write out as many ideas for how you can practically disciple your children... If you are married, don't share with your spouse. After a few minutes, I want you to share with your table ideas that you have for what you can continue to do or begin doing...

When we started this course 6 weeks ago, we stated that “discipleship will cost you something.” It will be different for everyone, but it will cost you at some point. It is the life that we are called to. Let me illustrate...

“Max Hickerson tells a wonderful story about **guitar phenomenon Les Paul**. Paul was known as the “**Architect of Rock and Roll**” and for **inventing the solid body electric guitar**.

**In 1948, Paul's passion for the guitar almost came to a tragic end.** While driving on a bridge in Oklahoma, his car skidded off into a river and his arm was shattered. **Doctors told Paul they could save his arm, but he would never play the guitar again.** Paul gave the surgeons a suggestion. **Could they set his arm at a slightly less than 90-degree angle so he could still cradle his guitar? That's what they did.**

**So, for the rest of his life, Les Paul could not throw, reach or raise his right arm. It didn't matter to him because he could do the one thing he always wanted to do: he could play the guitar.**

**Maybe we should ask the Lord to remold us and set us so that all we can do is fulfill our passion to serve Him.”<sup>70</sup>**

In our final session, here is what we want to communicate: **Discipleship will cost you something...**

**It might cost you spending some time at home instead of the lake.**

**It might cost you adding a few strokes to your golf game.**

**It might cost you a few friendships.**

**It might cost you financially.**

**Even so, we believe the Bible says it is worth it.**

Les Paul **CHOSE** to have his arm reset so that he could play his guitar. Similarly, you will have to **CHOOSE** to do practice discipling in your home. It is not easy. If it was easy, everyone would do it.

We, the staff of Cross Pointe Church, believe that if you will give your family over to God and practice discipleship, there is no limit to what God could do in your midst.

In our final session together, I want to focus on the practical application. First, you must face the brutal facts that you only have so much time...

**Rope Illustration:** What you do in these moments... effects ALL of eternity!

Why would you waste your life accumulating wealth, burying your mind in entertainment, or wasting it on things that will eventually pass away...

### **Don't Waste Your Life**

Matthew 12:15-21: “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” 16 And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, 17 and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ 18 And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’” 20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Life is not for the accumulation of things... No sane person on their deathbed was ever comforted by his possessions... Jesus said...

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<sup>70</sup> J. Michael Shannon, “Illustration: Commitment,” Preaching, accessed May 15, 2023, <https://www.preaching.com/sermon-illustrations/illustration-commitment/>.



Matthew 16:24: Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

That is what generational discipleship looks like! You can make a difference... an eternal difference by discipling others.

John Piper: “You don’t have to know a lot of things for your life to make a lasting difference in the world. But you do have to know the few great things that matter, perhaps just one, and then be willing to live for them and die for them. The people that make a durable difference in the world are not the people who have mastered many things, but who have been mastered by one great thing.”<sup>71</sup>

Have you been mastered by the Lord Jesus so much so that you are willing to live for Him and die for Him? To give your life for the cause of Christ?

4 Areas that will aid you in your discipleship journey.

## 1. PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP

- a. You must have a daily walk with God.
  - i. You can’t lead someone where you haven’t been.
  - ii. You can’t pour out if you are not being filled up.
- b. Reading plan...
  - i. We have reading plans for you...
  - ii. Old Testament, New Testament, book studies...
- c. Prayer plan...
  - i. I find I pray better when I write things down...
- d. You must share your faith.
  - i. When was the last time you led someone to Christ? When was the last time you tried?

TURN & TALK:

What does your walk with God entail? What is your personal time with God like? What practically do you do?

## 2. ROUTINE

- a. *Habits of the Household: Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms.*<sup>72</sup>
  - “Our routines become who we are, become the story and culture of our families.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> John Piper, “15 Popular Passages from ‘Don’t Waste Your Life,’” Crossway, April 7, 2018, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/15-popular-passages-from-dont-waste-your-life/>.

<sup>72</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*.

<sup>73</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 5.

- “Habits of work and technology are really patterns of worship that deeply form us.”<sup>74</sup>
    - Rule of Life: “A pattern of habits intended to shape a community in the love of God.”<sup>75</sup>
  - Waking
    - Before your **feet hit the floor**, talk to God.
    - Look at the Scriptures before your **smartphone**.
    - Gather your family and “send them out.”
  - Mealtimes
    - Have family meals as often as possible.
    - No **devices**.
    - “Pass the pepper.” A conversation game.
  - Discipline
    - “But note that all of the above mistaken instincts have something in common: when we see our children as problems to manage instead of image-bearers to be disciplined, we end up making moments of discipline about our convenience instead of their discipleship.”<sup>76</sup>
  - Family Devotions
    - Look for times you are already gathered.
    - Something rather than nothing.
    - **It is going to be messy.**
      - Embrace the mess.
      - Everyone is messy. We all sin. Meet them where they are, roll around in the mud, get your hands dirty!
    - Adapting and showing progress: **bedtime prayers, after-dinner devotions, breakfast devotions, inviting them to pray or read early with you, teaching them to do their own quiet time, shared daily readings.**
  - Work
    - Talk about YOUR work (what you do and why you do it).
    - Practice habits of inviting others (children) into the work of the household.
    - Practice habits of letting others (children) see the work outside the household.
  - Play
    - For families with children:
      - Habitually read **imaginative** stories to them (younger).
      - Accept their invitations to play.
      - Habitually send them out to play on their own.

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<sup>74</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 5.

<sup>75</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 14.

<sup>76</sup> Earley, *Habits of the Household*, 76.

- For everyone:
  - Include others in your hobbies.
  - Find ways to thank God for extracurriculars.
  - If you are going to work hard... play hard!
- Conversation
  - **Pursue 1-on-1 moments.**
  - Practice conversation as a way to heal trauma.
  - Model **vulnerability.**

#### TURN & TALK:

Application... Work your ideas for discipleship into your everyday rhythms. Provide a “Sample Schedule” of what you can do each discipling moment...

*When can you do them?* Think about your calendar. Think about your consistencies and patterns. Take a few minutes and write out moments of when you can implement discipleship practices into your daily rhythm...

There are blank notes pages at the end of your book if you need more room...

### 3. MAIN SERVICE

- a. Part of modeling what it looks like to be a disciple is to **allow your kids to see you being involved at church.**
- b. Let them sit with you. Let them see you hold your Bible. Let them see you take notes. Let them see you pay attention.
- c. **They are watching** more than you think they are.
- d. Be there... on time... !
- e. Meet new people!
- f. Serve and enable others to do the same.
- g. Consumers vs. Producers...
  - i. Consumers sit and listen to the message sit and leave...
  - ii. Producers hear the message and apply it and do something with it...

#### TURN & TALK:

How can you become a producer rather than a consumer when it comes to main service?

### 4. CHURCH

- a. Let us help you!
- b. The goal of a pastor is to “equip the saints for the work of the ministry” (Eph. 4:12). **We cannot do discipleship for you, but we can come alongside and help.**
- c. You are not alone...
- d. Be an ambassador for what we are trying to accomplish here!
- e. *“If you build a church, you won’t always get disciples. If you build disciples, you will always get a church.”*

## Tools & Resources:

Website: Axis.org<sup>77</sup>

- Culture Translator: Weekly email updates on culture among kids and teens. Song of the week.
- Parent Guides: step by step approach to a variety of topics.
- Conversation Kits: videos to watch to help walk your child through \_\_\_\_\_...

Resource Table.

**Homework: Start discipling someone this week... find a process that works... repeat it... spend the rest of your life doing it!**

Concluding Survey:

As we end our time together, I would like for you to fill out a survey for me. If you scan the QR code in front of you, that will take you directly to the survey. Please take your time and fill this out. Do not rush. I am not trying to give you something else to do, but rather I hope it will be a helpful exercise for you to complete to assess the current state of family discipleship taking place in your home.

## Final Story

David Livingstone was one of the greatest missionaries to ever live. He was best known for taking the gospel to some of the most dangerous and remote parts of Africa.

While he was trying reach remote portions of Africa, a missionary society wrote to him and asked...

**“Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you.”**

Livingstone wrote back, **“If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don’t want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all.”**<sup>78</sup>

We are not looking for believers wanting to simply find the **easy way out** or just do enough discipleship to **ease their conscience**. We are looking for people **who are willing to take the mantle of discipleship into their homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods, even when it seems like there is no road at all...**

**Your discipleship journey begins... right now...**

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<sup>77</sup> “Connecting Parents, Teens, & Jesus in a Disconnected World,” Axis, accessed June 20, 2023, [www.axis.org](http://www.axis.org).

<sup>78</sup> “A Good Road,” Bible.org, accessed June 2, 2023, <https://bible.org/illustration/good-road>.

APPENDIX 4  
T-TEST RESULTS

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	71.90909091	77.54545455
Variance	136.1818182	90.16450216
Observations	22	22
Pearson Correlation	0.73145245	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	21	
t Stat	-3.298370095	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.001711415	
t Critical one-tail	1.720742903	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.003422831	
t Critical two-tail	2.079613845	

APPENDIX 5

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY RESULTS

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Pre-Test Total</b>	<b>Post-Test Total</b>
1	70	66
2	84	89
3	85	86
4	59	73
5	84	85
6	77	77
7	87	92
8	90	90
9	54	71
10	58	71
11	66	59
12	64	79
13	74	76
14	83	87
15	79	80
16	61	77
17	68	79
18	61	79
19	55	72
20	85	88
21	77	73
22	61	57

APPENDIX 6  
EXPERT PANEL RESPONSES

The following appendix is a summary of the responses given by the expert panel members.

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

<b>Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.				7	
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.				7	
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently addresses a principle derived from the text and is clearly presented.				7	
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical understanding and practice of family discipleship.				7	
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each lesson was clear, containing a main idea pertaining to family discipleship.				7	
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.			1	6	
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum clearly details how Scripture views parents as the primary disciple maker in the home.				7	
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better practice family discipleship.			1	6	

Other Comments:



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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING PARENTS AT CROSS POINTE CHURCH IN DULUTH, GEORGIA, TO UNDERSTAND THEIR BIBLICAL ROLE AS THE PRIMARY DISCIPLE MAKER IN THE HOME

Micah Olson Ledford, DMin  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024  
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This project sought to provide a theological and biblical foundation of family discipleship to help parents see the need to disciple their children. Chapter 1 presents the ministry context of Cross Pointe Church and then lists goals for this project. An overview of the rationale used, and research methodology is also provided. Chapter 2 provides a biblical and theological framework showing the responsibility of discipleship given to parents. Commentary and supporting arguments are also provided in addition to the biblical text. Chapter 3 offers the theoretical and practical issues related to family discipleship. Factors inhibiting the facilitation of family discipleship are addressed. Chapter 4 describes the six-week project in detail and examines what was taught and completed each week. Further, it contains an evaluation of the project by the curriculum evaluators and participants. Chapter 5 provides the conclusion by examining the strengths and weaknesses of the project based on the specified goals and purpose.

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