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EQUIPPING FATHERS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN
LENOIR CITY, TENNESSEE, TO DISCIPLE THEIR
CHILDREN

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

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

by
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December 2024

APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING FATHERS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN
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I dedicate this project to my family. I said to my wife Kim on our wedding day: “Next to God’s grace, she is the greatest gift He has ever given me.” That is infinitely truer today than it was then. To each of my blessings from the Lord: Shelby, Caleb, Olivia, and Ava.

I love each of you and am so grateful to be your father and to have the opportunity to disciple you. Each of you were the motivation behind the development of this project. I pray God grants you the faith to see the magnificence of Him despite the shortcomings in me. I thank my mother for praying for me and continuing to do so and supporting me. I

thank my father for teaching me how to fish and how to work hard-two things I

appreciate more and more each day.

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PREFACE

I thank all the professors at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) for their direction and guidance throughout this process. Thank you to First Baptist Church Lenoir City (FBCLC) and all the members, as well as the staff and pastors who helped me along the way. Throughout this endeavor I have been reminded of all the people God uses in our lives to accomplish His will.

Randall Davenport

Lenoir City, Tennessee

December 2024

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

If there were one person we could intentionally focus on in order to impact the entire family, it would be the father. The impact a father has on his children does not diminish the impact a mother has on the children, but it follows the biblical order found in Ephesians 5:23: “For the husband is the head of the wife.”¹ From that we know the husband is the head of his family. The demands on many fathers today can seem overwhelming, and as the demands increase, so do the expectations. In a recent survey of two thousand fathers, 55 percent agreed with the statement, “I feel like I’m failing as a dad. I’m exhausted and don’t have the time to invest in making a change.”² Chuck Quarles shares an example of one father he knew. While attending a pastor’s conference he had lunch with one of the biblical scholars in attendance. “Dr. Quarles told this scholar he was extremely inspired by his productivity as a thinker and writer, and he went on to ask, ‘I’m amazed by your work. How did you manage to be so prolific?’ This theological heavyweight mumbled under his breath, ‘I sacrificed my son.’”³ He went on to explain,

“Don’t you try to console me . . . Yes, I did that! Even though people seem to be amazed by my productivity as a scholar, the fact is, I would give up every one of those books and far, far more just to have my son back!” Then this prolific writer looked across the table, straight into the eyes of Dr. Quarles, and said, “Just in case you want to walk in my footsteps, know that I pray to God you won’t.”⁴

Often busyness causes Christian fathers to neglect the most important things they should pursue, such as their own personal relationship with God, the spiritual

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

² “We Know the Challenges You Face as a Dad,” *Manhood Journey*, accessed June, 11, 2020, <https://manhoodjourney.org>.

³ Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 145.

⁴ Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 146.

leadership of their families, and their pursuit of greater faithfulness to him. All other relationships are affected by their relationship with God, whether it is their marriage, their relationship with their children, or how they relate to the local church.

Context

This project took place at First Baptist Church Lenoir City (FBCLC) in Lenoir City, Tennessee. It is the largest church in Loudon County, which sits on the western side of Knoxville, Tennessee. FBCLC is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and holds to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. It has a history of biblically grounded preaching and ministry in the community. The current membership is 2,382 with an average weekly attendance of 827 each Sunday. The congregation is made up of mostly professionals—blue-collar workers who live and work in the area, as well as retirees. There are also several multi-generational families at FBCLC.

The church is staff-directed and deacon-led. Currently, the staff is made up of a senior pastor, worship pastor, pastoral care pastor, family pastor, biblical counseling pastor, student minister, and children's ministry director. Our senior pastor, preached his first sermon in view of a call on March 8, 2020. The following Sunday, and for the next three months, we were not able to meet due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Thankfully the deacons were able to work out a plan to allow a vote to take place, even though we were not able to gather together. The church voted on June 7, and he accepted the call. The church had been in serious decline for the four years before that time. For three of those four years, the average worship attendance had dropped by one hundred each year. As the new senior pastor, one of his first goals was to structure the staff in a way that would allow him to move the church to a healthier position. Some of these changes involved moving the administrative duties of the church to the worship pastor's role. A children's ministry director was hired to oversee the ministries from birth to fifth grade. And my previous role as family pastor was moved to biblical counseling pastor, which left the

role of family pastor to be filled. He was hired in late 2020.

This process to create my new position began with a conversation between our senior pastor and me about my experience with biblical counseling. I have been counseling for nearly ten years, and four years ago I completed my certification through the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). The transition has gone very well, and the family ministry is growing and is facing a bright future. The biblical counseling ministry is growing as well, even faster than expected. The Lord has been gracious to FBCLC during the pandemic and up to the present time. Our average attendance is growing, our financial giving is better than it has been in nearly fifteen years, and there is an excitement among the congregation about the future of FBCLC. Another positive note in relation to this project is that there are many more families with children attending and joining the church. With attendance among families growing, this will provide a great opportunity to impact the fathers at FBCLC.

Deacons also provide leadership at FBCLC. And while the structure of the church staff has changed, the structure and responsibilities of the deacons at FBCLC has not. Currently, the deacon body consists of twenty-one active deacons. These deacons serve in a three-year staggered rotation with seven deacons rotating off each year. After a year of not serving, they may be considered by the congregation for another rotation of service. The policy of the church, in agreement with 1 Timothy 3:8–13, allows only men to serve as deacons. This view also applies to the hiring of pastors and ministers but allows women to serve as ministry directors. The deacons' leadership typically involves serving the widows and widowers in the church, approving any changes to the by-laws or church policy, managing any large issues such as purchasing land, and leading the process to form a search team for a new pastor. They also oversee the management of leaders for the church committees, such as the personnel team, property team, and the stewardship team.

The leadership of men is not a new idea at FBCLC. Thankfully, there are

already many men involved in the church's various ministries. Our pastoral care pastor, has led many of the men's ministries in his forty-two-year service at FBCLC. Some of the annual events he began are a car show with two to three thousand in attendance from around the region, a wild game dinner that brings over one thousand men, an annual golf tournament, and a ministry that helps build wheelchair ramps for anyone in the community that needs them, just to name a few. For nearly fifteen years, some of our lay leaders have led annual trips to the Johnny Hunt Men's Conference at FBC Woodstock, and this year under Pastor Hunn's leadership we have begun monthly breakfast meetings for men. The men's breakfast meetings have grown in attendance over the past few months, and our plan is to use these meetings as a springboard to get men involved in small groups and Sunday School classes.

The discipleship ministry for men at FBCLC was in its early stages. Historically the emphasis has been focused more on education. Because of that emphasis, men's discipleship had promoted large group meetings over one-on-one or small group discipleship and training. The overarching idea of discipleship with our men of the church was that discipleship is more about education than spiritual multiplication. Most men would not articulate discipleship as, "an individual and a corporate activity as we follow Christ and help each other along the way."⁵ If they would agree with that definition, the majority would not be equipped to follow it. The lack of a clear definition of discipleship has had a direct impact on fathers. Consequently, there was no understood connection to discipleship with a father's role in his home. One positive aspect of the discipleship ministries was many of the men at FBCLC did have a desire to grow in their faith. And most of the men who have expressed this desire are between the ages of 25 to 55, married, and have children.

⁵ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 3rd ed., 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 169.

Although FBCLC was poised with a great opportunity, there were some challenges. One of the challenges was building a discipleship ministry for fathers was clarifying that discipleship is equipping fathers for spiritual multiplication not only giving them more knowledge. Knowledge plays a key role and giving fathers more knowledge on how to disciple their children was a great place to start, but we had to have orthopraxy with our orthodoxy. We wanted to build a biblical model of fathers discipling their children, and we wanted that methodology to follow the Scriptures. The tendency could be too pragmatic in our approach, as Colin Marshall and Tony Payne write,

Even among those godly, faithful pastors who avoid the trendsetting fads of Christian marketing, there is confusion—most especially between what Christian ministry is in the Bible, and what Christian ministry has become in the particular tradition or denomination of which they are part. We are all captive to our traditions and influenced by them more than we realize. And the effect of tradition and long practice is not always that some terrible error becomes entrenched; more often it is that our focus shifts away from our main task and agenda, which is disciple-making.⁶

For the past few years, these men—and the church—had not been given a clearly communicated vision as to what discipleship truly looked like in the life of a believer, specifically fathers. As a result, no clear steps were provided for moving someone from a church attender, to a church member, to being discipled, and then to discipling someone else.

A second challenge for our fathers was understanding how to fit discipleship with their children into their already busy week. Men with a desire to grow deeper in their faith were consistently talking about how their lives are full of activities that involve work and their families. They were spending time at work to provide for their families, taking their children to school or extracurricular activities, and attending church, albeit not every Sunday. They were doing the things that regular families do in our surrounding community—simply taking care of their families. Yet these fathers saw a disconnect

⁶ Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2009), 15.

between their faith and their everyday responsibilities.

A third challenge was the overall lack of parental involvement in the spiritual lives of their children. Parents at FBCLC are devoted to their children. They wanted what was best in all areas of their children's lives—socially, academically, athletically, and spiritually. That desire was one of the reasons they would bring their children to FBCLC. On Sunday mornings we did, and still do, conduct KidStuf. KidStuf was a vibrant worship service geared toward children, with upbeat worship songs, skits, videos, and Bible teaching. Wednesday evenings were in a transition period. For the past fifteen years we had Awana for Pre-K through fifth grade. During the fall, we had Upward Soccer, which draws a few hundred participants from our church and the community. The children's programming had been one of the most appealing ministries to the families of our church. Our pastoral care pastor's own observations from his forty-plus years at FBCLC reveals that most families had joined FBCLC because of the preaching and the activities. While fathers had been involved with their children in those activities, a low percentage of those fathers had taken an active role in their children's discipleship.

Rationale

John Bishop, in his book *God Distorted*, writes, "I think that whatever comes to mind when you think about your father, there is a good chance that you attribute similar characteristics to your image of your heavenly Father."⁷ In Matthew 6:9, Jesus teaches Christians how to pray, and he begins his prayer with, "Our Father." When we ponder the impact of Jesus's teaching, our view of our own fathers and fatherhood in general may change. As believers in Christ, we can now approach the creator of the universe as a child would approach his earthly father. A biblical view of fatherhood can cause a dramatic impact on fathers and their children. As the father grows to be more like

⁷ John Bishop, *God Distorted: How Your Earthly Father Affects Your Perception of God and Why It Matters* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2013), 8.

Christ, his actions will be godlier, and thus his impact upon his children will be greater, especially as he disciplines them. And as the father disciplines them, we will begin to see the impact an earthly father has on his own family, particularly the impact the father has on shaping his children's view of God.

Christ commissioned each believer to take part in fulfilling the Great Commission. At FBCLC, our desire is to make sure the commission takes place in the home too. Therefore, we must be intentional, effective, and faithful in the discipleship of the children at FBCLC. To do that, there must be a partnership with the parents. Parents have a strong desire to give their children good things. Parents want their children to excel in their academic studies, so they look for the best schools in the area. Many hope their child will attend some form of higher education after high school, and that desire pushes many parents to get their children involved in sports at a very young age in the hopes their child may earn a scholarship. Most of the parents, if not all of them, want their children to live by strong morals for their life. While each of those desires are not inherently wrong, when compared to the Bible, they lack what should be our greatest desire for our children, which is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matt 22:37).

Part of the rationale for this project was to learn, grow, and develop the project for my own benefit. I do not stand on the outside of typical Christian fathers, looking into a group of dads who miss opportunity after opportunity for impacting their children for Christ—I am right there with them. I needed help in discipling my children and in making Christ their treasure. Having four children of my own, I could relate to the fathers in FBCLC. I not only wanted to impact the fathers in our church with this project, but I also wanted to grow in discipling my own children.

Parents at FBCLC had the same struggles all Christian parents had. One common struggle was against the influence of the larger culture, which encouraged parents to value what the culture values. In light of these struggles, we wanted to model

and guide them to not only ask, “What is good for my child?” but, “What is best?” The best thing we can give our children is Christ, and focusing on their fathers was paramount for accomplishing this task. There were many fathers present on a Sunday morning, but we desired more than only their presence—we desired their intentional involvement. Therefore, fathers—including myself—were the key component in the development of this project.

It was encouraging at that point in the life of FBCLC that this philosophy was held by not only the family pastor and myself, but also our senior pastor. In his short time here at FBCLC, Pastor Hunn had repeatedly mentioned from the pulpit the imperative call of parents to disciple their children and of the church to come alongside those parents, specifically fathers, to encourage and equip them in that work.

Since fathers have a distinct role and calling from the Lord to disciple their children, the time to emphasize and equip those fathers provided a great opportunity for FBCLC. With a new senior pastor, new roles for some of the staff, and a renewed emphasis on the vision of the church, FBCLC stood ready to see the Lord work in our church, in our community, and in the homes of our families. God’s Word clearly speaks to teaching and training the next generation to know God and follow him. Because of this command, it was vital for us to impact parents, specifically fathers, so they could be faithful to what God had commanded them to do.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip fathers at First Baptist Church in Lenoir City, Tennessee, to disciple their children by equipping fathers to be disciple makers in their homes.

Goals

Four goals needed to take place for the fulfillment of this project. These goals reflected an evaluation of the fathers, a process of teaching and training them, and a plan

to continue to equip more fathers to disciple their children within FBCLC.

1. The first goal was to assess what knowledge fathers had regarding discipling their children.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-week teaching series that would address key priorities and practices for fathers to effectively disciple their children.
3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the fathers to disciple their children by teaching the six-week series developed in goal 2.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a five-year strategic plan that would implement ongoing efforts to sustain a discipleship ministry equipping fathers and to create a culture of discipleship within FBCLC.

Research Methodology

Each one of the above goals would build upon the other to complete this project. The first goal was to assess what knowledge fathers have regarding discipling their children. To acquire this information, a pre-series survey would be used. This information was collected by using the Basics of Biblical Discipleship Inventory (BBDI).⁸ 117 fathers were invited to take part in the research who were (1) Christians, (2) members of FBCLC who attended faithfully and were already involved in small groups and/or Sunday School, and (3) were able to participate in the teaching series to be developed and implemented for this project. This goal was successfully met when more than twenty BBDI's were completed.

The second goal was to develop a six-week teaching series that addressed key priorities and practices for fathers to effectively disciple their children.⁹ After the teaching series was developed, it was measured by an expert panel of the pastoral staff and men's ministry leaders. They utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness,

⁸ See appendix 2. 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.

⁹ See appendix 4.

teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the teaching series.¹⁰ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the panel's expectations. If the material had failed to meet that standard, then it would have been revised until it did so.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the fathers so they could disciple their children. This goal was measured by administering a post-series survey to measure changes in the fathers' knowledge gained from the six-week teaching series. This goal was successfully met when the t-test two sample assuming unequal variances demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-series survey scores.¹¹

The fourth goal was to develop a five-year strategic plan to be implemented to sustain a discipleship ministry of equipping fathers and to create a culture of discipleship within FBCLC. In lieu of my role change at FBCLC from Family Pastor to Biblical Counseling Pastor, and out of respect for my colleague, the steps to create a strategic plan were given to the current Family Pastor. It would then be presented to the family ministry team for their approval at his discretion. The goal was successfully met when myself and the Family Pastor agreed to proceed in this manner.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Disciple. A disciple is someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way.¹² The leader is Christ, and the way is determined by the Bible.

¹⁰ See appendix 1.

¹¹ See appendix 6.

¹² Paul Helm, "Disciple," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 1, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Ada, MI: Baker, 1996), 629.

Discipleship. Discipleship is both an individual and a corporate activity as we follow Christ and help each other along the way.¹³

Disciple maker. A disciple maker is someone who invites others into a relationship with Christ *and* comes alongside them to teach and show them how to follow Christ. As these new believers spiritually mature in their walk with God, they become equipped to go and make new disciples.¹⁴

Family. The term family is defined when “any adult over the age of eighteen who has at least one child, under the age of eighteen, living in the home.”¹⁵ For the purpose of this project, the definition assumed the father was living at home with the child.

Family ministry. This term describes ministry that is focused on the family. Timothy Paul Jones defines family ministry as, “The process of coordinating a church’s practices so that all members develop diverse discipling relationships and so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives.”¹⁶

Biblical manhood. This term for this project means, “A man who rejects passivity, accepts responsibility, leads courageously, and expects God’s greater reward.”¹⁷ It was defined this way because the Bible gives men and women distinct roles in the church, as well as in the home. Some examples of these roles for men are pastor (in the church) and husband and father (in the home).

¹³ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 169.

¹⁴ “Discipleship 101,” The Disciple Maker, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://thedisciplemaker.org/discipleship-101/>.

¹⁵ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 169.

¹⁶ Timothy Paul Jones, “Family Ministry: A New Definition for Family Ministry, Part 3,” *Timothy Paul Jones* (blog), accessed December 12, 2019, <https://www.timothypauljones.com/family-ministry-a-new-definition-for-family-ministry-part-3/>.

¹⁷ Robert Lewis, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight: A Father’s Role in Guiding His Son to Authentic Manhood* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2007), 51.

Home. Webster's Dictionary defines this term as, "The social unit formed by a family living together."¹⁸ For this project, I focused on the homes where the father lives with their child. This consisted of a residential home, an apartment, or a duplex.

Strategic plan. Aubrey Malphurs defines this term as, "The envisioning process that a point leader uses with a team of leaders on a regular basis to think and act so as to design and redesign a specific ministry model that accomplishes the Great Commission in their unique ministry context."¹⁹

One limitation applied to this project. The accuracy of the pre- and post-series surveys on discipleship was dependent upon the honesty of the fathers filling out the surveys. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents were assured that their answers would remain anonymous.

Three delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project would address the discipleship knowledge and practices of fathers only. Second, the project would be confined to a fifteen-week time frame. This gave adequate time to conduct the pre-evaluation surveys and conduct the post-series survey once sessions had been completed. Finally, this project would be limited only to the discipleship of fathers who are members of FBCLC.

Conclusion

The leadership of the home is a vital factor as it relates to discipleship in the church. Considering recent cultural changes and the busyness of life for most families, it is imperative for fathers to be actively growing in their own spiritual lives, striving for greater faithfulness as a Christian and a father, and discipling their children. A careful

¹⁸ Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster, 2020), s.v. "home."

¹⁹ Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 26.

examination of the Scriptures will show that fathers are called to lead their families spiritually. Through this process, fathers would be more faithful to God and to the spiritual leadership of their families.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
FOR THE PROJECT

Psalm 127:3 states that children are a reward to parents from the Lord.

Children will learn many things, but Christian parents should teach them what God wants their children to know. As the Puritan John Flavel explains, “If you neglect to instruct [children] in the way of holiness, will the devil neglect to instruct them in the way of wickedness? No; if you will not teach them to pray, he will to curse, swear, and lie. If ground be uncultivated, weeds will spring.”¹ Christian parents are called to evangelize and disciple their children, and this calling involves both the father and the mother. Scripture does not devalue motherhood or a mother’s role in the life of her child, but God’s Word places a special emphasis upon the fathers’ spiritual leadership, nurturing, and training of their children.

Discipleship is at the heart of what Christ has called every believer to do. Just before his ascension into heaven, Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission. As Matthew 28:18–20 reads,

Jesus came near and said to them [i.e., his disciples], “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 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.”

The emphasis in the passage lies with “Go, therefore, and make disciples.” The main verb is *mathēteusate*, which translates as “make disciples.”² Although Jesus was speaking

¹ John Flavel, *Mystery of Providence* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1840), 58, quoted in Elliot Ritzema and Elizabeth Vince, eds., *300 Quotations for Preachers from the Puritans*, Pastorum Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), Kindle.

² Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman &

directly to his own disciples, Christians throughout history have rightly understood this command to be for all believers. One noteworthy aspect of Jesus’s ministry is the intentionality Jesus exhibited in making disciples. There was public teaching, small meetings, healings, and debates, but throughout Christ’s earthly ministry, there was personal discipleship. Jesus spent most of his ministry in close relationship with his disciples. His goal was not just to reach those men but also to train them to reach others who would do likewise. Reflecting on the focus of Jesus’s ministry, Robert Coleman states, “Really it is a question of which generation we are living for.”³ If Jesus’s goal was ultimately to reach the next generations, then the goal of fathers should be no different. Fathers should teach and disciple their children to teach and disciple their own children and future generations to come.

When Jesus gave the Great Commission, he did not tell Christians to make disciples in certain locations but wherever believers are. According to a study done by LifeWay Research, only 24 percent of parents who attend religious services regularly agree that successful parenting is when their child is godly or *has faith in God*.⁴ This is a gallant goal, but it falls short of Christ’s command in Matthew 28:18–20 for Christians to baptize disciples and teach them to observe “everything I have commanded you.” Christ’s command reveals the importance of Christians’ making disciples of our own children. A careful reading of the Scriptures will emphasize that discipleship should occur in many different locations, but it should also occur in our own homes. To show this emphasis I will expound upon Deuteronomy 6:4–7, Psalm 78:1–8, and Ephesians 6:4.

Holman, 1992), 431.

³ Robert E. Coleman, *The Masterplan of Evangelism*, 2nd ed. (Asheville, NC: Revell, 1994), 35.

⁴ Lifeway Research, “Lifeway Research Looks at Role of Faith in Parenting,” December 22, 2020, <https://research.lifeway.com/2009/03/24/lifeway-research-looks-at-role-of-faith-in-parenting/>.

Deuteronomy 6

According to Deuteronomy 6:4–7, the father’s walk with the Lord is foundational in their spiritual leadership of their family. Deuteronomy is the last book of the Torah. The name of the book comes from the Latin Vulgate and means “second law.”⁵ The reason it is referred to as the “second law” is that in it, God re-emphasizes the law first articulated in the book of Exodus. Since the wilderness generation who were given the law did not trust the Lord to take the promised land, God restated his law to ensure the next generation knew it. It was a very gracious act of God to remind the Israelites of his law because he intervenes and does what their forefathers did not do, namely, teach them God’s law. Moses is God’s mouthpiece to the people and is only relaying the message that has been given to him.⁶ The sequence connecting Deuteronomy 5 and 6 may be summed up in this way: “God gave me all this command (5:31) , . . . so be careful to do all that God has commanded you (5:32–33) And this is it (6:1–3)!”⁷ Chapter 6 offers glimpses of why the “second law” is a fitting designation. God has been preparing his chosen people to assume possession of the promised land, and as God does that, he reiterates to this current generation what he told the previous generation—their forefathers. Verses 4–9 present the “Shema,” which is “the expression of the essence of all of God’s person and purposes in sixteen words of Hebrew text”⁸—powerful words given by a powerful God for a powerful purpose. Gerbrandt writes, “Judaism and Christianity agree in designating this passage . . . the most important text in the whole of the Old Testament.”⁹

⁵ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 21.

⁶ Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 120.

⁷ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 132.

⁸ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 162.

⁹ Gerald Eddie Gerbrandt, *Deuteronomy*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2015), 105.

Verse 4 begins with “Hear, O Israel,” which is a call for God’s people not only to listen to him but to also obey him. The Hebrew word for hear (שמע) appears thirty-seven times in Deuteronomy and means “a way of life.”¹⁰ The preceding verse clearly indicates that this is God’s intention: “Listen, Israel, and be careful to follow them [i.e., God’s statutes and commands]” (v. 3). Even verse 2 shows that the Shema is for “you, your son, and your grandson.” So, when Moses shares the command of God to the people, he is calling them to pay close attention to what he (i.e., Moses) is telling them.¹¹ And fathers today should do the same with their own children.

In verse 4, God calls out to the Israelites and declares some significant truths with a two key words: “our” and “one.” First, when God says “our,” he is communicating that there is a relationship between himself and Israel. This relationship is a reference to the covenant God established with his people, beginning with Abraham. Even though God disciplined Israel by making them wander in the desert for forty years, the covenant between Israel and God remained. And since the covenant between them continued, the relationship between them endured. The second key word in verse 4 is “one.” By referring to himself as one, God is showing that a unity exists within the triune God, and this unity indicates that the same God who exists in a trinitarian relationship is the same God who has a relationship with Israel. These characteristics of God and how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to one another help Christians see how they are to relate to each other as people, especially members of the same family. That is, just as God relates to himself, Christians are to relate to their own family in a harmonious way, and this includes a parent with his or her child. As Bruce Ware writes, “In the Trinity, the various parts played by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit lead to the beauty and unity of harmony,

¹⁰ Timothy A. Gabrielson, “Obedience,” in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), eBook.

¹¹ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 132.

and this is the model we should emulate in our relationships.”¹²

Verse 5 sums up the law in one brief sentence: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” Jesus quotes this verse when confronted by a religious leader concerning the greatest commandment:

And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test him: “Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.” (Matt 22:36–40)

The command in Deuteronomy is central because it is part of renewing the covenant between God and Israel. And because of all that God has done for the Israelites in their salvation, “the only appropriate attitude to [their] God is that of love.”¹³ There is repetition in terminology from the covenant established with Israel. This terminology is similar to not only covenantal language but also father-son language.¹⁴ One of the best examples of someone loving another is the love a parent has for his or her child. Jesus refers to God as Father in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4). In addition, Hebrews 12 likens God to human fathers who love and discipline their sons. The author of Hebrews makes the connection that just as God loves and disciplines his “children,” human fathers are to do the same with their children.

It is fitting to view the command in the Shema as illustrative of a father loving his children. God himself is doing the same, teaching his statutes and commands to his children. The natural outpouring of believers’ following the Shema’s command to love God is for believers to obey God. It is illogical for someone who loves his authority to

¹² Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 136.

¹³ Anthony Phillips, *Deuteronomy*, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 55.

¹⁴ Dennis J. McCarthy, “Notes on the Love of God in Deuteronomy and the Father-Son Relationship between Yahweh and Israel,” *Christian Biblical Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (April 1965): 144–47. See also J. W. McKay, “Man’s Love for God in Deuteronomy and the Father/Teacher–Son/Pupil Relationship,” *Vetus Testamentum* 22, no. 4 (January 1972): 426–35.

disobey that same authority. Hence, because God loves his children and thus offers a picture of a father loving his children, and one of the best ways a father can love his children is to love God, then one of the most effective ways for a father to show his love for God is to obey God by teaching his children about the one he loves most—God.

A key word in Deuteronomy 6:5 is “your.” This word shows a relational aspect to obedience to God. Israel as a whole should obey God, but for that to occur, the individual themselves must obey God. This individual obedience is important with respect to the Shema since believers’ love of God is shown by individual obedience to God, and obedience to God is shown by believers’ teaching their own children. The command is about “piety and lifestyle.”¹⁵ Piety, being the “godly practices, spiritual habits or experiential religion” someone lives out.¹⁶ Verse 5 communicates believers’ knowing God or having a relationship with God, and within that relationship, there will be a Holy Spirit-enabled desire to do what God wants believers to do. Their lifestyle will now be characterized by their heartfelt desire to follow the commands and direction God wants from them, instead of their own desires that previously led them.

Verse 6 mentions “these words,” which encompass all of the words that Moses is passing on to the Israelites. This phrase also reminds readers of the first verse of the book (Deut 1:1). One commentator describes the phrase as “the full corpus of the covenant text.”¹⁷ God is the one who has given the commandments. The phrase “these words that I am giving you” (6:6) is like a gift from a father to his children. God desires for his hearers to keep his commands “in your heart.” This motivation from the heart means that God’s commands are to be remembered and lived out. People who have

¹⁵ J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 5 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 141.

¹⁶ Kelly M. Kapic and Wesley Vander Lugt, *Pocket Dictionary of the Reformed Tradition*, IVP Pocket Reference Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 87.

¹⁷ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

something in their heart would think about these things and make them important in their life. It is noteworthy that God specifically mentions the people's hearts and not their minds in verse 6. Reference to the heart focuses on the consciousness of the people. Today, the heart typically refers to the center of a person, especially the emotional aspect, but in ancient Hebrew times, the heart was understood to refer to the center of a person's rational aspect.¹⁸ To put it another way, the Israelites' obedience to God would be "a response based upon understanding," not some formulaic way of earning God's favor.¹⁹ As they continued to grow in their understanding of God, the natural overflow of that understanding would be for the Israelites to apply those things in their own lives and to tell others. This overflow appears in other books of the Old Testament as well, such as Jeremiah.²⁰ A contextual view of this passage reveals the following progression: "there is a movement from the private heart of the individual, outward via the family in the home, to the public realm of society at the gate."²¹ It starts with the individual when God miraculously changes a person's own heart. Once a person's heart is changed, he or she will desire to follow God's commands, such as the Shema, which impacts those in one's own home, one's spouse, and one's children. Then, those impacted in the home—including the father—will begin to impact those outside of the home. Equipping believers closest to oneself and then sending them out to reach others follows a similar pattern given with Christ's commissioning of his disciples in Acts 1:8. It begins with an

¹⁸ Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 56.

¹⁹ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 93, eBook.

²⁰ As Duane Christensen details, "The commandments are to be *upon your heart*; that is, the people are to meditate upon them to the point that the law is internalized, exactly as Jeremiah saw so clearly when he spoke of a 'new covenant' in which Yahweh declares that 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts (Jer. 31:31–33).'" Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 144.

²¹ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 137. See also Richard Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 91.

emphasis on the nearest area, “Jerusalem,” and then eventually spreads “to the ends of the earth.”

The first word in Deuteronomy 6:7, according to the NIV, is “impress” (ESV: “teach . . . diligently”). In Eugene Merrill’s words, “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.”²² This image offers details of how tedious this work can be, how much care is to be taken in following this command, and the impact a father has on the lessons he passes on to his children. The goal is for fathers to pass on the commands from the Lord to their children, teaching them in such a way that they will remember the words of God and recall them even in their old age. Then, when they have their own children, they can do the same thing their parents have done and pass on God’s commands to the next generation. The goal, however, is not only to pass on a knowledge of the law of Moses but also to help cultivate a sincere love for God.

The first part of verse 7 focuses on the activities believers do as a family. Sitting in the home signifies resting, eating, or some other type of inactivity with the family, whereas walking, working in the yard, or cleaning the house represents activity. The activities can also range from going to church, eating at a restaurant, or even relaxing on vacation. The last part of verse 7 talks about time. Lying down represents the end of the day, and getting up represents the start of the day. No matter what is going on inside or outside of the home, parents are to pass on—or “impress”—the words of God to their children. The CSB reads, “Repeat them to your children,” which communicates the idea of consistency. For the teaching of children to be consistent, it must take place in different aspects of life. It can take place in a formal setting, such as a family devotion, or an informal setting, like a trip to the grocery store. No aspect of believers’ lives or the lives of their children are to be separated from the Word of God. The command, and the

²² Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

passing on of God's commands, is to "permeate every sphere of the life of man."²³ In sum, according to Deuteronomy 6, parents' obeying God's commands and passing them on to their children is all-encompassing. In the next section, I examine Psalm 78 to show that a father's obedience to God can have a direct impact on the spiritual lives of his children.

Psalm 78

Psalm 78 begins with an historical account of Israel and a command for fathers to teach their children, "so the next generation will not repeat the mistakes of their forebears."²⁴ This Psalm is focused on teaching; in a similar way someone would use a catechism. We see this style of teaching as we look at Psalm 78 and how it follows a similar pattern found in the Torah. John Goldingay writes, "the subsequent stress on the passing on of Israel's story from one generation to another recalls Deuteronomy 6."²⁵ Psalm 78 provides a call to worship for Israel, and a closer look at this Psalm will show that the natural overflow of this worship will be to teach their children. The point of this Psalm is to not only teach our children, but for us, and our children, to worship the Lord. The Psalm also gives us a plan of discipleship, similar to what we can see in 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul writes, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Paul encourages Timothy not only to teach faithful men, but to teach them to teach other faithful men. He gives us an emphasis on the present and simultaneously on the future. The hearers of Psalm 78 are to do the same as they, "teach the young so well that they in turn will be

²³ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 93.

²⁴ Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 174, Kindle.

²⁵ John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol. 2, *Psalms 42–89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 716.

able to teach others.”²⁶ Coleman describes this as “spiritual multiplication” and the way Jesus taught his disciples.²⁷ This teaching in the New Testament was nothing new, but the way God intended to grow His kingdom, similar to what we see in the Old Testament.

Psalm 78 connects to Deuteronomy 6 and we can see that in the words and actions described in this chapter.²⁸ As we look at this psalm and how it references the prophets and the priests and how they were to be the ones who would speak to God’s people, and how the fathers are the leaders of their homes, then it is reasonable that fathers are to be the ones who should speak to their children and encourage them to “listen to the words of my mouth.”²⁹ This generation is to tell their children the memory of God and the acts of God.³⁰

The psalm begins with a call to listen carefully to the words that are about to be shared. This call is reminiscent of Deuteronomy in the flow and the message. The way Scripture interprets Scripture helps stress to us the importance of the whole counsel of God. It is not only about hearing these words, but also about taking heed to the exhortations and warnings that come from this Psalm and living “the right kind of life.”³¹

When we look closely at verse 2, we see some key words that help us understand this connection even more. One of those key words is “mysteries” or “dark sayings.” How would anyone know how to pass on a mystery to someone, if they themselves did not know the answer to it? So, whoever teaches this mystery must know themselves what they are teaching, and understand the depth of the mystery to pass it on

²⁶ Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, New American Commentary, vol. 13 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 75.

²⁷ Coleman, *The Masterplan of Evangelism*, 27.

²⁸ Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 289.

²⁹ Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, 77.

³⁰ Broyles, *Psalms*, 176.

³¹ Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 717.

to others. An application of this text points to the father who must himself know the mystery, and then he is to pass that mystery on to his children. He cannot pass on a mystery without first understanding it, otherwise, both parties become confused. This idea goes back to the purpose of this Psalm, which is “so the next generation will not repeat the mistakes of their forebears.”³² It is given so those who learn of God’s holiness, His might, and His wonders, will pass that knowledge to their children, and their children’s children. As a father grows in his own knowledge and wisdom of following God, he can naturally and intentionally steer his own children toward the Lord, “so that they may learn its lessons and worship its Lord.”³³

Another key word in verse 2 is “old.” It signifies that this is nothing new for the people to hear, rather it is what has been told in the past. Asaph is hearkening us back to what has already been said, so we will not neglect it. This instruction is a call for fathers to remember and to take heed to teach their children. Like a link in a chain, “there are things that the ancestors passed down to the current generation, and it is the current generation’s task to pass them on to the next.”³⁴

In verse 3 we begin to see a clearer connection between fathers and their children. The word “ancestors” can include a much larger group than only parents. It could include grandparents, teachers, preachers, and even the whole nation. It is more encompassing than only their home, but certainly not less. This process is one way wisdom is to be passed down from one generation to the next: from father to child. Consider the book of Proverbs, and how often Solomon writes directly to his son and how valuable he desires wisdom to be with him. The same is still true today; wisdom is valuable, but it must be taught and shared. And who is positioned in the most strategic

³² Broyles, *Psalms*.

³³ Cyril S. Rodd, *Psalms 73–150*, Epworth Preacher’s Commentaries (London: Epworth Press, 1964), 12.

³⁴ Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 712.

place for that to happen but the father?

There are more than facts being passed down from fathers to their children, because it is not enough to only know things about God, but He is also to be obeyed. Just as children are to obey their parents, Christian parents are to obey God. As fathers obey God, their children receive more than an education from their fathers, they are shown an example to follow, and this process is discipleship. Discipleship is “both an individual and a corporate activity as we follow Christ and help each other along the way.”³⁵ Fathers are to disciple their children by reaching their children with the Gospel so they put their faith in Christ, by training their children to follow God, and equipping their children to reach others. As we look at the life of Jesus and His ministry with the twelve, He was doing the same.

Verse 4 highlights impacting the next generation. It is clear if the next generation is going to be told about the wonders of God, then the current generation must know and obey those same facts. Otherwise, they cannot be passed down. This verse can also be viewed as a warning if they do not follow God, because “it is vital that the present generation plays its role as the link between the past generation and the next generation. Without this link, the chain of learning will be broken.”³⁶ If that chain is broken then the next generation and subsequent generations may fail to follow God and forget His works.

Verse 5 shows us how this task is not “merely a cultural tradition but especially a divine obligation.”³⁷ The covenant and law has already been established by God with Israel and this verse is a reminder of how God wants the knowledge of the covenant to be passed down to the next generation. Some would call it a “covenantal

³⁵ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 169.

³⁶ Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 719.

³⁷ Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 721.

duty” and this duty is the same thing commanded in Deuteronomy 6:6–9.³⁸ There are three key words that reveal what role God has played in the process: “established,” “appointed,” and “commanded.” God “established” a testimony with Jacob. The relationship began once that testimony was made. A relationship is personal, and Jacob did not establish it, but God did. The testimony is what God has done for Jacob. It would remind the Israelites that what they are to teach has been around for a long time, it is not new. He is not giving them an old command but the same law he gave to Jacob is the same law they are to teach to their children. The word “appointed” broadens our focus to the people of God. We notice how the emphasis in this verse moves from Jacob, to Israel, and then it will move to the next generation. God has chosen Israel to follow Him and has established a covenant relationship with them. Then the verse progresses to the “command” God gives to fathers, “That they [our fathers] should teach them [testimony and law in Israel] to their children” (Ps 78:5 NASB). The command is a covenantal duty of fathers to God and to their children. God has established a testimony with Jacob, established a law with Israel, then commands the fathers to teach their children the history of what He has done with Jacob and through Israel. Again, this does not devalue the work mothers do in discipling their children, but God does call fathers specifically to teach their children.

In verse 6 the language becomes even stronger regarding the importance of why we are commanded to head this instruction, and it also provides us the steps to fulfil the command. This verse contains the word “know,” and “this knowing is not sense perception, but understanding, recognizing, always with the connotation of *obedience* [emphasis added].”³⁹ This word points the reader to a goal of this Psalm, namely that the

³⁸ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 75.

³⁹ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms*, vol. 2, *Psalms 51–100*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 289.

“next generation will not repeat the mistakes of their forebears.”⁴⁰ But this applies to every generation because, “Each generation is to rise up, which means take action, to pass the covenant on to their children.”⁴¹ The idea of the covenant helps us see the importance of what parents are called to do. This mentioning of the covenant would have reminded each of the hearers about the covenant previously established with Jacob. As they thought about Jacob, they would have thought about their own role in passing on the glories of the covenant to their own children, just as it had been passed on to them.⁴² But this investment does not stop with their own children, because as verse 6a tells us, it is for the children yet to be born. And as these fathers are being faithful to the Lord to pass on the knowledge of God and his covenant, they are teaching their children how to teach their future children when they are blessed with them. This verse reiterates that it is not just about passing on knowledge, but for that knowledge to bring about saving hope in their hearts and the knowledge in their minds to be focused on obeying God. The Hebrew word for “arise” is קום and it is the same Hebrew word from verse 5 translated “establish.” God commands fathers to establish the testimony of Jacob in their children. All of this work is done for their children to have hope, and for their hope to be in the one true God.

Verses 7–8 show us some of the fruits that can be produced when fathers are faithful in the discipling of their children. We also saw this example in Deuteronomy 6:20–21, “with the tradition of the signs and wonders God has performed: If your son asks you in the future, saying, ‘What are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord our God commanded you?’ You will say to your son, ‘We were servants to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out from Egypt with a might

⁴⁰ Broyles, *Psalms*.

⁴¹ Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1, 1–41, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011), 655.

⁴² Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 654.

hand.”⁴³ As fathers teach their children, the hope is for their children to put their confidence in God. This confidence begins as they become believers and continue to look to the Lord for their hope and contentment, not themselves or worldly things. Focusing on ourselves removes the focus from God and can lead our children to forget about God. Most Christian parents today would be shocked to think about their own children forgetting about God, but as we have seen from this passage, the impact of failing to teach who God is, will have tremendous impacts on the third and fourth generations. Parents may not see their own children forgetting about God, but if their children are not taught well, then they may do exactly what Israel did and history could repeat itself.

So, we are to remember all that God has done for us, and we are to continue teaching and passing on to our children the wisdom of following God. This practice is especially true for fathers. As the church teaches and makes disciples, the parents, specifically the fathers, are to disciple their children. A partnership can be seen between these two establishments that God has ordained, which are the church and the home, and He uses these two groups in complementary form to fulfill his purposes. In the next section, I will take an in-depth look at Ephesians 6 to show specifically how Christian fathers are uniquely called to disciple their children.

Ephesians 6

Every believer has been empowered by Christ to fulfill the Great Commission. Jesus’s ministry modeled this process of growing the kingdom of God to his disciples. He took a few men and equipped them to make disciples and then commanded those same men he equipped, and every other Christian since then, to do the same. Making disciples is one of the main missions of the church, and parents are called to apply this in their homes by making disciples of their children. There is a complementary role between the

⁴³ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 289.

church and the home which impacts, teaches, and disciples children and fathers are at the forward position of this calling. Mothers clearly have an influential role in the discipleship of their children as well. Their influence is not diminished by Scripture, but rather is reinforced in passages such as 2 Timothy 1:5 as Paul is reminded of Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, and in Proverbs 1:8 to "forsake not your mother's teaching." But for the sake of this project I will emphasize the specific role a father has in discipling their childrne, while in no way disregarding the role of a mother.

In Ephesians, Paul focuses on an array of themes from who a Christian is in Christ, what God has spiritually provided to each believer, and the mystery of the Gospel that has now been revealed in Christ. All these themes reference the church as a whole. "It is like a sermon on the greatest and widest theme possible for a Christian sermon—the eternal purpose of God which he is fulfilling through his Son Jesus Christ, and working out in and through the church."⁴⁴ There is a clear connection with the church, from the first few chapters, and with the home, from chapters five through six. The focus of the first three chapters gives parents the specific truths to teach their children, while the last three show how these truths impact the relationships with others, such as believers in their church, their spouses, and their children. We could think of the first three chapters as the curriculum for the home.

Norman Corwin wrote in an article for Reader's Digest entitled *Perfect Home*, "One child makes a home a course in liberal education for both himself and parents; two children make it a private school; three or more make it a campus. But many parents today are not sure they are up to being professors in this university, and even then they are unsure of what should be offered in the curriculum."⁴⁵

For fathers there is ample discipleship curriculum in the book of Ephesians to pass on to their children. But in chapter 6, Paul addresses fathers specifically, which is unique when

⁴⁴ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 10 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 20.

⁴⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 211.

compared to the overall message of this book.

In Ephesians 6, the first three verses address children in the church. This observation is noteworthy and helps communicate how valued children are by God. In this historical context children were not considered important and even expendable. During Roman times there was child repudiation where the father could decide to keep the child at birth or literally discard the child to exposure or for infant traffickers. It has been noted that “one Roman father wrote to his wife from Alexandria: ‘If—good luck to you!—you have a child, if it is a boy, let it live; if it is a girl, throw it out.’”⁴⁶ In a Roman family, the father had absolute control over all his family. This family structure was called *patria potestas*, which translates “the father’s power.”⁴⁷ Other examples of this practice would be that a father could sell his son into slavery, have him killed, and the position the son had in the community was of no consequence to the father because the father had lifelong authority over his son. The fact that Paul writes specifically to children shows their value and importance. As one commentator wrote, “Against such a pagan cruelty the new relations of parents to children and children to parents brought by the Christian gospel stand forth like sunshine after a dismal storm.”⁴⁸ We should view children in the same way, as valuable and important members of the congregation. Not only are they the church of the future but they are the church of today.

Paul’s use of the term children can also be seen as an endearing metaphor for “father-child” relationships because that is how he references many other believers in the churches that he has planted, such as 2 Corinthians and 1 and 2 Timothy.⁴⁹ This metaphor

⁴⁶ Boice, *Ephesians*, 211.

⁴⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 795.

⁴⁸ Boice, *Ephesians*, 211.

⁴⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 398.

helps us see an even better picture of how Paul viewed children. It was not negative, but it was endearing and beneficial. The Bible contains other examples of this imagery such as John 1:12, where believers are given the “right to become children of God,” and even in the book of Exodus when God refers to His chosen people as the “children” of Israel. Viewing children this way had broad implications. Paul’s teaching is general enough to apply to any socially structured relationship, and “equally applicable in Antioch, Corinth, or Rome.”⁵⁰

In verse 4, Paul wrote directly to fathers within the church. Addressing specific groups of people was not unique for Paul, because he had addressed specific groups in his letter already. In chapter 5 he addressed wives and husbands, followed by children in the beginning of chapter 6. Later he addresses masters and bondservants. In each of these sections Paul followed the same order; first addressing the subordinate followed by addressing the one who oversees. But in specifically addressing fathers after addressing their children, Paul showed the importance of the work fathers are to do in discipling their children. Chapter 6 is not only for fathers, but more responsibility is given to the fathers, which fits the cultural context.

As we have seen in Deuteronomy 6 and in Psalm 78, the father had a greater responsibility for the children in his home. As Andrew Lincoln writes, “In later Judaism this point was made expressly: ‘All the obligations of a father toward his son enjoined in the Law are incumbent on men but not on women, and all obligations of a son toward his father enjoined in the Law are incumbent both on men and on women.’”⁵¹ In verse 1 children are commanded to obey their parents. The Greek word used for parents is *γονεύς* which is a different word used in verse 4 for fathers, which is *πατήρ*. Some scholars like

⁵⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 412.

⁵¹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 406.

John Stott see this distinction with little difference, “Although the word in verse 4 is, in fact, ‘fathers’ (pateres), it could be used for ‘fathers and mothers’ . . . both father and mother, who are referred to in verses 1–3, so that it is entirely legitimate for GNB to put ‘parents’ in verse 4.”⁵² While the application of this passage would apply to mothers too, it seems to put a stronger emphasis on fathers than that of mothers. I agree with Clinton Arnold’s interpretation of emphasizing fathers when he writes, “Although it is possible for ‘fathers’ (Greek for father) to be understood here in a generic sense with reference to both parents, Paul is most likely focusing here on the men.”⁵³

From historical context as well as biblical exegesis, fathers are specifically called, and commanded to teach their children. Frank Thielman writes how this plays out as children “have a responsibility to obey their parents, fathers ‘also’ have a responsibility to use their authority for the good of their children.”⁵⁴ Even though some scholars would not make much of the fact that the word ‘fathers’ is used in verse 4, the changing of the word from parents to fathers is significant. And the fact “that in the ancient world in both Greco-Roman and Jewish writings it is fathers in particular who are held responsible for the education of the children, make it for more likely that Ephesians is in conformity with this way of thinking and is addressing male heads of households in their role as fathers.”⁵⁵ It is not disregarding mothers, but rather emphasizing fathers for their role in disciplining their children.

In verse 4 Paul tells fathers first what not to do, then he tells them what to do. He writes, “*do not* provoke your children to anger” (emphasis added). Provoking

⁵² John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 245.

⁵³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

⁵⁴ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 401.

⁵⁵ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 406.

someone means to “stir up” or “incite someone” to anger. As we look back to the historical context, Paul is likely addressing parenting this way because of the culture around the Ephesians. Fathers could rule in a way a king would rule his subjects, making verse 4 even more striking. Paul is encouraging fathers to not provoke their own children. He does not want fathers to raise their children in a way that would lead them to be angry, instead he wants fathers to raise their children in a way that glorifies God. Fathers can provoke their children to anger in a lot of different ways. Lou Priolo, in his book *The Heart of Anger*, lists twenty-five different ways a father can provoke their own child to anger. Some of those examples are having double standards, being legalistic, constantly finding fault, not listening to the child’s opinion, making fun of the child, or abusing them physically. While these actions may have been part of the culture in the city of Ephesus, Paul addresses Christian fathers and tells them to avoid the actions of their culture.

Now Paul moves to the work that fathers are to do with their children. The phrase, “bring them up” communicates the idea of nourishing or feeding someone. In this case it is nourishing or feeding their children spiritually by disciplining them in the Lord.⁵⁶ This is the same word Paul used in 5:29 as he encouraged husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. He writes, “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but *nourishes* and cherishes it.” In the previous verse Paul referred to Christ as the example to follow as Christ sought to make his bride, the church, “holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word” (Eph 5:26). Just as a husband cares for the physical needs of himself, he is to care for his wife in the same way physically and spiritually. Because the word for “nourish” is used in this chapter and in 6:4, it applies in the same way to a father’s children. Children should be “brought up” or nourished spiritually by their father. This nourishment means they would be raised in a way that would help them grow physically

⁵⁶ Stott, *God’s New Society*, 247.

and spiritually into mature adulthood.

Paul concludes verse 4 with, “discipline and instruction of the Lord.” As we look at discipline and instruction, some scholars consider these two key words a hendiadys. Their meanings are similar, but we can see some different nuances as well. In the CSB the word discipline is translated as *training*, and in the KJV as *nurture*. The meaning conveys more of a focus on the physical actions of the child. Fathers are to take an active role in the discipline of their children. The child’s discipline from their father is for the child’s own good. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* describes this as, “to put them in a state of good order so that they function in the way intended.”⁵⁷ The Greek word for discipline used in Ephesians 6, is the same word used in Hebrews 12, “both of earthly fathers and also of our heavenly Father who ‘disciplines us for our good.’”⁵⁸ A father is commanded to discipline his son, but this discipline should come from a sincere love for God as well as a love for his own child. The reason a father should discipline his child is the same reason God would discipline His child, for the good of the child. Each of us are intended to walk with God and glorify Him in all we do, and the discipline we receive helps us walk in that way.

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary provides a definition for discipline: *discipulus*, the Latin word for *pupil*, which also provided the source of the word *disciple* (albeit by way of a Late Latin sense-shift to “a follower of Jesus Christ in his lifetime”).⁵⁹

The Holman Bible Dictionary explains the word “discipline” as

the process by which one learns a way of life. A disciple was like an apprentice who was learning a trade or craft from a master. Such learning required a relationship between the master who knew the way of life (discipline) and a learner (a disciple). Within this relationship, the master led a learner through a process (the discipline)

⁵⁷ Barry J. Beitzel, “Discipline,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 1, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Ada, MI: Baker 1996), 631.

⁵⁸ Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 248.

⁵⁹ *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, “Discipline,” accessed January 5, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discipline>.

until the learner could imitate or live like the master.⁶⁰

Paul used the Greek word παιδεία, which the CSB translated as “training.” The term “had a broad range of meanings, from physical and mental training in the values of a particular culture to disciplinary punishment.”⁶¹ Compared to instruction, this word leads more to the physical aspect of a life, or what a child should do, how they should behave, or how the child is to conduct themselves. It has the connotation of “providing guidance for responsible living.”⁶²

The word for instruction denotes specific training that takes place through verbal admonition or correction. As H. Cremer said of νοουθεσία, “Its fundamental idea is the well-intentioned seriousness with which one would influence the *mind* and *disposition* of another by advice, admonition, warning, putting right according to circumstances.”⁶³ The word *instruction* is closely related to the English word Nouthetic. The term is familiar with those who are involved in biblical counseling. Jay Adams writes, “From Biblical times onward, God’s people have counseled nouthetically. The word itself is Biblical. It comes from the Greek noun *nouthesia*.”⁶⁴ Adams goes on to write, “To put it simply, nouthetic counseling consists of lovingly confronting people out of deep concern in order to help them make those changes that God requires.” Providing biblical counsel to others so that they would follow the Lord, is really what a Christian father should do with his child. He is to instruct or give “good counsel” to them in a way to correct their thinking, which should correct their actions.⁶⁵ The concept is giving a

⁶⁰ Chad Brand, ed., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2015), 217.

⁶¹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 402.

⁶² Benjamin L. Merkle, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016) 198.

⁶³ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 408.

⁶⁴ Adams, “What Is Nouthetic Counseling?”

⁶⁵ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 402.

warning and correcting people who are in the midst of—or in danger of falling into—wrong behavior.⁶⁶ There are countless opportunities for fathers to teach their children. The warning is given to fathers because if they do not follow the command and instruct their own children, they are being disobedient to the Lord. A disobedient father abdicating his role is repeating the same mistakes we saw in Psalm 78. Ever since Adam held his tongue while Eve was being tempted, men have struggled with speaking the words that need to be said. This word gives fathers a command to speak, because this refers to the “training that takes place through verbal correction (i.e., exhortations, warnings, or rebukes).⁶⁷

The last phrase from verse four is “of the Lord.” The phrase serves as a modifier and it is a reference to Christ and “is not to be anthropocentric as it was in Hellenism nor centered around the law as in the rabbinics but, rather, Christocentric.”⁶⁸ This interpretation means the father is commanded to teach their child what Christ wants the father to teach. God has provided the curriculum in the first part of Ephesians for the father to use. Maintaining a Christocentric approach also implies that both the *way* a father teaches and the *information* the father teaches should be out of obedience to Christ. This observation follows the context and focus of Ephesians, specifically in chapter one, as we see that fathers are to walk “in Christ” and the way they are to teach their children is “in Christ.” This Christocentric focus can be seen in chapter 4 with the idea of, “learning Christ and being taught in him spoken of in 4:20, 21 is to be an activity that takes place not only in the Christian community in general but also specifically in the family, with the fathers as those who teach their children the apostolic tradition about

⁶⁶ Michael Scott Robertson, “Discipline,” in Mangum, *Lexham Theological Wordbook*.

⁶⁷ Merkle, *Ephesians*, 198.

⁶⁸ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 798.

Christ and help shape their lives in accordance with it.”⁶⁹ Focusing on the Lord, continues Paul’s Christological focus in 5:21 when we see the phrase “the fear of Christ” (NASB). Paul continues in verse 22 when he writes wives are called to submit to their husbands “as to the Lord” (NASB) and when he writes to husbands in verse 25 as husbands are commanded to love their wives “as Christ also loved the church” (NASB). Each member of the family is to put their focus on Christ and be obedient to him, and verse 4 continues that emphasis.

As a father follows the Lord, they are to teach their children to do the same. The one in authority (the father), and the one entrusted to that authority (the child), are equally under the authority of Christ. As Barth writes, “It implies that both the supposedly high and the supposedly low are subordinated to the same highest authority.”⁷⁰ The father is under the authority of the Lord and the child is also under the authority of the Lord. Because the father is under that same ultimate authority as their children, they are to humbly walk with the Lord. Fathers must be enabled by the Holy Spirit to disciple children faithfully because, “a person’s power of reason is not adequate to raise godly children.”⁷¹ We can also think of this principle in this way, “Paul refers to the training and instruction that the Lord gives to children through the family father.”⁷² The NLT uses the phrase, “that comes from the Lord” (Eph 6:4 NLT). Fathers are the means God has ordained and uses to make the greatest impact on their children, and because of that, we could accurately say the Lord ultimately is the one who is teaching the child.

If the information to be taught to children primarily comes from the Lord, then

⁶⁹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 408.

⁷⁰ Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1–3*, Anchor Bible, vol. 34A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 756.

⁷¹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 799.

⁷² Thielman, *Ephesians*, 402.

we begin to see a connection to the spiritual condition of a father and his impact on his children. While fathers are to raise and disciple their children in a way that pleases the Lord, we cannot forget that fathers must know the whole counsel of God, and be theologically sound themselves if they are to pass that instruction on to their children. To teach others what God would want them to know, while the teacher neglects applying those same lessons is hypocrisy. Being hypocritical can exasperate children and young people today. “The National Study of Youth and Religion’s most incontrovertible finding is that parents generally ‘get what they are,’ in religion as in most things. This finding means that we can expect the faith of the young people we love to reflect the faith we show them.”⁷³

Each parent has an important task in raising their children and passing on their faith, and fathers have a unique calling in that task. As we read in the Decalogue, the fifth commandment says, “Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.” Both fathers and mothers are to teach their children, and the child is told to listen to both. As we see in Proverbs 1:8 “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.” Parents occupy the space between God in the first four commands, and the rest of the world in the last five commands. As Thielman wrote, “Parents by their nature stand on the borderline between the mortal and the immortal side of existence.”⁷⁴ This task is not easy, but it is the task given to all parents, especially fathers. As one commentary quoted, “Parents should care more for the loyalty of their children to Christ than for anything besides, more for this than for their health, their intellectual vigour and brilliance, their material prosperity, their social position, their exemption from great sorrows and great

⁷³ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 39.

⁷⁴ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 398.

misfortunes.”⁷⁵ It is no small task to take the truths God has given fathers and connect those truths to their children because, “There is always much rejoicing and thanksgiving whenever the teaching and discipline of a Christian home leads, not artificially but naturally, to a child’s acceptance of the teaching and discipline of the Lord Jesus himself.”⁷⁶

Conclusion

Fathers have a unique role and calling from God in the discipleship of their children. God has specifically called fathers to heed his words and be prepared to teach their children. They are to stand in the gap between their children and God and be a spokesperson for all the wonders God has done and all the miraculous works he has performed. It is a glorious calling that each father must accept, and in obedience, commit to fulfill. Thus, we should herald these truths, call fathers to greater faithfulness, and lock arms with others as the church seeks to impact this, and subsequent, generations.

⁷⁵ Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 170.

⁷⁶ Stott, *God’s New Society*, 250.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL SUPPORT FOR EQUIPPING FATHERS
TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

God may call you to do more than disciple your children, but never less. God is lovingly calling fathers to focus less on themselves, and more on their families and children through discipleship. To do that, fathers must first follow Christ. Perhaps one of the best-known proponents of discipleship in the twentieth century was the German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer wrote in his classic work *The Cost of Discipleship*, “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”¹ The goal of discipleship has not changed, because the goal of discipleship is a person—not a program to design or a status to achieve—but a person to follow and devote our entire lives to. Discipleship is all about relationships, and one of the most influential relationships is the relationship between a father and his children. Throughout the ages fathers have held a pivotal place in the lives of their children, and the impact a father has can be seen in clear and dramatic ways. A closer look at historical and present examples of the impact fathers have on their children will reinforce the need for ministries to focus on fathers within the local church.

Introduction

Discipleship was not a new idea introduced by Jesus, since it can be seen in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word *limmudh* is used in Isaiah four times (8:16; twice in 50:4; 54:13), and it refers to a disciple. John the Baptist had disciples, and in Matthew 11:2, he sent some of them to verify if Jesus was the true Messiah. When Christ gave the

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 64.

Great Commission, those around him knew what “make disciples” meant. They were to continue the process of what Christ had shown and modeled by making disciples of all ages and statuses, and this included children.

Jesus emphasized the importance of ministering to children. Jesus rebuked his own disciples for trying to keep children away, and instead welcomed the children and “blessed them” (Mark 10:16). Naturally, the first disciples were connected to homes and therefore the children living in them. Making disciples in the home was a natural focus of the early church because the early church met mostly in homes.

During the Reformation, believers were freed from the legalistic and oppressive teachings of the church of that time and instead embraced salvation by God’s grace alone. The Reformers wanted to make sure that freedom was not lost again, and that desire led to a renewed emphasis on making disciples in the home. Martin Luther wrote, “Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal.”² One of the ways the Reformers equipped parents to acquaint their children with the gospel was by using catechisms. John Calvin wrote, “Believe me . . . the Church of God will never be preserved without catechesis.”³

As the impact of the Reformation grew, the emphasis on discipleship in the home continued by “deliberately transmitting a spiritual legacy for generations to follow so that the Reformation in England would endure.”⁴ The impact of the Reformers upon

² Martin Luther, *The Estate of Marriage*, trans. Walter I. Brandt, Lutheran Catechism, October 31, 2010, part 3, para. 27, https://lutherancatechism.com/doc-lib/luther_m_the_estate_of_marriage_1522.pdf.

³ J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 51.

⁴ Brian Hanson, “The Reformed Home: Learning from Family Worship in Protestant England,” *Desiring God* (blog), October 6, 2020, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-reformed-home>.

the family was far reaching. Pastor and author William Farley recounts, “Before 1830, virtually every manual on parenting was addressed to fathers.”⁵

While both fathers and mothers are called to disciple their children, single mothers can find themselves in unique and challenging situations with their children. Even though this project focuses on fathers, single mothers can and should disciple their children, as seen in Proverbs 1:8: “Forsake not your mother’s teaching.” Robert Jones offers a few practical strategies for single parents in his booklet, “Single Parents: Daily Grace for the Hardest Job.” Some of those strategies single mothers can focus on are: (1) view yourself fundamentally as a Christian, not as a single parent; (2) cling to God’s special promises to the widow and the fatherless; (3) follow the basic biblical counsel given to all parents; (4) pay attention to your children’s response to your single parenthood; (5) participate in your local church; and (6) expose your children to mature Christians.⁶ While some of these strategies will be discussed with more detail in this project, they can also help single mothers navigate the discipleship of their children. And as one mother is quoted in the booklet, “The most difficult challenge I face as a single parent is making parenting decisions without someone who loves my child as much as I do to help me make them.”⁷ We can remind all parents, including single mothers, that they are not alone because “God wants your child in His kingdom more than you do.”⁸

God’s Word is supreme, the Holy Spirit is guiding hearts, and the church is the central location for believers to be equipped. Let us not forget, “The church is plan A,

⁵ William P. Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 127.

⁶ Robert D. Jones, *Single Parents: Daily Grace for the Hardest Job* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008).

⁷ Jones, *Single Parents*, 14.

⁸ Art Murphy, *The Faith of a Child: A Step-by-Step Guide to Salvation for Your Child* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), 37.

and there is not a plan B.”⁹ We want the local church to be ground zero as we emphasize the importance of discipleship in the home. Fathers are placed in a key position regarding discipleship in the home. Chapter 2 established the biblical basis for the importance of equipping fathers to disciple their children. This chapter will seek to lay the groundwork for accomplishing this task as well as provide practical and historical views related to the subject.

The Impact the Gospel Has in the Home

The gospel means “good news” and it is the message of reconciliation from a holy and righteous God to a spiritually lost and sinful man. As we broaden that definition we could describe the gospel as, “the good news concerning Christ and the way of salvation.”¹⁰ This truth is the foundation upon which all believers are called to stand. As a father meditates on the gospel, he is reminded of who God is and who he himself is in relation to God. Greg Gilbert, when asked “What is the gospel?” responded,

Essentially that God created us, we are accountable to him. Therefore, we’ve sinned against him, we’ve rebelled against him. For that rebellion, we deserve a penalty of death. And yet God, in his love, sent Jesus, the eternal Son of God, to become a human and live the life we ought to have lived, die the death that we deserved for our sin and rebellion against him, and then rise again so that as we are united to him by faith, we, too, rise to newness of life in the hope of the resurrection. That, I think, is the heart of it.¹¹

From Gilbert’s quote we see four areas which can give fathers a firm grasp of the gospel: God, Man, Christ, and Response. A closer look at these four areas will help equip fathers to first model and then teach these truths to their children. As Farley writes,

⁹ Sam Crites, “Parachurch, Not Parachute: Advantages and Disadvantages of Extra-Church Bible Studies and Fellowships,” 9Marks, December 15, 2022, <https://www.9marks.org/article/parachurch-not-parachute-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-extra-church-bible-studies-and-fellowships/>.

¹⁰ “What Is the Gospel?,” Got Questions, accessed July 17, 2023, <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-the-gospel.html>.

¹¹ Greg Gilbert, “How Should We Define the Gospel?,” April 12, 2021, *Crossway Podcast*, produced by Crossway, podcast, 55:18, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/podcast-defining-the-gospel-greg-gilbert/>.

“First Jesus did, then he taught. Every effective parent does likewise. Children seldom internalize the teaching of hypocrites.”¹²

God

The first person fathers should look to in discipling their children is God. Having a correct view of God helps keep all other aspects of a person’s life in the right perspective. As we look to God, we see characteristics a father should show to his child that relate to the gospel. We see in Proverbs 9 that fearing the Lord is “the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 9:10). As fathers, we want to be wise as we disciple our children. Farley writes on parents fearing God,

The fear of God teaches parents to fear God, not their children. It motivates parents to discipline their children. It attracts men to family and church. It inspires parents to discipline their children in a wholesome, building way. It motivates parents to be compassionate and affectionate. It rivets our eyes on eternal realities, the shortness of this life, and the intensity of eternity for which our parenting is our child’s crucial preparation. It makes parents humble, teachable, and approachable.¹³

First John 4:8 reminds us that “God is love,” and likewise fathers must love their children. Fathers telling their children they love them should go without saying, but in my counseling ministry I have heard many children, adolescents, and adults say, “I never heard my father say, ‘I love you.’” Unfathomable does not begin to describe the pain that comes from that kind of neglect. Instead, we can equip fathers to love their children by showing, verbalizing, and expressing their love to them.

God “disciplines the one he loves” (Prov 3:12), and fathers should follow that example. Martha Peace and Stuart Scott give a helpful commentary on this verse regarding young children when they write, “A toddler is not going to understand most of what that verse means, but you need to be thinking in biblical ways and, in turn, teach

¹² Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting*, 107.

¹³ Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting*, 66–67.

your children in simple words and phrases that he can begin to understand.”¹⁴ Notice he points out that *we* need to think in biblical ways, and then we can teach our children to do the same. The order is important here: godly discipline shows love to the one being disciplined.

Another attribute of God that applies to fathers is holiness. The holiness of God refers to God being “set apart,” and this helps fathers view our lives and our parenting as set apart from the world. How a father lives his life should be radically different from how non-believing fathers live their lives. Focusing on the holiness of God will impact a father’s personal life, walk with the Lord, and help a father see where he falls short. This should also bring about a “humble and contrite spirit” (Isa 66:2) within him. And through this process he should also begin to see God’s grace in his life.

Grace is a gift from God, and can be described as showing unmerited favor toward someone else. Grace should motivate all believers, especially fathers, to be obedient to the Lord. As believers see all they have been given from God, they want to give those same things to others. For example, when a child sins against their father, the father can forgive his child “just as God also forgave [him]” (Eph 4:32). God shows each believer grace in this way, and as we grow in our knowledge and gratitude of God’s grace in our lives, we extend grace to others.

Man

God is the first person we look to as we consider the gospel, and man is the second. Having a correct view of man will also help fathers realize where sin originates in his child. While our little ones are adorable and precious, they have the sin nature passed down from Adam “to all people” (Rom 5:12). That natural bend toward the flesh makes them, as the great hymn “Come Thou Fount” reminds us, “prone to wander.”

¹⁴ Martha Peace and Stuart Scott, *The Faithful Parent: A Biblical Guide to Raising a Family* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), 68.

Albert Mohler showed this tendency in one of his sermons: “You do not want to be the parents of pagans. But if you are not strategic and careful, if you do not heed the word of the Lord, you will raise pagans by default.”¹⁵ Our children are not naturally bent toward godliness any more than we are. Instead, their sinful heart causes them to seek for their own selfish desires.

While children are bent toward sin, they are still a gift from God. Fathers should view their children as gifts that are “remarkably and wondrously made” (Ps 139:13). A father’s joy in the exclusivity of their child may be expressed in the same way God rejoices in His only Son when He says, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased” (Matt 3:17). As a father develops a biblical view of man, this will help him have a more thorough view of Christ and the hope he gives us.

Christ

As fathers focus on Jesus, it will help them understand all he has done and all that he is. Jesus even communicates this truth to the religious leaders of his day when he states, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:48). In the same gospel, Jesus states clearly that the only way to get to God is through him (Christ) when he says, “No one comes to the father but through me” (John 14:6). What we see here is as much as fathers love their children, they can never be their savior. Fathers can teach, model, pray, and read all the books on parenting they can, but they are powerless to save the soul of their child. Instead, they must trust Christ who came “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

Romans 5:8 reads, “But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Since Christ showed his love to us by dying for us, fathers should have the same commitment. While most fathers probably will not physically die for their children, they will have ample opportunity to give up their own

¹⁵ Albert Mohler, “How Not to Raise a Pagan,” *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), December 12, 2023, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/how-not-to-raise-a-pagan/>.

preferences and desires for the benefit of their children. Deepak Reju writes about a conversation with a father: “I heard one father say, ‘God used fatherhood to make me face up to my self-centeredness.’”¹⁶ He goes on to say, “As a husband, you learn to give up the dreams of doing what you want when you want and start considering your wife’s needs before your own. Fatherhood will continue that process.”¹⁷

Fathers should also seek, or pursue, their children. A. W. Tozer points out, “Christian theology teaches the doctrine of prevenient grace, which briefly stated means this, that before a man can seek God, God must first have sought the man.”¹⁸ A vital way fathers can show love and care for their children is by pursuing them. Pursuing their children by taking an interest in the children’s activities, to have fun with them, and to have honest conversations. This pursuit helps fathers build a relationship with their children. This practice should continue even as their child enters the teen years, where it may be even more effective. Seeking someone to have a relationship with is what Christ models to us, and every father should emulate.

Mankind can be redeemed because of Christ. Man’s redemption occurs as God shows grace and favor to those he calls to himself. Regardless of one’s past, God can take man’s brokenness and use it for good and for his glory. Only because of the death and resurrection of Christ is this redemption possible.

Response

All people will respond to God. Philippians 2:10–11 reminds us that “every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” This verse does not mean all will be saved, only those who put

¹⁶ Deepak Reju, *Preparing for Fatherhood* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2015), 8.

¹⁷ Reju, *Preparing for Fatherhood*, 8.

¹⁸ A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Ada, MI: Bethany House, 2013), 11.

their faith in Christ will be saved. Greg Gilbert describes a Christian as “one who turns away from his sin and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ—and nothing else—to save him from sin and the coming judgement.”¹⁹ Response is a vital part of the gospel, and it can be modeled by fathers before their children so those children can learn how to respond to God. Fathers are to respond to God, their heavenly father, as children are to respond to their earthly fathers.

These four major aspects of the gospel—God, Man, Christ, and Response—are pillars supporting all that we seek to do. On these pillars we want to build spiritually strong fathers who build spiritually strong families and children. This goal is especially significant as we seek to disciple our children.

The Role of the Great Commission in the Home

Just as Jesus commissioned his disciples, he has commissioned every believer to make disciples. And while God has called every believer to make disciples, fathers have a specific call from God to disciple their children. The Great Commission has two components: “go” and “make” (Matt 28:19). These components are missional and pastoral. Jesus did not give us specific locations where we are to make disciples. A father is to be pastoral with his family as a pastor is with his congregation, “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you” (1 Pet 5:2). Fathers are also to be missional as they disciple their children and send them out into the world, as shown in the book of Acts: “[You] will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Fathers have the opportunity to take part in the Great Commission within their homes, and fathers should view discipling their children as part of the Great Commission. In one of George Whitfield’s sermons, he encouraged this same viewpoint and responsibility for fathers:

¹⁹ Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 73.

Were a minister to disregard teaching his people publicly and from house to house, and to excuse himself by saying that he had enough to do to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling without concerning himself with that of others; would you not be apt to think such a minister to be like the unjust judge, “one that neither feared God nor regarded man?” And yet odious as such a character would be, it is no worse than that governor of a family deserves who thinks himself obliged only to save his own soul without paying any regard to the souls of his household.²⁰

The Influence a Father Has on His Children

Leaders guide and influence others. In the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, there is a scene when a new recruit is told to stop saluting the captain. The experienced soldier explains, “Every time you salute the captain, you make him a target for the Germans.”²¹ Why is the captain such a valuable target over the other soldiers? The Germans know the captain is the leader, and the impact of the leader affects the rest of the group. In the same way, what happens to fathers affects the entire family. The United States government also acknowledges the influence of a father. The US Department of Health and Human Services manages the website fatherhood.gov. Their purpose is “to provide, facilitate, and disseminate current research and proven and innovative strategies that will encourage and strengthen fathers and families.”²² Just like the soldiers in *Saving Private Ryan*, fathers are in a war, a spiritual war for their souls and the souls of their own children. The importance a father carries in his home helps us see why we should help equip fathers for this battle.

The influence of fathers on their children is not only while the children are young, but also as they grow into teens and adulthood. The results from the National Study of Youth and Religion showed what impacted a teen’s faith. Kenda Creasy Dean

²⁰ George Whitefield, “The Great Day of Family Religion,” in *Classic Sermons on the Family and Home*, ed. Warren W. Wiersbe (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993), 55.

²¹ *Saving Private Ryan*, directed by Steven Spielberg (Dreamworks, 1998), 1:03:12. DVD.

²² “About Us,” National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.fatherhood.gov/about-us>.

writes, “While grandparents, other relatives, mentors, and youth ministers are also influential, parents are by far the most important predictors of teenagers’ religious lives.”²³ God has designed the role of parents, especially fathers, to pass on the faith. In another study by *Touchstone* magazine in Sweden, the researchers concluded, “If a father does not go to church, no matter how faithful his wife’s devotions, only one child in fifty (2 percent) will probably become regular adult worshippers. If a father goes regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three quarters of their children will become churchgoers (regular and irregular).”²⁴ These statistics reinforce the enormous impact the father has in the spiritual lives of his children. For this reason we need to equip fathers to do the work God has called them to do. When we think about how God can use fathers to impact the lives of their children, we should be encouraged and inspired to accept his call.

What Should a Father Do to Disciple His Children?

As we seek to equip fathers to disciple their own children, it is essential for a father to practice the same spiritual disciplines he teaches his children. As Archbishop Tillotson said, “To give children good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell.”²⁵

Fathers need to be fathered. We must not forget our own need to be led and fathered by God. Bryan Loritts said it pointedly: “Part of being made in the image of God

²³ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 18.

²⁴ Robbie Low, “The Truth about Men and Church,” *Touchstone* 16, no. 5 (June 2003).

²⁵ Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting*, 108.

is we were meant to be fathered.”²⁶ Just as God’s leadership influences believers, a father’s leadership is designed to influence his family. Voddie Baucham Jr. writes, “The role of men in their families is so important that God honored it by conferring upon us his own title, Father.”²⁷ Fathers must lead by example and point their children to God the Father, so ultimately the Lord can father them. As fathers grow in their faith and become mature believers, their sanctification will impact their children. As Kevin DeYoung writes, “The one indispensable requirement for producing godly, mature Christians is godly, mature Christians.”²⁸

As maturing Christian fathers, we must be prepared when our children see our own sin. Paul David Tripp writes, “The key to the family’s functioning as a redemptive community, a family that is held together by the glue of the gospel, is parents who so trust in Christ that they are ready and willing to confess their faults to their children.”²⁹ A Christian father has been given a new heart (Ezek 11:19), a new family (John 1:12), a new mission in life (Matt 28:19–20), and a new goal (Matt 22:38). The Christian father is a new person, and he is to live in such a way that he is different from the world—different in who his friends are, in who he follows, in his purpose in life, in what his authority is, and in how he spends his time.

For a father to disciple his children and impact them for Christ, they must value time together. Voddie Baucham writes, “The use of time is one of the most difficult

²⁶ Bryan Loritts, “Church Pulse Weekly Conversations: Bryan Loritts on Fatherhood and Race in the Church,” Barna, June 16, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/cpw-loritts/>.

²⁷ Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 11.

²⁸ Kevin DeYoung, “Reaching the Next Generation: Hold Them with Holiness,” *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), October 21, 2009, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/reaching-the-next-generation-hold-them-with-holiness/>.

²⁹ Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*, rev. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2022), 60.

subjects to broach with Christian men.”³⁰ When a father is thinking about discipling his children, one of the things he must consider is the use of his time. Larry Eims emphasizes discipleship and time, saying, “And it is equally true that to train men a person must be willing to spend time with those men in hours of conversation and association in the normal affairs of life.”³¹ Christ modeled this for us during his earthly ministry. He called his disciples to follow him so he could lead and guide them. Notice how Robert Coleman describes Jesus’s relationship with his disciples as a father with his children:

Such close and constant association, of course, meant that Jesus had virtually no time to call his own. Like little children clamoring for the attention of their father, the disciples were always underfoot of the master. Even the time he took to go apart to keep his personal devotions was subject to interruption at the disciples’ need (Mark 6:46–48; cf. Luke 11:1). But Jesus would have it no other way. He wanted to be with them. They were his spiritual children (Mark 10:24; John 13:33; 21:5), and the only way that a father can properly raise a family is to be with it.³²

The majority of what we have recorded of Jesus’ ministry takes place in about three years, and the majority of that time was spent with his disciples. He was strategic with his time, and fathers must be the same with theirs.

The Supremacy of God’s Word in the Home

According to a study from LifeWay, only 29 percent of born-again Christians state that their personal faith plays the most significant role in their approach to parenting.³³ We can do better. It is imperative for fathers to read their Bibles and be equipped to study, understand, and apply the Bible to their lives and the lives of their children. This skill equips fathers, “so that the man of God may be complete, equipped

³⁰ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 155.

³¹ LeRoy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 31.

³² Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 2nd ed. (Asheville, NC: Revell, 1994), 46.

³³ Jana Magruder, *Nothing Else: Engaging Kids in a Lifetime of Faith* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2017), 21.

for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16).

One of the simplest yet most effective ways to help a father learn how to study his Bible is to follow the Inductive Bible Study Method. This method has been used for years in different ministries, most notably Precepts Ministries, which began in 1970. The premise is to follow the Observation, Interpretation, and Application method of Bible study. A father first observes the setting and structure of the passage he is reading. This process enables him to see what is happening in and around the passage and to see the context. Second, he moves to the process of interpreting, which answers the question, “What does it mean and/or what is the big idea?” This question enables him to begin to understand exactly what Scripture is saying. The third step is application, which seeks how to implement the Word into your life. This step enables him to apply the Bible accurately and practically to his life.

Whitfield, in his same sermon mentioned earlier, named three activities a father should focus on with his family, and the number one activity was reading God’s Word together.³⁴ God’s Word should be supreme in a Christian family. It is the final authority to guide each member of the family, and it is also the textbook that is to be taught to the children. A father must make this book a prized possession in his own life before he can attempt to make it a prized possession in the lives of his children. Jesus stressed the importance and necessity of God’s Word. In Matthew 4:4, while being tempted in the desert, Jesus said, “Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” The Greek word translated “live” means to physically live. God’s Word is food for us as believers, and fathers must view it as such.

The Necessity of Prayer in the Home

If reading the Bible is the first activity to focus on, prayer is a close second. As

³⁴ Whitefield, “The Great Day of Family Religion,” 57.

Thomas Doolittle wrote, “Consider what great deep mysterious things are contained in the word of God which you are to read together. And there will appear a necessity of praying together also.”³⁵ Prayer is a privilege and one of the most powerful activities a father can do with and for his children.

Prayer Communicates Dependence upon the Lord

Jerry Bridges writes that prayer “is a recognition of our own helplessness and absolute dependence on God.”³⁶ Prayer also shows you are not alone. It can be difficult for men to reach out for help about struggles they might have with their children. But having someone to lean on is a necessity in the life of every father, and our heavenly Father knows this. Every father has an enormous task of training his children to love the Lord, and that task cannot be done alone. Fathers need God to help them disciple their children, and prayer gives fathers the opportunity to ask him for help. The more a father prays the more he grows.

As stated before, a father is to mature in his faith if he wants to be equipped to disciple his children. This maturing is what Scripture refers to as sanctification. Charles Ryrie refers to Romans 8:39 and writes, “Sanctification basically means to be set apart,” and “has the same root as the words *saint* and *holy*.”³⁷ God begins this process at the moment of salvation, and continues the process throughout the life of every believer. Powlison writes about this ongoing process, “Progressive sanctification is about how we live in between God’s laying the cornerstone and setting the capstone.”³⁸ A cornerstone

³⁵ Thomas Doolittle, “The Word of God and Family Prayer,” in *A Theology of the Family*, ed. Jeff Pollard and Scott Brown (Wake Forest, NC: NCFIC, 2016), 72.

³⁶ Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 145.

³⁷ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 442.

³⁸ David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 29–30.

refers to the foundations while the capstone refers to the completion, and Christ is both. Powlison goes on to explain the relationship between the work of God and our responsibility in sanctification, “A person who changes takes action. You change your mind, your attitudes, your feelings, your goal in life, the way you treat others, your habits. And you find, sooner or later, that God himself has been working all along.”³⁹ It goes back to the aspect of a relationship with God and a relationship with others, because sanctification “is something that happens in community.”⁴⁰ God is the one who ultimately produces the change, but he uses fathers’ efforts to accomplish this work. The growth we hope to see in our children is not a work of our own, it is the Lord using our efforts to impact our children. In *Deep Discipleship*, J. T. English writes,

[It] is essential to remember that, biblically speaking, the Holy Spirit, alone, sanctifies and matures disciples. Salvation, from beginning to end, is the work of God. Sanctification cannot be sequenced by a program or a discipleship process. . . . Christians are washed by God, sanctified by God, and justified by God. Salvation is the work of the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit, from first to last.⁴¹

Fathers are not capable of sanctifying themselves or their children, but they can be faithful to God as He works through them because Philippians 2:13 reminds us, “It is God who works in you.”

One of the most powerful ways fathers can be involved in the sanctification process with their children is to pray for them. Chad Ashby gives us four specific ways parents can pray for their children.⁴² These are based upon Luke 2:52 and suggest that we pray for our children to (1) increase in wisdom, (2) increase in stature, (3) increase in

³⁹ Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?*, 69.

⁴⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 756.

⁴¹ J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 135.

⁴² Chad Ashby, “Four Daily Prayers for Your Children,” *Desiring God* (blog), November 16, 2016, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/four-daily-prayers-for-your-children>.

God’s favor, and (4) increase in man’s favor. When we ask God to help our children increase in wisdom, we are not asking him to make them smarter. Knowledge is not wisdom. We are asking God to work in their hearts in such a way as to fear him, and fearing God is only the beginning of wisdom. Fathers want wisdom to grow in their children. The second request is to increase in stature. As Ashby explains, “The Lord is developing each of our children in a special way—some tall, some short, some slow, some fast, some walking, some in wheelchairs. May they increase in understanding how their unique bodies are given to be used to bring him glory.”⁴³ The third request is that they would increase in God’s favor. This prayer is about God’s grace in their life, their salvation, and a growing relationship with him. The fourth request is focused on their interactions with others, ministry, and their witness for Christ to the world. No matter where God leads their children, the prayer of every father should be for healthy and Christ-centered relationships with others and their future spouses, if God calls them to marry.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Home

The Holy Spirit is referred to as the “helper” by Jesus (John 14:16), and he indwells every believer. A father always has help in the task they are called to. This is not a minuscule detail, but a profound truth to remind fathers they are never a lone soldier in this battle.

One of the ways the Holy Spirit helps a believer is by guiding them to understand the Word and to pass that understanding onto others. As Roy Zuck writes, “The Holy Spirit, Christ promised, would guide—not drive or compel—the disciples ‘into all truth.’”⁴⁴ The idea of the Holy Spirit being a guide gives us a picture of someone

⁴³ Ashby, “Four Daily Prayers for Your Children.”

⁴⁴ Roy B. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 26.

taking another by the hand and leading them in the way they should go, step by step. A guide leads us down the correct path and avoids harm or destruction. Providing a guide is how the Lord helps us. He helps us by directing the way we should go, and in turn we are to direct those whom we lead.

This truth can impact every father, including single fathers and those who might have grown up without a father in their life. More children are finding themselves in a similar situation. A study from 2021 shows that

children living with a mother only is the second most common U.S. living arrangement, a number that has doubled since 1968. About 7.6 million (11%) children lived with their mother only in 1968 compared to 15.3 million (21%) in 2020. The number of children living with their father only, although still small, more than quadrupled from 0.8 million (1%) to 3.3 million (4.5%) between 1968 and 2020. This arrangement remains much less common than living with a mother only.⁴⁵

In contrast to the findings of this study, our heavenly Father is ever-present, faithful, and working in the lives of his children. No matter what the home environment might be, we can still trust the Lord in his work.

As fathers, we also want to exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit to our children. For this reason, it is vital for fathers to be walking with the Lord, and this is how they can bear spiritual fruit in their lives. To bear spiritual fruit a father must first yield to the Holy Spirit in his life, and then step out in faith to be obedient to whatever God has called him to do. This is not passive on the father's part, instead there is action involved. We see this in Galatians 5:16 with the phrase, "walk by the Spirit." Walking with the Lord is not a passive activity, it is a moment-by-moment step in accordance with God's Word. It is following Christ more than ourselves, and obedience involves surrender.

Surrender shows a father is under the authority of the Lord. Just as children are

⁴⁵ Paul Hemez and Chanell Washington, "Percentage and Number of Children Living with Two Parents Has Dropped Since 1968," United States Census Bureau, April 12, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/number-of-children-living-only-with-their-mothers-has-doubled-in-past-50-years.html>.

to obey their earthly parents, fathers are to obey their heavenly father. Bruce Ware writes, “If our homes and our churches are truly to be countercultural, we need to exhibit a whole-hearted, healthy respect for authority.”⁴⁶ A father must yield to the Holy Spirit in order for the Holy Spirit to work in his life. Looking at the incarnation may help fathers understand submission more fully. For example, Jesus prayed to the Father in the garden, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). This verse shows Jesus’ unconditional willingness to follow and obey the Father.

Another way the Holy Spirit helps fathers is reaching the hearts of their children. In Ephesians 6:4, we see the words “discipline” and “instruction.” As mentioned in the previous chapter, instruction focuses more on the heart and desires of the child. Fathers are powerless to change their child’s heart. The Holy Spirit is the one to do that. A father should model, teach, and instruct, but a father must be dependent upon the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of his children. John MacArthur writes, “Therefore, one of the things God uses to exhort, correct, and encourage us is the Spirit’s ministry from and through other believers.”⁴⁷ The Holy Spirit is the one who really ministers to the children, but he uses the father to do that work by helping fathers be godly fathers.

Challenges We Face in Today’s Culture

The first of the Ten Commandments is, “Do not have other gods besides me” (Exod 20:3). The Old Testament refers to other gods as idols. Typically, when we think about idols we think about stone or wooden images that people would worship and bow down to. Most of us today would say we do not bow down to things, and we definitely do not worship stone or carved images. Stuart Scott referred to an idol as anything that we

⁴⁶ Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 137.

⁴⁷ John MacArthur, *The Silent Shepherd: The Care, Comfort, and Correction of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 97.

would sin to get, and anything we would sin if we do not get it.⁴⁸ Each of us must be diligent to avoid all the idols in our world today. For instance, I may not see golf as an idol in my life, but if I neglect time with my wife and children to spend time on the golf course it could be an idol. And from a different perspective, if I get frustrated or angry when my schedule does not allow me to play golf, golf may be an idol in my life. Fathers are forced to evaluate areas of their own life and desires that can become more important than God. Evaluating our desires for ourselves and those we have for our children can be a helpful way for God to expose the idols in our hearts. As Tripp writes, “We begin to need them to be what they should be so that we can feel a sense of achievement and success. We begin to look at our children as our trophies rather than God’s creatures.”⁴⁹ He goes on to say, “They are given not to bring us glory but to bring him glory.”⁵⁰ Avoiding this evaluation of our desires can lead to discouragement in our lives and the lives of our children.

Where we may see these desires as distractions today is in the activities in which children are involved. Even if a parent has scheduled their child’s time in good things like education, sports, and even attending certain church activities outside of worship, while neglecting or minimizing intentional time spent for discipleship, then that family is probably going to be overcommitted. Timothy Paul Jones expounds on this:

And yet, whenever any activity, however good it may be, becomes amplified to the point that no time remains for family members to disciple one another, a divinely designed joy has been distorted into a hell-spawned idol. God calls us, just as he called our father Abraham, to be willing to release every longing for our child’s pleasure and success for the sake of obedience to God’s word (Genesis 22:2–18). In this, what God asked of us is no less what he himself has already done in Christ Jesus, “He . . . did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32).⁵¹

⁴⁸ Stuart Scott, “Journal of Desires,” One Eighty Ministry, October 22, 2015, <https://oneeightyministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/journal-of-desires-counselee.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*, 32.

⁵⁰ Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*, 32.

⁵¹ Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to*

Fathers must use godly wisdom as they evaluate their own work schedule, hobbies, and other family activities in order not to neglect the training of his children. This process of evaluation is not about the activities specifically, but rather it is about the priority fathers place on each of them. The difficulty is that many of the commitments fathers make for their children are good. No one is saying that the busyness of life, such as work, sports, events, dance recitals, and doctors' appointments are bad. But we must keep the busyness of good activities in check, so the good does not interfere with the best. There may be times when we should not do all the activities that are offered for our children, and instead spend some quality time together as a family having fun, building relationships with each other, reading our Bibles, and discussing the Scriptures. Fathers may find making time for these activities challenging, but the whole family will be blessed when they do. What activities a family chooses to be involved with comes down to an issue of Christian liberty. There is no verse in the Bible that forbids a family from being busy, or being involved in numerous activities. This is why we need wisdom as we approach this subject. During this process of evaluation, it could be very beneficial for a father to seek out wisdom from other believers such as his pastor, and if married, his wife.

Deuteronomy 6 speaks about how we use our time with our children when Moses wrote, "Talk about [God's Word] when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7). We are to teach as we naturally go along in our lives, hence cultivating a relationship with our children. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne emphasize the connection between discipleship and relationships in their book *The Trellis and the Vine*: "The important point here is that training is inescapably relational. The trainer is calling upon the trainee to adopt not only

Make Disciples (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 104.

his teaching, but also the way of life.”⁵² Training becomes more important the older the child gets, especially during the teenage years. The teen years have a reputation of challenge and confusion; we should view this season as “the time to connect with our children as never before. These are years of great opportunity.”⁵³ Because, as Tripp continues, “the truths of Scripture apply as powerfully to teens as they do to anyone else.”⁵⁴

The Role the Church Plays in the Home

While family is influential and important, it should not stand alone in discipling children. The church should be a vital partner in that process. Next to parents, the influence on the lives of children toward reinforcing their faith lies with “highly devoted congregations.”⁵⁵ A father’s connection to a local body of believers is paramount to his own spiritual health and therefore for the health of his family. Being connected to a community provides him and his family with opportunities of fellowship with other believers. The children and their father all need this connection, and a father also needs others in the church to help him in the discipleship process of his children. These relationships in no way take the place of a father’s role in discipling his children, rather they complement the father’s role.

The New City Catechism asks, “What is the church?” And the answer given is, “A community elected for eternal life and united by faith, who love, follow, learn from, and worship God together.”⁵⁶ This community is not to be separate from the family, but a

⁵² Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2009), 75.

⁵³ Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*, 18.

⁵⁴ Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*, 18.

⁵⁵ Dean, *Almost Christian*, 193.

⁵⁶ Collin Hansen, ed., *The New City Catechism: God’s Truth for Our Hearts and Minds*

vital part of it. There is no distinction in Scripture between the Great Commission at home and the Great Commission abroad, there is simply the Great Commission. Coleman writes, “Contrary to our superficial thinking, there never was a distinction in his mind between home and foreign missions. To Jesus it was all world evangelism.”⁵⁷

Attending church, however, is not a growing trend in America. Recent statistics show overall church attendance has declined in America. Adelle Banks reports the statistics among Southern Baptist churches specifically: “The average in-person weekly attendance at Southern Baptist Convention churches declined 18.75 percent, from 4,439,797 in 2020 to 3,607,530 in 2021.”⁵⁸ These numbers show Covid had a huge impact on church attendance, but the trend has been going on long before the pandemic. “More people have left the church in the last twenty-five years than all the new people who became Christians from the First Great Awakening, Second Great Awakening, and Billy Graham crusades combined.”⁵⁹ Regardless of what the trend is, when a family makes church attendance a priority, they spend their time in beneficial and helpful ways. And prioritizing church attendance reemphasizes the importance of the church over other opportunities.

There are differing views on the approach the church should have as it helps families disciple their children. These views can be summed up in three major categories: Family-Integrated, Family-Based, and Family-Equipping. Family-Integrated models seek to avoid age-segregated ministries in the church and instead seek to combine, or

(Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2018), 48.

⁵⁷ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 23.

⁵⁸ Adelle M. Banks, “Southern Baptists Report Significant Attendance Drop,” *Baptist Standard*, May 16, 2022, <https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/baptists/southern-baptists-report-significant-attendance-drop/>.

⁵⁹ Bob Smietana, “The Great ‘Dechurching’ Explores America’s Religious Exodus,” *Religion News Service*, December 2, 2023, <https://religionnews.com/2023/09/07/the-great-dechurching-explores-americas-religious-exodus/>

integrate, the whole family into the ministry of the church. A distinguishing mark of this model would be the worship services incorporating the entire family, without a separate worship service for the children or teenagers. But some Family-Integrated churches might have a nursery or preschool area. Another model is Family-Based, which resembles the traditional age-organized children and teen ministries. This model has been the standard of many larger churches and seeker-friendly churches. For worship, there usually is a separate service for children and sometimes for teenagers. And the third is the Family-Equipping model, which seeks to focus on parents and equipping them to do the work of discipleship of their children, while retaining certain age-specific ministries for children and teens.

The Family-Equipping model is closer to the goals of this project and also aligns with the philosophy of ministry at FBCLC and its leadership.⁶⁰ The goals for the three models are similar, and the churches who follow them seek to have the church and the family partner with each other, grow better and stronger, and love God and love others. In his book *Deep Discipleship*, J. T. English writes, “Discipleship in the local church is meant to cultivate brotherly and sisterly, fatherly and motherly, love among members of the same household.”⁶¹

One way the church and the home can partner together is through the preaching of God’s Word. A pastor who consistently opens the Word of God to the congregation emphasizes the importance of God’s Word in their lives. His preaching from the Bible and through the power of the Holy Spirit will lead us to “be doers of the word and not hearers only” (Jas 1:22). The same is true within the home. When a father applies the Word of God to his own life and teaches his children the same, he emphasizes

⁶⁰ Each of these descriptions can be found in Paul Renfro, Brandon Shields, and Jay Rother, *Perspectives of Family Ministry: 3 Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009).

⁶¹ English, *Deep Discipleship*, 62.

the importance of the Word in their lives just as a pastor does to the congregation.

Another way the church can partner with families is through worship. Worship is vital for the church and is even the driving force for many missions' organizations. As John Piper writes, "Missions exist because worship doesn't."⁶² The idea of worship as a family mirrors the idea of worship in a church. The home is a place where fathers can lead their children in worship so they can learn how to worship with the church. Adrian Rogers writes, "The best thing you can do for your kids is to teach them to worship. Why? Because we become like the object of our worship. The Bible teaches us when we worship an idol, we become like that idol. First the family molds the idol, and then the idol molds the family."⁶³ The church is a family made up of children of God. God is the Father, and his children gather to worship him, the one true God. Similarly, in a home where the father is the leader, he gathers his children to worship the one true God. The terminologies used in the Bible to describe God as Father, the church as a family, and believers as children makes the connection easy to see. Mark Dever sums up the purpose of the church: "The proper ends for a local congregation's life and actions are the worship of God, the edification of the church, and the evangelization of the world."⁶⁴

However similar, the church and the family are also distinct in their roles and purposes. We see this distinction in the performing of the ordinances of the Lord's supper and baptism. Baptism and the Lord's supper are specifically designed to take place within the church, not within the home. Baptism is designed to remind believers of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as a believer makes their faith public. And the Lord's Supper is designed to remind believers of Christ's crucifixion and our communion with one

⁶² John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 35.

⁶³ Adrian Rogers, *10 Secrets for a Successful Family: A Perfect 10 for Homes That Win* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996), 43.

⁶⁴ Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible*, 9Marks (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 69.

another. Administering these ordinances within the church and not the home help reinforce the distinction between the family and the church. The family should complement the church in its role, not take the place of it.

Conclusion

The task of fathers raising their children is given to them the moment their child is placed in their arms for the first time. Discipleship begins in that moment. The feelings can be overwhelming, but there is joy in the work God has called fathers to do. What a magnificent task the church has to raise up fathers who are committed to raising their children to love the church, the bride of Christ, in such a way that their children's devotion to the Lord grows. And when the children have grown and look back on their childhood, let us pray they will be able to see how the roots of the Great Commission began to take hold in their homes and that their fathers gave them a firm foundation in Christ, not only for their own lives but for the future lives of their children and their children's children.

CHAPTER 4
THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE PROJECT CURRICULUM AND THE
STRATEGIC PLAN

The purpose of this project was to equip fathers at FBCLC to disciple their children. This project consisted of four distinct goals which reflect an evaluation of the fathers, a process of teaching and training them, and a plan to continue to equip more fathers to disciple their children within FBCLC. The first goal was to assess what knowledge fathers in the church have regarding discipling their children.¹ The second goal was to develop a six-week teaching series that addressed key priorities and practices for fathers to effectively disciple their children. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the fathers to disciple their children. The fourth goal was to develop a five-year strategic plan to sustain a discipleship ministry equipping fathers and to create a culture of discipleship within FBCLC.

**Curriculum Development and Approval:
The Weekly Developmental Process**

Preparation (Weeks 1-6)

My project began with a conversation with Dr. Hunter related to the details of the project and all that chapter 4 needed to include. We discussed the evaluation team, recruitment of fathers for the group, and how chapters 2 and 3 contain the necessary information for my group project. I procured the use of a video camera to record each

¹ See appendix 1. The questions in the BBDI were compiled with the assistance of the work by Timothy Paul Jones in *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 202–3. All rights reserved, used by permission. All 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.

session. By recording each session, I hoped to allow any father who missed a session to watch it on their own time before the next session. I also provided the notes for each session to any father who missed the class time. Providing the video recording and class notes serves the fathers I talked to in the church who were excited about the group but asked if they could still come even though they knew they would miss a week or more. This accommodation allowed more fathers to take part in this project.

I first created a simple outline for each of the lessons based on the sections from chapters 2 and 3. It was helpful to review both chapters during this process, and the layout of those two chapters helped the sessions flow better. I also decided to include resources at the end of each session to help fathers begin to apply the subject matter in their lives and homes. These resources consisted of specific application points, podcasts, and books. I wanted to give the fathers some good resources to help them in the future.

Next, I completed the first lesson for my project. I reviewed chapters 2 and 3 to gather the pertinent information related to the topic of my first session, “The Impact the Gospel has in the Home.” My focus for this first session was to lay the groundwork to move forward with more specific details and application related to equipping fathers. I focused on equipping fathers to understand the gospel in a simple way. The four aspects I focused on were four questions: Who is God? Who is Man? Who is Jesus? and What is our response? Each question addressed a different aspect of the gospel. My aim for this lesson was to equip fathers to provide a biblical answer to the question, “What is the gospel?” But I also wanted to challenge fathers to look at their own lives in light of the gospel, and therefore provide an opportunity for fathers to apply the gospel to their own lives. This process continues the focus of equipping a disciple in their personal spiritual growth, as well as helping others do the same.

I wrote the second lesson for my project, “The Role of the Great Commission in the Home.” My aim was to emphasize the specific call of a father in discipling his children. This lesson served to show the importance of making disciples by seeking to

fulfill the Great Commission. I also showed the role of a father as both missional and pastoral. I shared how fathers can be missional at home as they disciple their children with the intention of sending them out into the world, wherever God may call their children to go. Focusing on being missional helped emphasize that the Great Commission has no distinction between home and international missions. There is only the Great Commission. I also shared how fathers are to be pastoral as they shepherd their children by caring for them, looking out for them, and instructing them. We looked at the book of Proverbs for examples of a father pastoring, or shepherding, his child.

During week 3, I submitted an event request form to the church office to reserve the meeting room for our sessions, and began writing my third lesson, “What Should a Father Do to Disciple His Children in the Home?” My aim with this lesson was to dive more specifically into the spiritual life of the father, how a father’s spiritual life relates to the spiritual lives of his children, and the importance of relationships with his children. I began this lesson with this quote from my own project: “As we seek to equip fathers to disciple their own children, it is essential for a father to practice the same spiritual disciplines he teaches his children.” We first looked at what was true for every Christian, including Christian fathers: They have a new heart (Ezek 11:19–20), a new family (John 1:12), a new mission (Matt 28:18–20), a new goal (Matt 22:38), and are a new person (2 Cor 5:17). Next, I looked at ways fathers can grow and mature in their faith. I wrote out areas of fathers’ lives to evaluate, such as their maturity as Christians and their walks with the Lord. Then we looked at different areas that influence us as fathers, such as our friends, who we follow, and our ultimate need to follow Christ. Next, we evaluated how we use our time, specifically in the areas of our hobbies, our personal quiet times, and our family activities we are involved with, which included church. And lastly, we evaluated our worship and the importance of guarding against things that can compete with it. I shared a helpful handout from Stuart Scott called, “Journal of

Desires.”² This tool is something I use in my counseling ministry to help identify idols in our lives which distract us from the Lord.

After reviewing the event request form, the FBCLC staff approved the room for me to host my group. I also wrote the email to send to the fathers to invite them to be a part of the project.³ Next, I compiled a list of fathers to invite to be a part of the teaching sessions who are members of our church. Each member of the Family Ministry Team compiled a list of fathers in our church. I sent personal emails to 117 fathers in our church whose names were on the list some of our staff compiled. We also set up a group in our church management software to keep the information of those who registered for the group. It was exciting to receive email responses from fathers who wanted to register for the group, even while I was still in the process of emailing other fathers. I also had a few questions from fathers who stated they would love to attend each of the sessions but would have to miss one to three sessions due to previous work or family commitments. I assured them the videos of each session would be available each week, so they could still be a part of the group. They were pleased and registered for the group.

This week I also wrote the fourth lesson for my project, “The Supremacy of God’s Word in the Home.” My aim with this lesson was to showcase the importance of studying and handling God’s Word in the life of a father so he can accurately and faithfully teach God’s Word to his children. I shared details of the Inductive Bible Study method: Observation, Interpretation, Application (OIA). There are a few different ways of sharing the details of this Bible study method, but I finally chose the information and format from The Knowable Word, a website I am familiar with which modernizes the layout of the OIA method.⁴ I also chose this format because there is a website with more

² Stuart Scott, “Journal of Desires,” One Eighty Ministries, October 22, 2015, <https://oneeightyministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/journal-of-desires-counselee.pdf>.

³ See appendix 2.

⁴ “Summary of the OIA Method,” Knowable Word, accessed June 15, 2022,

details about this method. Therefore, a father has the option of learning more or going deeper if he desires. The Knowable Word website also has resources that anyone could use to teach someone else to use this Bible study method. I thought this would be helpful for fathers to know if their child wanted to learn how to study the Bible. I focused on the three major parts of the inductive Bible study method and also explained the differences between exegesis and eisegesis.

During week 5, I gathered the relevant forms for research required and submitted them to Dr. Hunter and the PDS Office for both of their approvals. I also reached out to Dr. Timothy Paul Jones for permission to use the BBDI survey which came from his work in *Family Ministry Field Guide*.⁵ While at church on Sunday, I spoke to a few more fathers in attendance and invited them to the project. Each one seemed excited about the topic. I also began to work on the fifth lesson, “The Necessity of Prayer in the Home.” My focus for this lesson was to explain what prayer is and the need for fathers to pray, and to follow that with specific things for fathers to pray for their children. I shared four things to pray for their children which came from an article at Desiring God written by Chad Ashby.⁶ The four things are based on Luke 2:52 and are as follows: (1) Increase in wisdom, (2) Increase in stature, (3) Increase in God’s favor, and (4) Increase in man’s favor. Increasing in wisdom focuses on our children fearing the Lord and having Godly wisdom as they live their lives. Increasing in stature is how God has gifted them with different talents and skills; our prayer for our children is to use those talents and skills for God and not for fathers to live vicariously through their children. Increasing in God’s favor is concerned with the child’s salvation and growing closer to God. Increasing in man’s favor focuses on their relationships with others, their calling in

<https://www.knowableword.com/2012/08/10/our-bible-study-method-oia/>.

⁵ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 104.

⁶ Chad Ashby, “Four Daily Prayers for Your Children,” *Desiring God* (blog), November 16, 2016, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/four-daily-prayers-for-your-children>

life, and their future spouse.

I was approved for my research and for the use of the BBDI created by Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, and received that notification email.⁷ This week, I wrote the sixth lesson, “The Role the Church Plays in the Home.” I wanted to end with this topic to emphasize the importance of the local church in the life of the father and his family. I also wanted to avoid creating an assumption that fathers could disciple their children on their own. Every passage I focused on in chapter 2 was addressed with the group, because I wanted to be thorough in this final lesson. I began with this phrase from my own writing: “While the family is influential and important, it should not stand alone in discipling children.” The church should be a vital partner in that process. A father’s connection to a local body of believers is paramount to his own spiritual health and therefore for the health of his family. I defined the church to make sure everyone understood what the church actually is. Then I listed different ways fathers could be involved with their local church. I addressed worship attendance, fellowship among other believers, serving within the church, and ways to partner with the church. I reviewed the three main passages from my chapter 2 and explained how each of them was given to a body of believers, not to a specific family. I also shared ways the local church can partner with families from Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones’s book, *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*.⁸ I then instructed the fathers that they should emphasize the Bible and worship in their home—practices that also should be emphasized in their church. I ended with what makes the church distinct from the family: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Lastly, I took time to personally review all my curriculum lessons I would be teaching in the coming weeks.

⁷ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 104.

⁸ Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, eds., *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 143.

Teaching (Weeks 7–15)

Lesson 1

Before the first session began, I set up the room with a table for fathers to mark their attendance, pick up their session notes, and get their name tags. In the back of the room, I also set up some small snacks with drinks. While each session began at 5:00 pm, I provided light snacks for the guys just to help with conversation around the tables and create a friendly atmosphere. As we began, I first distributed the BBDI for each father in attendance to complete. Once the inventory was completed, I collected each of them before beginning the session. This week I taught the first session, “The Impact the Gospel has in the Home.” Those in attendance received it very well. I began with a preview of each of the six sessions, as well as an overview of session one. My takeaway for them was, “Review your notes and tell either your wife, one of your kids, or a close friend which of the four topics (God, Man, Jesus, Response) resonated with you the most.” The resource I mentioned was a sermon by Alistair Begg, “Why We Need the Gospel.”⁹ And the book I highlighted was *What Is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert.¹⁰ I recorded this session and each subsequent session to post the video privately on YouTube. I posted the video on YouTube after teaching lesson 1. I then emailed each participant who had registered for the group. I included the link and the notes for the session.¹¹ Later in the week I received a text message from one of the fathers who attended session 1 stating, “Thank you so much. I really enjoyed the first class. I ran home and told my boys I loved them and that I was proud of them.”

⁹ Alistair Begg, “Why We Need the Gospel” (sermon preached at Parkside Church, Chagrin Falls, OH, November 6, 2022).

¹⁰ Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

¹¹ See appendix 2.

Lesson 2

I set the room up the same way each week and included snacks again. This second session focused on, “The Role of the Great Commission in the Home.” We began with a review of the previous session, as well as an overview of the upcoming sessions. I emphasized how Christian fathers are called, just like every Christian is called, to take part in the Great Commission. I focused on the words “Go” and “Make” in verse 19. I also emphasized the importance of focusing on Christ and on obedience to Christ during discipleship. I taught on Deuteronomy 6:4 and how fathers can disciple their children as they naturally go about their lives. I emphasized the importance of fathers in the life of their children by using examples from the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, which shows examples of leadership in times of war. I also highlighted how even the government acknowledges the importance of fathers, as seen on the website fatherhood.gov.¹²

I then moved to Ephesians 6:4 and made the argument that fathers are uniquely called to teach their children. We looked at Ephesians 6:1 where Paul uses the word “parent,” and then verse 4 where Paul uses the word “father.” I pointed out that those are different words in the Greek, which I believe emphasizes fathers in the distinct role of teaching the children, not negating mothers and their influence or authority over their children. The word simply highlights the opportunity fathers have in the lives of their children. I concluded this session charging the men to discuss with their wives or close friends the question, “Should you work on being more pastoral or more missional with your child(ren)?” The resources I shared for this session were a listing of Alistair Begg’s sermon titled, “The Biblical Pattern for Fathers,”¹³ and the book *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* by Voddie Baucham.¹⁴ I recorded this

¹² “About Us,” National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.fatherhood.gov/about-us>.

¹³ Alistair Begg, “The Biblical Pattern for Fathers” (sermon preached at Parkside Church, Chagrin Falls, OH, November 11, 1984).

¹⁴ Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes*

session and sent an email to each father who registered for the group that included a link to the video and an attachment with the notes for session 2.

Lesson 3

In this session, I shared specific ways fathers could disciple their children. The title of the session was, “What Should a Father Do to Disciple His Children in the Home?” We reviewed the previous two weeks’ sessions, and I gave an overview for session 3. I covered five main points in this session. The first was, “What is true of a Christian father.” Then I moved to the question, “Are you growing in maturity?” In this section, I focused on Moses’ command in Deuteronomy 6:7 and the emphasis of “impressing” God’s commands into their children’s lives. I shared the word for “impressing,” which is described in Hebrew as a craftsman carving words into stone. Next, I reviewed different sources that influence fathers. The fourth point I focused on was evaluating a father’s use of time on himself and the need to be strategic with the time he spends with his children. Fathers have difficulty evaluating and making changes to their use of time in this regard. The last point was “worship,” and this helped fathers focus on what is the first priority in their lives. I looked at numerous verses to emphasize the importance of making God first, such as Mark 6:46–48, Luke 11:1, Mark 10:24, John 13:33, John 21:5, and Exodus 20:3.

I concluded by charging the fathers to fill out the Journal of Desires from Dr. Stuart Scott¹⁵ and asked each father to share their entry with someone close to them. I listed a link to resources explaining how Christians can grow in their faith—“What Does It Mean for a Christian to Grow in Faith?” from Got Questions¹⁶ and the book *Disciplines*

(Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

¹⁵ Scott, “Journal of Desires.”

¹⁶ “What Does It Mean for a Christian to Grow in Their Faith?” Got Questions, accessed June 14, 2024, <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-grow-faith.html>.

of a Godly Man by Kent Hughes.¹⁷ I recorded session three and posted the video to YouTube after I taught the lesson. I emailed each participant who had registered for the group and included the link and notes for the session. Due to Mother's Day being the following Sunday, we did not meet that Sunday. Instead, we met the subsequent Sunday for lesson 4.

Lesson 4

This week's session was, "The Supremacy of God's Word in the Home." In this session, I emphasized the Bible as the final authority to guide each member of the family and as the textbook to teach children in the home. A father must make this book a prized possession in his own life before he can attempt to make it a prized possession in the lives of his children. I shared what the Bible is and what it says about itself, how Jesus himself used Scripture when tempted, and the Inductive Bible Study Method, or OIA. I spent most of the session explaining each of the three parts of this Bible study method and elaborated on each of those. I gave examples of observation, interpretation, and application. I then explained the differences between exegesis and eisegesis. I concluded by charging the men to set aside a specific time each day to read and study the Bible, follow the OIA method, and strive to read at least a little bit of the Bible every day. I listed the Knowable Word website¹⁸ and encouraged the fathers to get a systematic theology book to keep in their home, such as *Basic Theology* by Charles Ryrie.¹⁹ This book would serve as a resource to help fathers give a solid biblical answer when their children ask questions about God, the Bible, Jesus, or the church. I recorded this session and posted the video on YouTube. After I taught lesson 4, I emailed each participant and

¹⁷ R.Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

¹⁸ Knowable Word, "Summary of the OIA Method."

¹⁹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999).

included the link and the notes for the session.²⁰

Lesson 5

This week's lesson was titled, "The Necessity of Prayer in the Home." I shared the importance of prayer in a believer's own personal walk with the Lord by explaining our need as fathers to pray for our children. I also stressed how prayer reminds each of us that we are not alone in this great endeavor as fathers. I also gave four specific prayers fathers could pray for their children: (1) Increase in Wisdom, (2) Increase in Stature, (3) Increase in God's Favor, and (4) Increase in Man's Favor. These four items to pray for our children were from Chad Ashby and based upon Luke 2:52. I concluded this session by charging the men to remember that prayer is one of the most important and effective ways to disciple our children. The resource for this session was Ashby's article "Four Daily Prayers for Your Children,"²¹ and the book *Spiritual Disciplines* by Don Whitney.²² I recorded this session and posted the video on YouTube. After I had taught lesson five, I emailed each participant and included the link and the notes for the session.

Lesson 6

The last session I taught was "The Role the Church Plays in the Home." It served as a capstone to the project as I described the importance of the local church in the life of the father and the family, as well as the distinctiveness between the family and the church. I shared specific ways a father can be involved with his local church. The first was through worship attendance. The second was through fellowship with other believers, which emphasizes a close community within the church. My third point was

²⁰ See appendix 3.

²¹ Ashby, "Four Daily Prayers for Your Children."

²² Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014).

the importance of serving within the church, which not only helps others, but also helps members of the church to use their spiritual gifts. And fourth was partnering with FBCLC, which follows the family equipping model. I also shared the importance of the Bible and worship in the church and in the home. Lastly, I shared the differences between the church and the home, especially in regard to baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are to be done by the church.

My takeaway for this session was to challenge each father to make church attendance and involvement a priority for his family. The resource I recommended was *My Church Notebook* which is published by Children Desiring God.²³ And the book I recommended was *Family Worship* by Donald Whitney.²⁴ At the conclusion of this session, I passed out the BBDI to be completed by those in attendance. The following day I emailed the fathers registered for the group and included the link to the video as well as an encouragement to those who were absent to complete the BBDI only after watching the last session. I instructed them to email their inventory back to me. My administrative assistant printed those to protect the anonymity of each of the participants.

Evaluation (Weeks 13–15)

After having taught the curriculum this week I reviewed and edited all the lesson plans and handouts for each session. Then I contacted the evaluation team so they could begin the process to evaluate the curriculum. The evaluation team consisted of the following:

Our Senior Pastor at FBCLC. He has filled that role since 2020. He has extensive experience in pastoring as well as training pastors in numerous countries. His giftedness to communicate God's Word in a passionate and faithful way makes his

²³ Sally Michael, *My Church Notebook: Come into His Presence* (Minneapolis: Children Desiring God, 2016).

²⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

evaluation of this curriculum very helpful for this project.

Our Executive Pastor at FBCLC. He joined the staff team in 2024. He has a Doctorate in Educational Ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and has ministry experience in many different roles in the areas of discipleship, education, and administration. He is gifted in administration and passionate about education, both of which enable him to evaluate curriculum excellently.

Our Family and Discipleship Pastor holds a PhD from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has held this position from 2005–2016, served in Alabama for four years, then returned to FBCLC in 2020. His educational background and influence with families in our church makes him a vital part of this evaluation team.

One of our Sunday school teachers who also holds a PhD from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has experience in the pastorate and writing extensively for journals and other publications. He currently manages a local AutoZone store where he has been rewarded for his excellence in management and sales. He makes a vital part of this team for his experience, his education, but most importantly how he leads his children. His leadership truly models what I hope to teach fathers here at FBCLC, and he was the only member of this evaluation team to attend the project group sessions.

The director of our Men's Ministry. He is a long-time member of FBCLC and a father of two. I have personally observed his influence within our men's ministry. He is respected for his honesty as well as his humility, and has a powerful testimony of how God changed his life as well as his relationship with his two sons. His leadership ability and heart for men make him a vital part of this evaluation team.

Each evaluation team member received a copy of the curriculum along with a teaching series rubric for evaluation. The evaluation team returned those to me in a timely manner, and I compiled this information for my project. I collected all the pre-test and post-test inventories of the BBDI and began compiling the data to compare the results. Once I plugged all the information into the excel program, I could conduct a t-

test. I did seek some help with this from one of our church members who works in the Oak Ridge Standard Lab, which is a government laboratory, who has a PhD and is familiar with statistics.

The final week consisted of evaluating the data as well as developing the steps to create a strategic plan for the future of the project in the life of FBCLC. My aim with the strategic plan was to incorporate the feedback and support of the family ministry team. Under the leadership of our Family Pastor, the family ministry team consists of the Children’s Director, the High School Minister, and the Middle School Minister.

Strategic Plan

My fourth goal for this project was to develop a strategic plan in the hopes of continuing the process of equipping fathers to disciple their children. My hope with the strategic plan is that it will not only impact fathers, but also thereby help grow the discipleship ministry of FBCLC. Aubrey Malphurs writes, “Your strategy is the vehicle that enables the ministry or church to accomplish its mission or overall goal, which is the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20).”²⁵

Envision the Process

A strategic process will take time, and for the purposes of this project I hope to develop an annual time to teach the curriculum. This process is to equip current fathers with the anticipation of new fathers who, in the years to come, will have children of their own and need to be equipped to disciple them. I also hope to work with the current family ministry team to make each of them aware of this curriculum that is available.

Assemble a Strategic Leadership Team

Since I focus on the fathers in FBCLC in this project I will need to incorporate

²⁵ Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategy 2000: Churches Making Disciples for the Next Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 30.

the feedback and support of the Family Ministry Team. This is the team of people listed under the “Week 15” section of this chapter. The Family Ministry Team are more connected to the families within FBCLC on a day-to-day basis, which is why their feedback and involvement are vital for the strategic plan. Their involvement also helps the team take ownership of the curriculum and small group material. This way they can teach the material themselves, if I am not available to do so.

Think Theologically toward a Model

I cannot stress the importance of a theological basis for this project and not do the same for the strategic plan. I have included theology in the curriculum, and I want to continue that practice with the strategic plan. Malphurs recommends that the team should ask fundamental question, such as, “What does the Bible say about why we are here?”²⁶ Asking this question, and focusing on sound theology, will enable us to move forward in confidence and assurance that we are doing work based upon what the Bible says.

Refine and Redesign the Model

Certainly, I will have to make adjustments throughout this process of refining the strategic plan. Leaders, including myself, will need to consistently evaluate this material and how it fits in the ongoing ministry of FBCLC. Consistently refining and redesigning the model will enable this project to not only continue, but also to be more effective.

Focus on the Great Commission

A focus on the Great Commission is paramount for the success of this project. I have included the importance of fathers taking part in the Great Commission, and my hope is for their involvement to impact other areas within the church, because we are all

²⁶ Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 28.

called to make disciples.

Consider the Ministry Context

Our current ministry context has drastically changed over the past four years. FBCLC has nearly tripled in three years, and because of that growth our staff team has grown. This swift change gives the strategic leadership team great insight in the future of implementing this project at FBCLC in the years to come. It also helps us see the importance of evaluating the context of our ministry. With the involvement of the strategic planning team, I will provide the strategic plan to the Family Ministry Team for approval and implementation within their different ministries.

Conclusion

I completed the development and implementation of this entire project over a span of six years. Part of the time was a break between the work due to a new senior pastor coming here and a change in my job and responsibilities. Toward the end of the project, I developed the curriculum over a span of fifteen weeks with the purpose of equipping fathers of FBCLC with necessary tools to disciple their children faithfully. The curriculum consisted of six sessions, which I taught over a span of six weeks. Thirty-two pre-surveys were completed, and twenty-eight post surveys were completed as well. I compiled the results and performed a t-test to determine the effectiveness of the project. Finally, I listed the steps to create a strategic plan to continue the process of equipping fathers at FBCLC, and gave this information to our current Family Pastor.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This project was designed to equip fathers who are members of First Baptist Church in Lenoir City, Tennessee, to be able to disciple their children. The project was determined to be a success through the creation and implementation of a six-week teaching series for fathers. This chapter will give an evaluation of the purpose, the curriculum, and the goals of the project. This chapter also includes strengths and weaknesses as evaluated by the author, potential changes to improve the future implementation, and will conclude with theological and personal reflections about the entire process.

Evaluation of the Purpose

The overall purpose of this project was to equip fathers at First Baptist Church in Lenoir City, Tennessee, with the necessary theological, biblical, and practical tools to disciple their children. Making disciples is the mission of the church, and that includes the homes of believing fathers. While discipleship is the main mission for every believer, fathers have a unique role and responsibility from God to disciple their children. Fathers are to be the main disciplers of their children.

Even though FBCLC has a strong ministry to children and the community, there are many challenges fathers face in discipling their children. One of those challenges is that fathers have not been disciplined themselves. A father may be at a disadvantage if he has never been disciplined.

The purpose of this project seeks to follow the Great Commission given by Jesus to make disciples “of all nations” (Matt 28:19). Making disciples is also one of the

focuses of FBCLC as explained in our purpose statement, “We desire that all who make a ‘decision’ for Christ become true disciples of Christ.” I have sought by this project to bring these two emphases together by equipping fathers at FBCLC to make disciples of their children. It was important for the purpose of this project to determine how the fathers at FBCLC practice spiritual disciplines in their own lives. My main goal after establishing those practices was to equip those fathers to disciple their own children. And while the work focuses on the external activities of fathers, my hope is for the Lord to soften the hearts of those fathers and their children so that a spiritual heritage will be established in their families.

The attendance for my project was larger than I expected. One hundred seventeen fathers were personally invited to take part in this project, and forty-seven fathers attended at least one of the sessions. Only thirty-two completed the pre-test, and twenty-eight completed the post-test. Based upon the feedback from informal conversations with the fathers following the sessions, they attended because of the subject matter. I had personal conversations with many of the fathers throughout the project, and each of them were thankful for the topic and opportunity to attend the group.

Evaluation of the Goals

To achieve the purpose of the project, I focused on four goals critical for success. Each one of the four goals built upon the other to complete this project.

Goal 1

The first goal was to assess the knowledge fathers had regarding discipling their children. To acquire this information, I utilized a pre-series survey and collected the information by using the BBDI.¹ To accomplish this goal, I emailed personal invitations to take part in this research to 117 fathers, who are (1) Christians, (2) members of

¹ See appendix 2.

FBCLC who attend faithfully and are involved in small groups and/or Sunday School, and (3) able to participate in the teaching series that was developed and implemented for this project. This goal was accomplished by having fathers complete a survey at the first session of the small group. The survey contained forty questions developed from Dr. Timothy Paul Jones's book, *The Family Ministry Field Guide*, and was used with permission. The fathers' pre-survey helped me understand where they were currently in their practice of certain spiritual disciplines related to their family. The goal was for twenty members to attend and complete this project. Forty-seven fathers attended at least one of the sessions for the group, and thirty-two of those men accurately completed BBDI's in the pre-test phase.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a six-week teaching series to address key priorities and practices for fathers to effectively disciple their children. The titles for each session were as follows: Week 1: The Impact the Gospel Has in the Home, Week 2: The Role of the Great Commission in the Home, Week 3: What Should a Father Do to Disciple Their Children in the Home, Week 4: The Supremacy of God's Word in the Home, Week 5: The Necessity of Prayer in the Home, and Week 6: The Role the Church Plays in the Home. After developing and teaching the series, I had the curriculum evaluated by an expert panel made up of pastoral staff and one of FBCLC's Men's Ministry leaders.² The team utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, scope, teaching methodology, and applicability of the teaching series. This goal was considered successfully met since at least 90 percent of the evaluation criteria was met.³

² See appendix 1.

³ See appendix 3.

Goal 3

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the fathers to discipline their children by teaching the six-week series developed in goal 2. I measured this goal by administering a post-series survey to measure changes in the fathers' knowledge gained from the six-week teaching series. My project followed a quantitative method. I used a survey method to determine the effectiveness of implementing a program to equip fathers to discipline their children. I conducted the pre- and post-survey to evaluate the current practices of fathers in disciplining their children and the improvements of those practices in the lives of the fathers. The quantitative method gives me the ability to determine the gaps in knowledge I want to address in my context.⁴ This method also allows me to conduct a t-test two sample assuming unequal variances. By performing a t-test, I can determine if there is a statistically significant result.⁵ The round of testing was anonymous so there was no way to connect any pre-test with any post-test evaluation. This goal was successfully met since performing a t-test two sample assuming unequal variances demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-test survey scores.

The survey contained a Likert scale with six options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree Somewhat, Agree Somewhat, Agree, Strongly Agree. Each of the questions used for my research was assigned a numerical value, both positive and negative answers. Other questions received weighted values so the answers balanced out with the overall research. For questions 1–6, 18, 21–22, and 33–40, I wanted a positive answer, so those questions followed the ranking of 1–6. For instance, the choice of “Strongly Disagree” had a value of 1 and a “Strongly Agree” had a value of 6. For questions 17, 19, and 20, I wanted a negative answer so they had the opposite ranking of

⁴ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018), 160.

⁵ Timothy C. Urdan, *Statistics in Plain English*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 109.

the previous set of questions. For these questions, “Strongly Disagree” had a value of 6 and “Strongly Agree” had a value of 1. For questions 23–25, 29, 30, and 32, there were eight options with the values 1–8, but in the Excel program their numerical values were weighted to $\frac{3}{4}$ so as to balance out the research.

I took the information I had gathered and compared the scores. Once I had done this, the mean for the pre-survey was 139.1, and the mean for the post-survey was 161.1. These means give me the standard error of the difference between the means for dependent samples.⁶ This increase in means shows an increase in the spiritual knowledge of fathers regarding discipleship of their children. The measure for this goal included a post-survey, and the goal was met when a t-test two sample assuming unequal variances demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-survey scores: $t_{(32)} = -5.989, p < .0001$.

T-test: two-sample assuming unequal variances

	<i>Pre-Test Total (Variable 1)</i>	<i>Post-Test Total (Variable 2)</i>
Mean	139.0625	161.142857
Variance	182.4435	221.015873
Observations	32	28
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	55	
t stat	-5.988525774	
P(T<=t) one-tail	8.39497E-08	
t Critical one-tail	1.673033965	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.67899E-07	
t Critical two-tail	2.004044783	

⁶ Urdan, *Statistics in Plain English*, 101.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to develop a five-year strategic plan to be implemented to sustain a discipleship ministry of equipping fathers and to create a culture of discipleship within FBCLC. In lieu of my role change at FBCLC from Family Pastor to Biblical Counseling Pastor, and out of respect for my colleague, the steps to create a strategic plan were given to the current Family Pastor. It would then be presented to the family ministry team for their approval at his discretion. The Family Ministry Team consists of the Family Pastor, High School Minister, Middle School Minister, and the Children's Director. The Family Pastor gives the final approval for the use of this curriculum. The goal was successfully met when myself and the Family Pastor agreed to proceed in this manner.

Strengths of the Project

One of the strengths of the project was the number of fathers who signed up to attend my class. I had compiled a list of 117 fathers who fit the criteria for this project. I sent individual emails to those fathers inviting them to be a part of this group. Many responded with encouraging words and how they were excited to be a part of the project; or wish they could be a part of the project but could not be due to work responsibilities, family commitments, or other reasons. I had 47 fathers attend at least one session of this group, and of those 47 some were a guest of another participant, or they wanted to check out the group from the invitation even though they were not able to take part in the class for different personal reasons. Of those 47 fathers, I only had 32 fathers correctly complete their BBDI. For my research purposes I had to remove 15 pre-test surveys due to (1) not answering all the questions, or (2) incorrectly marking more than one answer when the question asked for only one answer to be marked. Each of these fathers were members of FBCLC. The fathers range in ages from 20s to 50s.

The health of the church was another strength of this project. If I had done my project three to five years ago, I likely would not have had the same response because

there were not that many fathers who fit the project criteria to qualify for the group. Going through a pastor change four years ago dramatically changed FBCLC. If I tally up the number of fathers I would have invited to the project four years ago, that number would have been much lower. But the health and the growth of the church benefited my project greatly. Each one of our staff and even church members recognize the health of our church is only possible by God's grace.

Another strength of this project was the support of our Senior Pastor and other staff. I received their verbal support in staff meetings and within the church, as well as private support and encouragement to persevere in the process of completing this project. I was pleased to have staff with whom I could discuss aspects of this project. Topics such as (1) dates for when to host the classes, (2) which fathers to invite, (3) the content of my research, and (4) having some be a part of the review team of my curriculum. Being part of a team makes a big difference in ministry and the educational process.

Another strength of my project was having the unique ability to record each session and post on YouTube privately. These YouTube videos allowed some fathers to participate who otherwise could not. After each class meeting, I emailed all the participants a link to the recording, as well as a PDF of the notes for that particular session. By providing the link, this allowed each participant the ability to review the content of the session and print the notes. Many of the fathers took advantage of this feature, especially if they missed a class or two. For the post-test, there were nine fathers who took advantage of this option and emailed their post-test to me.

Weaknesses of the Project

One of the weaknesses my project was the time of year I had my classes. The typical course of the culture in our church sees many families leaving for vacation when school ends. We see this trend every year, and we also see it at other times of the year when there are breaks from school such as spring breaks, fall breaks, and even Christmas

breaks. As I spoke to many fathers inviting them to take part in this project, many of them asked if they could miss at least one or two sessions because they and their families would be out of town. If I were to do this project again, I would plan to do it in a six-week schedule and look at the school calendar to make sure there is no conflict between their calendar or the church's. It is understandable that not everyone will be able to attend every session, but a six-week block of time with no conflict should increase attendance for each session.

Another weakness, or at least challenge, was the collection of BBDI's, which was difficult for a few reasons. The first would be the attendance. I did a pre-test which was completed at the beginning of the first session, and a post-test which was completed at the end of the sixth session. One thing that would have helped the collection of the BBDI would have been to make sure more fathers were in attendance for the last session. The attendance for the first session was very good, but by the last session attendance had dropped for some of the reasons already mentioned. Because of this difference in attendance, I had to reach out to ten fathers, who were not in attendance at the last session, to give them the post-test and collect it from them. Due to the time of year that the project took place, collecting the post-test became somewhat of a challenge. It also delayed evaluating the results. If I were to do this project again, I would consider making the post-test in a format that could be filled out online. The way I sent the post-test out was in a PDF form, which worked very well for any father who had a printer available to him or was able to scan the post-test and email it back to me. But some fathers had a difficult time completing the post-test and then returning it. I believe a simpler format would have been more efficient for the fathers to return their post-test.

What I Would Do Differently

Since I had the support of the Senior Pastor, I would have worked alongside him to either have a sermon series to complement the project, give him the

session notes so that he could incorporate some of those topics into his sermon, or waited until he was going through a particular book of the Bible that connected to this subject to begin the teaching series following that particular sermon series. This would have allowed him to speak about the project from the pulpit and then invite fathers to take part in the project.

Another thing I would change is add a time of discussion for each of the group sessions. Providing a time for fathers to discuss the subjects would have worked out easily in the room I met in because we have large round tables in the room. I could have worked more closely with the members of our Men's Ministry Team and had each of them host a table and lead the discussions on the subject I was teaching. I could have also recruited fathers who had registered to be a part of the group to host tables. This group could have consisted of men who were already teaching a Sunday School class or small group, or who were a deacon.

Theological Reflections

The objective of this project was a theological objective. God's Word is clear that we are to make disciples. The Great Commission is for all believers to "go therefore and make disciples." The mission Jesus gave his disciples applies today just as much as it did then. From this project we see a priority on fathers for the impact on their children, but not a disregard of mothers in the role of their child's spiritual life. From chapter 2 of this project, we see that Ephesians 6:4 shows a distinct calling of the role of fathers. In Ephesians 6:1 Paul calls children to "obey their parents," and in verse four he specifically warns fathers not to "provoke your children to anger." The Greek words for "parents" and "fathers" are different Greek words. Again, it does not diminish the role of mothers for the discipleship of their children, but it does specifically call out fathers for their distinct role in discipling their children.

Another theological reflection from this project is that fathers are to be

fathered. It is no coincidence, that we call God our Heavenly Father. Once we put our faith in Christ, we become children of God, we are welcomed into his family, and are now heirs with Christ. Even though a father is the head of his home as seen in Ephesians 5:23, he is nevertheless under the authority of his Heavenly Father. This truth should humble fathers in their roles, but it also should encourage fathers. It reminds fathers that they have a Heavenly Father who loves them, cares for them, and ultimately models to them what it means to be a father. Because of that truth, we can confidently say that the Bible is the best parenting book ever written.

Another reflection is that the Bible should serve as the curriculum to teach our children. Second Timothy 3:16 reminds us of the sufficiency of God’s Word, and then in verse 17 “that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Yes, Paul is writing to a young pastor, but the power and influence of God’s Word in that work is clear and applies to every believer. Also, 2 Peter 1:3–4 tells us that the Holy Spirit has “granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness,” and later, “so that through them” (God’s promises) we may be “partakers of the divine nature.” We see the importance of God’s Word in our own lives, as fathers, and also in the lives of our children.

One more reflection would be the importance of the local church. In no way has this project set out to disregard the role the church plays in the life of the family. Rather, it is an attempt to show that our families, and fathers specifically, should partner with their local church in the discipleship of their children. They should seek to be involved together as a family. Churches should actually influence the family by illuminating all the truths and actions that should be occurring within a family. All the members are “part of one body” and are brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Tim 5:1–2). Christ loves his church, died for his church, and will one day gather his church. Jonathan Edwards said, “Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated

to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by His rules.”⁷

Personal Reflections

There were definitely challenges for me in completing this project. When I first began the project, our church was not in good health. We were in decline and staff morale was low. But at the point of completing the project the church is in a different place than it was. The church is healthier and is growing quickly. We have tripled our attendance in just three years. Part of that is the health of the church, but a big part of the health is the strong preaching on Sunday mornings and the ongoing leadership of our Senior Pastor. Our staff team is larger and healthier compared to four years ago. Another factor for the growth is the large numbers of people moving to Tennessee. Seventy percent of the growth of FBCLC is new people who have moved to this area. It is a unique situation that FBCLC finds itself in, but it is one I can say has been very exciting to be a part of.

One major change occurred with my role in the church. I came to FBCLC to serve as the Family Pastor, which was a position I truly enjoyed. But I also was involved in biblical counseling early in my ministry. That ministry has continued to grow and be healthy. But once our new Senior Pastor came and found out I was a certified biblical counselor, a new position of Biblical Counseling Pastor was created at this church. I moved from the role of Family Pastor to Biblical Counseling Pastor, and many may think those rolls are very different. While the details may be different of each role, I have found in my role in counseling fathers and families that the issue of family discipleship is a churchwide issue and a churchwide calling.

Another reflection I would add, is something I have learned in this process: steady work is more effective than shorter bursts of work. I believe this relates to ministry

⁷ Timothy Paul Jones, “Family Ministry: ‘As it Were a Little Church,’ The Puritan Model for Family Discipleship,” *Timothy Paul Jones* (blog), September 3, 2013, <https://www.timothypauljones.com/family-ministry-as-it-were-a-little-church-the-puritan-model-for-family-discipleship/>.

as well. Discipleship takes time; it is not something that can be rushed. As a father disciplines his children, there are ups and downs, good times and bad, and fathers must persevere through those challenges. We have to think about the discipleship of our children over a long period of time, not segments. One of the greatest problems facing most fathers today, is that they do not have enough time to disciple their own children. Through this project, I have learned I need to spend more time discipling my children.

Conclusion

When I decided to pursue this degree, my main reason was the personal challenge in growth it would provide me. I loved my time at SBTS when I pursued my Master of Divinity and had always thought I would pursue a higher degree if I had the chance. But this project also had a much deeper reason. I have had a growing heart to disciple others, and that desire grew when I became a father. But with that desire also came feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy. I am thankful to have been able to take part in this program and pursue this degree, but I am most thankful for the personal growth and application this project has provided me and prayerfully my own children.

I also am convinced that the issue of discipleship is one of the major issues within the local church. With the response from fathers for this project, it makes me wonder how many others within our local churches feel that same inadequacy in the area of family discipleship. But at the same time, they desire to grow and be equipped to make disciples. My hope in this project is not that it accomplishes the goals I set out to meet, but that it will continue to impact children and their children's children for generations to come. I am excited to be able to teach this curriculum in our small group ministries within our church. But truly the only way this ministry will flourish and grow will be by the grace of God and the movement of the Holy Spirit within fathers and their children. My prayer is that of Malachi 4:6a, "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." To God be the glory

APPENDIX 1

EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR FATHER'S DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY TEACHING SERIES

This appendix contains the rubric used to evaluate the teaching series that was created for this project. The series was evaluated and completed goal 2.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Evaluation Rubric for Father's Discipleship Teaching Series					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The teaching series is biblically and theologically sound.					
The teaching series effectively establishes the scriptural basis for fathers discipling their children.					
Scope					
The teaching series adequately covers each topic it addresses.					
The teaching series content is appropriate for lay church members.					
The teaching series provides a basic understanding of discipleship concepts.					
Methodology					
The teaching series effectively teaches a basic biblical discipleship methodology for fathers.					
The teaching series effectively utilizes various aspects of discipleship.					
Applicability					
The teaching series is applicable for personal discipleship.					

The teaching series will effectively equip fathers in the discipleship of their children.					
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Please include any additional comments below

APPENDIX 2

BASICS OF BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP INVENTORY

This appendix contains the inventory used to survey each father who attended the teaching series and it determined the knowledge they had related to discipleship. The information gathered was used for the pre- and post-test data.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding and practices of fathers in the area of discipleship. This research is being conducted by Randall Davenport for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Part 1(Parental Information)¹

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?

A. Yes

B. No

2. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?

A. Yes

B. No

3. Are you married?

A. Yes

B. No

4. Do you have any children age 18 or younger living in the home?

A. Yes

B. Yes

5. What is your age in years?

A. 18-24 D. 45-54

B. 25-34 E. 55-64

C. 35-44 F. 65 and over

¹ Questions were compiled with the assistance of the work of Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 202–3. All rights reserved, used by permission.

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

SD = strongly disagree AS = agree somewhat D = disagree
 A = agree DS = disagree somewhat SA = strongly agree

Part 2

6. I consider myself to be the spiritual leader of my home.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7. I am an effective spiritual leader of my home.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8. I desire to lead my family well.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9. I have a strong grasp of what it means to be the disciple-maker of my home.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10. I have a clear process in the discipleship of my children in my home.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11. If asked, I could articulate the gospel to my children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12. I have a good knowledge of what Scripture has to say about the role of fathers leading in the discipleship of their children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. If asked, I could locate key Scriptures that discuss the discipleship of children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. I believe that it is the responsibility of the father to lead in the discipleship of their children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. I prioritize consistent family devotions in my family's schedule.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible readings at home, but my family is too busy at this time.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

18. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each individual child. SD D DS AS A SA

19. The church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children. SD D DS AS A SA

20. The church leaders are the people primarily responsible for teaching my child how to present the gospel to others. SD D DS AS A SA

21. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan to disciple my child. SD D DS AS A SA

22. I am comfortable in leading a time of discipleship with my family. SD D DS AS A SA

Part 3

23. I read my Bible (check only one)

- A. more than once per day
- B. once per day
- C. several times per week
- D. once per week
- E. several times per month
- F. once per month
- G. several times per year
- H. not at all

24. I meditate on Scripture (check only one)

- A. more than once per day
- B. once per day
- C. several times per week
- D. once per week
- E. several times per month
- F. once per month
- G. several times per year
- H. not at all

25. I pray (check only one)

- A. more than once per day
- B. once per day
- C. several times per week
- D. once per week
- E. several times per month
- F. once per month
- G. several times per year
- H. not at all

26. I have a specific time set aside for prayer.

- A. Yes
- B. No

27. I most often pray for (check only one)

- A. myself
- B. family
- C. friends
- D. other

28. I most often pray (check only one)

- A. at church
- B. at home
- C. while traveling
- D. at work
- E. other

29. I pray with my children (choose only one)

- A. more than once per day
- B. once per day
- C. several times per week
- D. once per week
- E. several times per month
- F. once per month
- G. several times per year
- H. not at all

30. I read the Bible with my children (choose only one)

- A. more than once per day
- B. once per day
- C. several times per week
- D. once per week
- E. several times per month
- F. once per month
- G. several times per year
- H. not at all

31. I read Christian books to/with my children (choose only one)

- A. more than once per day
- B. once per day
- C. several times per week
- D. once per week
- E. several times per month
- F. once per month
- G. several times per year
- H. not at all

32. I lead my home in family discipleship (specific time of Bible-reading and prayer)
(check only one)

- A. more than once per day
- B. once per day
- C. several times per week
- D. once per week
- E. several times per month
- F. once per month
- G. several times per year
- H. not at all

33. I know the areas in which my believing children are struggling in their sanctification.

SD D DS AS A SA

34. I spend time encouraging my wife's spiritual walk.

SD D DS AS A SA

35. I encourage my children to spend time reading the Bible and praying.

SD D DS AS A SA

36. I use everyday situations as opportunities to instruct my children with biblical principles.

SD D DS AS A SA

37. It is important to teach children to have a missional mindset.

SD D DS AS A SA

38. I have a clear process (big picture of what I should do) for spiritually leading my wife and children.

SD D DS AS A SA

39. I have a plan of action (steps I will take) for spiritually leading my wife and children.

SD D DS AS A SA

40. My spiritual health directly impacts my ability to lead my family spiritually.

SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 3

EMAIL INVITATION TO EACH POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT

Hey (member's first name), I hope this email finds you well. I want to invite you to a special group I'll be teaching for fathers. The past few years I've been working on my doctorate, and one of my last steps is to create and lead a group of fathers where we focus on "Equipping Fathers to Disciple Their Children." I don't know how you feel about discipling your kids, but many times I personally feel very inadequate. That's one reason I chose this subject. The other is the biblical command to teach and train our children. So, as a dad, would you join me in this group as we walk through this process together?

We'll start on April 21, and you can see the topics below. Please email kym@myfbclc.org to let her know you'll be attending. I'm truly excited about the opportunity to gather with like-minded fathers to challenge each other on how to disciple our children. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Where: Fellowship Hall C (FHC). It's downstairs in the Primetime area.

When: 5pm – 6:15pm

- April 21** **1. The Impact the Gospel Has in the Home**
- April 28** **2. The Role of the Great Commission in the Home**
- May 5** **3. What Should a Father Do to Disciple His Children in the Home?**
- May 12** **- Mother's Day – We won't meet this day -**
- May 19** **4. The Supremacy of God's Word in the Home**
- May 26** **5. The Necessity of Prayer in the Home**

June 2 6. The Role the Church Plays in the Home

Please let me know if you have any questions about this project, and I really hope you can join us.

Randall Davenport
Biblical Counseling Pastor
FBC Lenoir City
Office # 865-635-7211

APPENDIX 4
EQUIPPING FATHERS SESSION OUTLINES

This appendix contains each of the session outlines used for this project and meets goal 2.

Week 1 – The impact the Gospel Has in the Home

Study Overview:

Week 1 we will gain a firm understanding of the GOSPEL.

Week 2 we will look at the GREAT COMMISSION and how fathers take part in it.

Week 3 we will review practical ways a father can DISCIPLE his children.

Week 4 we will discuss how to STUDY the Bible and the importance of God’s word in our homes.

Week 5 we will review the NECESSITY and role that prayer has in a father’s life and home.

Week 6 we will unpack some specific ways a father can PARTNER with the local church.

If your child asked you, “What is the Gospel?” How would you respond?

The Gospel is Essentially that God created us, we are accountable to him. Therefore, we’ve sinned against him, we’ve rebelled against him. For that rebellion, we deserve a penalty of death. And yet God, in his love, sent Jesus, the eternal Son of God, to become a human and live the life we ought to have lived, die the death that we deserved for our sin and rebellion against him, and then rise again so that as we are united to him by faith, we, too, rise to newness of life in the hope of the resurrection.¹

To have a firm grasp of what the Gospel means, there are 4 questions we need to answer.

1. Who is GOD?
2. Who is MAN?
3. Who is JESUS?
4. What is our RESPONSE?

The Bible answers each of these questions

1. Who is God?

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”²

As we look to God, we see characteristics a father should show to his child that relate to the gospel.

- A. God is LOVE

1 John 4:8 – “The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

How does God express His love?

FAITHFUL - He keeps his PROMISES / COVENANTS

¹ Greg Gilbert, “How Should We Define the Gospel?” *Crossway Podcast*, April 12, 2021, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/podcast-defining-the-gospel-greg-gilbert/>

² A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1961), 1.

1 Kings 8:56 - Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant.

ENCOURAGING

Matthew 3:17 - And a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.”

His children know what he THINKS and FEELS about them.

B. God DISCIPLINES

Prov. 3:11-12 - Do not despise the Lord’s instruction, my son, and do not loathe his discipline; ¹²for the Lord disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.

“A toddler is not going to understand most of what that verse means, but you need to be thinking in biblical ways and, in turn, teach your children in simple words and phrases that he can begin to understand.”³

C. God is HOLY

Isaiah 6:3 - And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

Holy - God’s perfect holiness—the complete perfection of His attributes such as POWER and GOODNESS—is a humbling and even terrifying thing when revealed to weak and sinful men (e.g., Isa. 6:5; Luke 5:8; Rev. 1:17).⁴

Isaiah 66:2 - All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

C. God is GRACIOUS

Grace – “showing unmerited favor toward someone else.” Eph. 2:8–9 - ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.⁵

2. Who is Man

A. Made in Gods IMAGE

³ Martha Peace and Stuart Scott, *The Faithful Parent: A Biblical Guide to Raising a Family* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), 68.

⁴ Cabal Ted, “Holy,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed., ed. Chad Brand (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2003), 772–73.

Gen. 1:26-27 - Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

How do we bear the image of Christ?

Our SURRENDER to God

Our FREEDOM from sin

Our SPIRITUAL growth

B. FALLEN

Gen. 3:6 - ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

"What is sin? Any feeling, or thought, or speech or action that comes from a heart that does not treasure God over all things.

Consequences of sin

- 1) Death – Gen. 2:16-17 - ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."
- 2) Broken relationships – Gen. 3:15-19 - ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." ¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." ¹⁷ And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."
- 3) Indwelling sin - Rom. 5:12 - Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned

In fathers and in their children

- 4) Unable to save himself

Gen. 3:7 - Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves - ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

Saved by faith – Eph. 2:8–9 - ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

“You do not want to be the parents of pagans. But if you are not strategic and careful, if you do not heed the word of the Lord, you will raise pagans by default.”⁶

3. Who is Jesus?

- A. GOD – John 8:58–59 - ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.
- B. SAVIOR – John 14:6 - ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
*If you can parent the same way a Mormon would parent, you are not parenting in a Christian way.
- C. SACRIFICIAL LAMB – Romans 5:8 - ⁸ “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
“God used fatherhood to make me face up to my self-centeredness. As a husband, you learn to give up the dreams of doing what you want when you want and start considering your wife’s needs before your own. Fatherhood will continue that process.”⁷
- D. PURSUER – Luke 19:10 - “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.”
A vital way fathers can show love and care for their children is by pursuing them. Pursuing their children by taking an interest in the children’s activities, to have fun with them, and to have honest conversations.

4. What is our Response?

Fathers are to respond to God, their heavenly father, as children are to respond to their earthly fathers.

Salvation – Justification

Repentance - Sanctification

⁶ Albert Mohler, “How Not to Raise a Pagan,” *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), December 12, 2023, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/how-not-to-raise-a-pagan/>.

⁷ Deepak Reju, *Preparing for Fatherhood* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2015), 8.

How do we respond to GOD?

When we sin

How do we respond to our CHILD(REN)?

When we sin

Paul David Tripp writes, “The key to the family’s functioning as a redemptive community, a family that is held together by the glue of the gospel, is parents who so trust in Christ that they are ready and willing to confess their faults to their children.”⁸

Take Away: Review your notes and tell either your wife, one of your kids, or a close friend, which of the four topics (God, Man, Jesus, Response) resonated with you the most.

Resource: <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/why-we-need-gospel/>

Book: What is the Gospel, Greg Gilbert

Week 2 - The Role of the Great Commission in the Home

Review: Last week we looked at the Gospel and we answered four questions; 1) Who is God?, 2) Who is Man?, 3) Who is Jesus?, and 4) What is our response?

If your child asked you, “What is the Gospel?” How would you respond?

This week we will look at the Great Commission and how fathers take part in it.

“God may call you to do more than disciple your children, but never less.”

According to a study done by LifeWay Research, only 24 percent of parents who attend religious services regularly agree that successful parenting is when their child is godly or *has faith in God*.⁹

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18–20 - And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

⁸ Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*, rev. ed (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2022), 60.

⁹ Lifeway Research, “Lifeway Research Looks at Role of Faith in Parenting,” December 22, 2020, <https://research.lifeway.com/2009/03/24/lifeway-research-looks-at-role-of-faith-in-parenting/>.

The two components of the great commission

GO - vb. to go, proceed. *Refers to the act of going in a particular direction.*

*Figuratively, it refers to taking a particular course of action.*¹⁰

Not PASSIVE

MAKE - vb. to make a disciple. *Used to indicate the action of causing another to become a disciple.*¹¹

Not ISOLATED

What is a DISCIPLE? Someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way.¹²

Disciples are not new. John the Baptist had disciples.

What is DISCIPLESHIP?

An individual and a corporate activity as we follow Christ and help each other along the way.¹³

Perhaps one of the best-known proponents of discipleship in the twentieth century was the German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer wrote in his classic work *The Cost of Discipleship*, “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.” The goal of discipleship has not changed, because the goal of discipleship is a person—not a program to design or a status to achieve—but a person to follow and devote our entire lives to.

Biblical Counseling is discipleship. My goal in counseling is not to make your life better, it’s to make you more like Christ.

Jesus did not give us specific locations where we are to make disciples. He didn’t say “Go there and make disciples, He said “Go.” So, as you are going, you are to be making disciples.

Deut. 6:7 - 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*. (emphasis added)

¹⁰ Andrew W. Litke, “Journey,” in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

¹¹ Chris Byrley, “Discipleship,” *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

¹² Paul Helm, “Disciple,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 1, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Ada, MI: Baker, 1996), 629.

¹³ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 3rd ed., 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 169.

These two components are both MISSIONAL and PASTORAL

A Godly father is to be MISSIONAL

Missional means – focused on the mission

Fathers are to be missional as they disciple their children and send them out into the world, as shown in the book of Acts: “[You] will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

There is no distinction in Scripture between the Great Commission at home and the Great Commission abroad, there is simply the GREAT COMMISSION.

Were a minister to disregard teaching his people publicly and from house to house, and to excuse himself by saying that he had enough to do to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling without concerning himself with that of others; would you not be apt to think such a minister to be like the unjust judge, ‘one that neither feared God nor regarded man?’ And yet odious as such a character would be, it is no worse than that governor of a family deserves who thinks himself obliged only to save his own soul without paying any regard to the souls of his household.¹⁴

What are some challenges to being “missional?”

A father is to be PASTORAL

Pastoral means – shepherding.

A father is to be pastoral with his family as he shepherds those around him, “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you” (1 Peter 5:2)

Prov. 1:8 - Hear, my son, your father’s instruction,

Martin Luther wrote, “Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, *for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel*. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal.”¹⁵

What are some challenges to being “pastoral?”

Who better to disciple their children, than their fathers.

The challenge with discipleship is it’s caught, not taught. Fathers lead their children, and as they lead them, they model what it means to follow Christ.

¹⁴ George Whitefield, “The Great Day of Family Religion,” in *Classic Sermons on the Family and Home*, ed. Warren W. Wiersbe (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993), 55.

¹⁵ Martin Luther, *The Estate of Marriage*, trans. Walter I. Brandt, Lutheran Catechism, October 31, 2010, part 3, para. 27, https://lutherancatechism.com/doclib/luther_m_the_estate_of_marriage_1522.pdf.

Matthew 4:19 “Follow me...” Jesus was saying, “Live with me and learn by watching me. Own my values and priorities. Learn to become passionate for the things I live for. And follow my example by doing the ministry I have come to do.”

1 Cor. 11:1 - Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Being hypocritical can exasperate children and young people today. “The National Study of Youth and Religion’s most incontrovertible finding is that parents generally ‘get what they are,’ in religion as in most things. This finding means that we can expect the faith of the young people we love to reflect the faith we show them.”¹⁶

Have you ever seen your child “imitate” you?

We can see the influence a father has on his children. He influences because he’s the leader.

Saving Private Ryan

In the movie Saving Private Ryan, there is a scene when a new recruit is told to stop saluting the captain. The experienced soldier explains, “Every time you salute the captain, you make him a target for the Germans.”¹⁷ Why is the captain such a valuable target over the other soldiers? The Germans know the captain is the leader, and the impact of the leader affects the rest of the group. In the same way, what happens to fathers affects the entire family.

Fatherhood.gov

Their purpose is “to provide, facilitate, and disseminate current research and proven and innovative strategies that will encourage and strengthen fathers and families.”¹⁸

A Fathers leadership applies to their Children even when they are TEENS.

National Study of Youth and Religion

“While grandparents, other relatives, mentors, and youth ministers are also influential, parents are by far the most important predictors of teenagers’ religious lives.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 39.

¹⁷ *Saving Private Ryan*, directed by Steven Spielberg (Dreamworks, 1998), 1:03:12. DVD.

¹⁸ “About Us,” National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.fatherhood.gov/about-us>.

¹⁹ Dean, *Almost Christian*, 18.

The Truth about Men and Church

“If a father does not go to church, no matter how faithful his wife’s devotions, only one child in fifty (2%) will probably become regular adult worshippers. If a father goes regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three quarters of their children will become churchgoers (regular and irregular).”²⁰

Ephesians 6:1–4, ¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. ² Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, ³ so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land. ⁴ Fathers, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Notice the words used to refer to parents.

Verse 1 is “parents” - γονεύς (*goneus*). n. masc. parent. *Refers to a person’s biological (or legal) parent.*²¹

Verse 4 is “fathers” - πατήρ (*patēr*). n. masc. father, forefather. *Literally someone’s male parent.*²²

“Although it is possible for ‘fathers’ (Greek for father) to be understood here in a generic sense with reference to both parents...Paul is most likely focusing here on the men.”²³

Pastor and author William Farley recounts, “Before 1830, virtually every manual on parenting was addressed to fathers.”²⁴

RECAP: God may call you to do more than disciple your children, but never less.

“God has called fathers to walk patiently, purposefully, and prayerfully as we lead our families toward all that is ours in Christ...In the end, I want you to see Jesus. I want you to see him in a way that drives you to pursue him personally and to keep him before your wife and children in a way that causes them to seek him as well. In short, I want you to shepherd your family in the direction of the Good Shepherd.”²⁵

²⁰ Robbie Low, “The Truth about Men and Church,” *Touchstone* 16, no. 5 (June 2003): 67–69.

²¹ Thom Blair, “Family,” in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

²² Dougald McLaurin III, “Ancestry and Posterity,” in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

²³ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 417.

²⁴ William P. Farley, *Gospel Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 46.

²⁵ Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 11.

Take Away: Discuss with your wife or a close friend this question, “Should you work on being more pastoral or more missional with your child(ren)?”

Resource: Alister Begg, Truth for Life. The Biblical Pattern for Fathers
<https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/biblical-pattern-for-fathers>

Book: Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes by Voddie Baucham

Week 3 – What Should a Father do to Disciple their Children in the Home

Study Overview:

Week 1 we gained a firm understanding of the Gospel.

Week 2 we looked at the Great Commission and how fathers take part in it.

This Week we will start to focus on practical ways a father can disciple his children. We want to practice the same spiritual disciplines we teach our own children

Week 4 - How to study the Bible.

Week 5 - How and what to pray for your children.

Week 6 - How to partner with the church.

As we seek to equip fathers to disciple their own children, it is essential for a father to practice the same spiritual disciplines he teaches his children.

If the information to be taught to children primarily comes from the Lord, (The Bible) then we begin to see a connection to the spiritual condition of a father and his impact on his children.

Be encouraged! Look at where you already are.

1. What is true of a CHRISTIAN father?
 - A. New HEART (Ezek. 11:19–20) - And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.
 - B. New FAMILY (John 1:12) - But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.
 - C. New MISSION (Matt. 28:18–20) - And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

D. New GOAL (Matt. 22:38) - And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

E. New PERSON (2 Cor. 5:17) - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

What now?

2 Peter 1:5–8 - For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We want our children to be “increasing” in these spiritual qualities, or to be mature believers.

Kevin DeYoung writes, “The one indispensable requirement for producing godly, mature Christians is godly, mature Christians.”²⁶

2. Are you growing in MATURITY?

According to Deuteronomy 6:1–9 the father’s walk with the Lord is foundational in the spiritual leadership of their family.

“Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, ²that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son’s son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. ³Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. ⁴“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

²⁶ Kevin DeYoung, “Reaching the Next Generation: Hold Them with Holiness,” *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), October 21, 2009, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/reaching-the-next-generation-hold-them-with-holiness/>.

The name of the book comes from the Latin Vulgate and means “second law.”²⁷ The reason it is referred to as the “second law” is that in it, God re-emphasizes the law first articulated in the book of Exodus. Since the wilderness generation who were given the law did not trust the Lord to take the promised land, God restated His law to ensure the next generation knew it.

- v. 2 – Notice who this passage is addressed to. FATHERS
Notice who it benefits. FATHERS, SONS, AND YOUR SON’S SON
- v. 3 – a reference to the 5th commandment. Which we looked at last week when we discussed Eph. 6:1–4 (v. 2 quotes this command)
- v. 4–6 – these verses address all of Israel. The leaders, adults, parents, and their children.
- v. 7 – Now we focus on the children, but this is clearly commanding parents to disciple their children. We looked at discipleship last week.

The context here (Deut. 6:4–9) tells us the progression, “There is a movement from the private heart of the individual, outward via the family in the home, to the public realm of society at the gate.”²⁸

“The important point here is that training is inescapably relational. The trainer is calling upon the trainee to adopt not only his teaching, but also the way of life.”²⁹

The first word in Deuteronomy 6:7, according to the NIV, is “impress” (ESV: “teach . . . diligently”). In Eugene Merrill’s words, “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.”³⁰

This can be tedious work.

Notice how much care is to be taken and the life-long impact a father has on the lessons he passes on to his children.

Long Lasting Lessons

What are some long lasting lessons your father taught you?

Let’s look at things that influence you.

²⁷ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, vol. 4. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 21.

²⁸ Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 91.

²⁹ Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2009), 75.

³⁰ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

3. What INFLUENCES you?

My friends –

Proverbs 18:24 - A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Proverbs 22:24–25 - ²⁴ Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, ²⁵ lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

Proverbs 27:9 - Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.¹

Proverbs 27:6 - Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 27:17 - Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Who I follow –

Matthew 6:9–13 - The Lord’s Prayer - Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Be led by God, be fathered

Bryan Loritts said it pointedly: “Part of being made in the image of God is we were meant to be fathered.”³¹

Fathers need to be fathered

Voddie Baucham writes, “The role of men in their families is so important that God honored it by conferring upon us his own title, Father.”³²

From historical context as well as biblical exegesis, fathers are specifically called, and commanded to teach their children. Frank Thielman writes how this plays out as children “have a responsibility to obey their parents, fathers ‘also’ have a responsibility to use their authority for the good of their children.”³³

My purpose

Malachi 4:5–6 - Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ⁶ And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”²

Eccl 12:13 - The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

³¹ Bryan Loritts, “Church Pulse Weekly Conversations: Bryan Loritts on Fatherhood and Race in the Church,” Barna, June 16, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/cpw-loritts/>.

³² Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 11.

³³ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 401.

Westminster Shorter Catechism – 1. What is the chief end of man?
Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

My ultimate authority – the Word – next session

How I spend my time

Fathers should be maturing in their faith and that takes time.

Jesus was strategic with his time; therefore, fathers must be strategic with their time.

Let’s look at how you spend your time.

4. Am I strategic with my TIME?

We have to evaluate our time at work

We have to evaluate our time at home/family

We have to evaluate our time at leisure (hobbies)

Voddie Baucham writes, “The use of time is one of the most difficult subjects to broach with Christian men.”³⁴

How we spend our time reveals our hearts.

“Take a careful assessment of any person’s habits, and soon you can tell, with little margin for error, what really captures his heart” – David Mathis³⁵

Larry Eims emphasizes discipleship and time, saying, “And it is equally true that to train men a person must be willing to spend time with those men in hours of conversation and association in the normal affairs of life.”³⁶

Time for QT’s, conversations with your kids, do you make time for church (we’ll discuss more at week 6), if married, do you make time to love your wife.

When your child is born, you have 6,570 days before they turn 18

When your child is 5, you have 4,745 days left.

When your child is 10, you have 2,555 days left.

When they are 16, you have 730 days left.

Family Activities

³⁴ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 155.

³⁵ David Mathis, “Where You Abide Reveals What You Love,” *Challies* (blog), accessed, May 23, 2024, <https://www.challies.com/sponsored/where-you-abide-reveals-what-you-love/>.

³⁶ Larry Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 31.

And yet, whenever any activity, however good it may be, becomes amplified to the point that no time remains for family members to disciple one another, a divinely designed joy has been distorted into a hell-spawned idol. God calls us, just as he called our father Abraham, to be willing to release every longing for our child's pleasure and success for the sake of obedience to God's word (Gen. 22:2–18). In this, what God asked of us is no less what he himself has already done in Christ Jesus, "He . . . did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32).³⁷

Deuteronomy 6 speaks about how we use our time with our children when Moses wrote, "Talk about [God's Word] when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deut 6:7).

CONNECTION?

Things can get in the way. It reveals what's number 1 in our life. It reveals what we worship.

Let's look at worship

5. What competes for my WORSHIP? (Are there areas of your life where you consistently choose that area over God?)

John 3:30 – He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Archbishop Tillotson said, "To give children good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell."³⁸

Such close and constant association, of course, meant that Jesus had virtually no time to call his own. Like little children clamoring for the attention of their father, the disciples were always underfoot of the master. Even the time he took to go apart to keep his personal devotions was subject to interruption at the disciples' need (Mark 6:46-48; cf. Luke 11:1). But Jesus would have it no other way. He wanted to be with them. They were his spiritual children (Mark 10:24; John 13:33; 21:5), and the only way that a father can properly raise a family is to be with it.³⁹

Mark 6:46–48 - ⁴⁶And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night, he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them,

³⁷ Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 104.

³⁸ Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting*, 108.

³⁹ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 2nd ed. (Asheville, NC: Revell, 1994), 46.

Luke 11:1 - Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

Mark 10:24 - And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God!

John 13:33 - Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’

John 21:5 - Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.”

The first of the Ten Commandments is, “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Ex 20:3).

Stuart Scott refers to an idol as anything that we would sin to get, and anything we would sin if we do not get it.⁴⁰

See Handout “Journal of Desires”

Tripp – Evaluating our desires for ourselves and those we have for our children can be a helpful way for God to expose the idols in our hearts. As Tripp writes, “We begin to need them to be what they should be so that we can feel a sense of achievement and success. We begin to look at our children as our trophies rather than God’s creatures.” He goes on to say, “They are given not to bring us glory but to bring him glory.”⁴¹

As one commentary quoted, “Parents should care more for the loyalty of their children to Christ than for anything besides, more for this than for their health, their intellectual vigour and brilliance, their material prosperity, their social position, their exemption from great sorrows and great misfortunes.”⁴²

RECAP: “The important point here is that training is inescapably relational. The trainer is calling upon the trainee to adopt not only his teaching, but also the way of life.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Stuart Scott, “Journal of Desires,” One Eighty Ministry, October 22, 2015, <https://oneeightyministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/journal-of-desires-counselee.pdf>.

⁴¹ Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*, rev. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2022), 32.

⁴² Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 10 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 170.

⁴³ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 75.

“There is always much rejoicing and thanksgiving whenever the teaching and discipline of a Christian home leads, not artificially but naturally, to a child’s acceptance of the teaching and discipline of the Lord Jesus himself.”⁴⁴

- Take Away:** Fill out the journal of desires. Then share it with someone close to you.
- Resource:** <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-grow-faith.html>
- Book:** Disciplines of a Godly Man by Kent Hughes

Week 4 – The Supremacy of God’s Word in the Home

Study Overview:

- Week 1 – we gained a firm understanding of the Gospel.
- Week 2 – we looked at the Great Commission and how fathers take part in it.
- Week 3 – we began to focus on the condition of the father, and evaluate areas of our lives.
- Week 4 – This week we’ll learn how to study the Bible. Study the Bible in a way to see and share the point of the passage
- Week 5 – How and what to pray for your children.
- Week 6 – How to partner with the church.

Accountability Check: Of the different topics we’ve discussed, what has been the most helpful?

According to a study from LifeWay, only 29 percent of born-again Christians state that their personal faith plays the most significant role in their approach to parenting.⁴⁵

If your child asked you, “What is the Bible?” what would you say?

Scripture puts forth many descriptions of itself.

- God-Breathed and Useful for teaching, correcting, rebuking, and training-----2 Tim 3:16
- Lamp to our feet, light to our path -----Psalm 119:105
- Living and active-----Heb 4:12
- Sword of the Spirit-----Eph 6:17

Look at how Jesus used the Bible. Matthew 4:1-11

⁴⁴ Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 250.

⁴⁵ Jana Magruder, *Nothing Else: Engaging Kids in a Lifetime of Faith* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2017), 21.

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil
2 After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 Then the tempter approached him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” 4 He answered, “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will give his angels orders concerning you, and they will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” 7 Jesus told him, “It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God.” 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 And he said to him, “I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus told him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.” 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and began to serve him.

What does Jesus respond with each time he is tempted?

What is significant in verse 4, when Jesus uses the word “live”?

What keeps us from studying the Bible?

(I don't have time. - I don't feel smart enough. - I'm afraid I'll say something wrong. - The Bible is boring. - Therefore, my kids will think it's boring. - I don't know how.)

Why should we emphasize the Bible?

It not only tells us to teach, but it gives us the truths to teach, it gives us the curriculum to teach our children.

Inductive Bible Study Method⁴⁶

Inductive Bible study is an approach to God's Word focusing on three basic steps that move from a focus on specific details to a more general, universal principle. Through these three steps, we apply inductive reasoning, which is defined as the attempt to use information about a specific situation to draw a conclusion. Inductive Bible study can be done on many different levels. The shorter version is good for a brief devotional. The more extensive study is wonderful for digging deeper into the mind and heart of God.

1. OBSERVATION (What does it say?)

A father first observes the SETTING and STRUCTURE of the passage he is reading.

If we neglect good observation of what the text says, we have no true foundation upon which to know Christ. We have great intentions, but in all the wrong directions. We are

⁴⁶ “Our Bible Study Method,” Knowable Word, accessed June 11, 2024.
<https://www.knowableword.com/2012/08/10/our-bible-study-method-oia/>.

the people who failed to observe which weekend was the daylight savings time switch, and we show up to church an hour off from everyone else.

- A. WORDS: Pay attention to the words. Count up how many times different words are repeated. Notice how different things are described or labeled.
- B. GRAMMAR: Identify the subject, verb, and object of a sentence. What are the main verbs? Who is doing what, and where and how are they doing it?
- C. STRUCTURE: How does the passage fit together? Break it into paragraphs. Pay attention to transitions.
- D. GENRE: Is this poetry or prose? A letter or a narrative? Who is the author? Who is the original audience?
- E. MOOD: What tone of “voice” is the author writing with? Does the passage inspire action, invoke emotion, or challenge assumptions?

2. INTERPRETATION (What does it mean? Or “Why?”)

Next, a father begins to work toward UNDERSTANDING exactly what Scripture says. If we neglect good interpretation of what the text means, we might not know whether what we believe or do is biblical or not. We might be honoring the Lord, or we might not be. Although there may be many different applications, there is one correct interpretation of a passage. The correct interpretation is what the Author intended the reader to come to understand. A good example of poor interpretation of Scripture is found in Mark 12:18–24.

“If Scripture has more than one meaning, it has no meaning at all.” John Owen

- A. The entire UNITY of Scripture because it will never contradict itself.
- B. The surrounding context or the BIG IDEA.
Every Bible passage has a context. If we lift individual verses from their context, we endanger interpretation. At worst, we run into error, heresy, or unbelief, or we lead others into those things. Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons use the Bible to support their doctrines, too.

This process enables him to see what is happening in and around the passage which helps to see the context.

Context - In Scripture the context provides the situation behind the text.⁴⁷

Example – Look at the word “Read.”

- C. The CUSTOMARY meaning, or that natural reading. Beware of spiritualizing or reading into a text. If the natural sense makes sense, don’t look for any other sense.

3. APPLICATION (What do I need to do now? Or how do I need to change?)

Lastly, a father can apply the Bible ACCURATELY and PRACTICALLY to his life.

⁴⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 37.

If we neglect good application of how we ought to change, we are like foolish builders who build a home upon sand. We give lip service to Christ, but our hearts are far from him (Matthew 15:8–9). God wants to make us more like Jesus (Rom 8:29), and he won't rest until his Word accomplishes that purpose (Isaiah 55:10–11).

- How is God's Word relevant (notice: NOT "how do I make the Word relevant")
- Is there a teaching here to be learned and followed?
- Is there a correction to be noted?
- Does the passage give a rebuke to be heard and heeded?
- How does this passage train us to be righteous?
- In what ways should I change in light of Scripture, and what steps will do this?
- Remember: We always allow the Bible to change us, not the other way around.

There are 3 spheres for application. These spheres represent 3 different aspects of your life where you can obey the Lord and be conformed to the image of Jesus.

- A. THE HEAD represents everything you think and believe. This sphere involves thinking God's thoughts after him and believing his truth. It involves identifying lies you believe so you can replace them with the truth.
- How should you think about God? How should you think about others? How should you think about yourself?
 - Do I see myself among the lowly, or among the high and mighty?
 - Do I believe what this passage says? Do I believe that the Lord can rescue/save anyone?
 - Why do I remain silent, caring more about my glory and comfort than God's glorious rescue of sinners?
- B. THE HANDS represent everything you do. This sphere involves imitating the Lord and his ambassadors, learning new skills so you can be more effective at building God's Kingdom, and laying aside your old patterns of selfish behavior.
- Who can help me be more brutally honest about my need for Christ? How can I invite that person's counsel?
 - Am I faithfully proclaiming the message of Christ's rescue to others?
 - How can I be more effective at connecting every conversation to the saving power of Christ to rescue the lowly?
 - How can I pray for God to rescue my extended family? My neighbors? My co-workers?
 - How can I season my conversation with salt to expose where people trust in themselves and need Christ?
- C. THE HEART represents who you are. This sphere involves becoming a new person who desires the Lord above all and shows godly wisdom and selfless character.
- Am I open to the Lord's correction and salvation?
 - How can I give more glory to God when he rescues me from my sin and foolishness?

- Where do I feel the pain of my weakness? Where am I resisting the Lord's efforts to change me?

Exegesis vs. Eisegesis

Exegesis and eisegesis are two conflicting approaches in Bible study. Exegesis is the exposition or explanation of a text based on a careful, objective analysis. The word *exegesis* literally means "to lead out of." That means that the interpreter is led to his conclusions by following the text. The opposite approach to Scripture is eisegesis, which is the interpretation of a passage based on a subjective, non-analytical reading. The word eisegesis literally means "to lead into," which means the interpreter injects his own ideas into the text, making it mean whatever he wants.⁴⁸

Example of each - 2 Chronicles 27:1–2

"Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. . . . He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done, but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the LORD."

"The hardest thing about preaching is to get out of the way." - Pastor John. Bible study is no different.

RECAP: The Bible is the final authority to guide each member of the family, and it is also the textbook that is to be taught to the children. A father must make this book a prized possession in his own life before he can attempt to make it a prized possession in the lives of his children.

Take Away: Commit to setting a specific time aside each day to read and study your Bible. Follow the OIA method, and strive to read at least a little bit of the Bible every day.

Resource: <https://www.knowableword.com>

Book: Get a systematic theology book to keep in your home. This is to be a resource when your children ask you questions about God, the Bible, Jesus, or the Church. *Basic Theology* by Charles Ryrie

Week 5 – The Necessity of Prayer in the home

Study Overview:

Week 1 – we gained a firm understanding of the Gospel.

Week 2 – we looked at the Great Commission and how fathers take part in it.

⁴⁸ "Exegesis vs. Eisegesis," Got Questions, accessed June 4, 2024, <https://www.gotquestions.org/exegesis-eisegesis.html>, accessed 5/15/24.

Week 3 – we began to focus on the condition of the father, and evaluate areas of our lives.
Week 4 – we learned how to study the Bible.
Week 5 – This week we’ll learn the importance of prayer, and what to pray for your children.
Week 6 – How to partner with the church.

Overview: Prayer is a privilege and one of the most powerful activities a father can do with and for his children.

What is prayer?

Jerry Bridges writes that prayer “is a recognition of our own helplessness and absolute dependence on God.”⁴⁹

Helplessness - inability to defend oneself or to act effectively.

Absolute dependence - the state of relying on or being controlled by someone or something else.

Why is it difficult to pray?

Gen 25:21 - Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The Lord was receptive to his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived.

2 Sam 24:25 - He built an altar to the Lord there and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the Lord was receptive to prayer for the land, and the plague on Israel ended.

Ezra 8:23 - So we fasted and pleaded with our God about this, and he was receptive to our prayer.

Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

Maturing

Progressive Sanctification

“Progressive sanctification is about how we live in between God’s laying the cornerstone and setting the capstone.”⁵⁰

A cornerstone refers to the foundations while the capstone refers to the completion, and Christ is both.

Heb. 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

⁴⁹ Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 145.

⁵⁰ David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 29–30.

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.

Are fathers passive in this process? NO

For example, Jesus prayed to the Father in the garden, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

A father always has help in the task they are called to.

“A person who changes takes action... You change your mind, your attitudes, your feelings, your goal in life, the way you treat others, your habits. And you find, sooner or later, that God himself has been working all along.”⁵¹

*Though we may not fully understand the ramifications of the Spirit’s praying in the believer, the fact that He does is perfectly clear: “And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26).*⁵²

To bear spiritual fruit a father must first yield to the Holy Spirit in his life, and then step out in faith to be obedient to whatever God has called him to do.

Bruce Ware writes,

“If our homes and our churches are truly to be countercultural, we need to exhibit a whole-hearted, healthy respect for authority.”

A way the Holy Spirit helps fathers is reaching the hearts of their children. In Ephesians 6:4, we see the words “discipline” and “instruction.” Instruction focuses more on the heart and desires of the child. Fathers are powerless to change their child’s heart. The Holy Spirit is the one to do that.

Things to remember

If I do everything right as a father, will my kids turn out head and shoulders above other kids? No Biblical guarantee.

What are the next books following Deuteronomy? Joshua then Judges. What is the book of Judges like? What happened? God is the one who saves, no one else.

Adam & Eve had the perfect parent and the perfect environment, yet they still rebelled.

Eph. 6:4 - As H. Cremer said of *νουθεσία*, “its fundamental idea is the well-intentioned seriousness with which one would influence the *mind* and *disposition* of another...”⁵³

⁵¹ Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work*, 69.

⁵² Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 441.

⁵³ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books,

He is to instruct or give “good counsel” to them in a way to correct their thinking, which should correct their actions.⁵⁴

Chad Ashby gives us four specific ways

Luke 2:52

1. Increase in wisdom

When we ask God to help our children increase in wisdom, we are not asking him to make them smarter. Knowledge is not wisdom. We are asking God to work in their hearts in such a way as to fear him, and fearing God is only the beginning of wisdom. Fathers want wisdom to grow in their children.

2. Increase in stature

The second request is to increase in stature. As Ashby explains, “The Lord is developing each of our children in a special way—some tall, some short, some slow, some fast, some walking, some in wheelchairs. May they increase in understanding how their unique bodies are given to be used to bring him glory.”

3. Increase in God’s favor

The third request is that they would increase in God’s favor. This prayer is about God’s grace in their life, their salvation, and a growing relationship with him.

4. Increase in man’s favor

The fourth request is focused on their interactions with others, ministry, and their witness for Christ to the world. No matter where God leads their children, the prayer of every father should be for healthy and Christ-centered relationships with others and their future spouses, if God calls them to marry.

Take Away: Prayer is one of the most important and effective ways to disciple our children.

Resource: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/four-daily-prayers-for-your-children>

Book: *Spiritual Disciplines* by Don Whitney

WEEK 6 – The Role the Church Plays in the Home

Study Overview:

Week 1 – we gained a firm understanding of the Gospel.

Week 2 – we looked at the Great Commission and how fathers take part in it.

1990), 398.

⁵⁴ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 402.

Week 3 – we began to focus on the condition of the father, and evaluate areas of our lives.
Week 4 – we learned how to study the Bible.
Week 5 – we learned the importance of prayer, and what to pray for your children.
Week 6 – This week we’ll learn what the church is and the role it has in our lives and in our homes.

Overview: While family is influential and important, it should not stand alone in discipling children. The church should be a vital partner in that process. A father’s connection to a local body of believers is paramount to his own spiritual health and therefore for the health of his family.

Every believer has been empowered by Christ to fulfill the Great Commission. Jesus’s ministry modeled this process of growing the kingdom of God to his disciples. He took a few men and equipped them to make disciples and then commanded those same men he equipped, and every other Christian since then, to do the same. Making disciples is one of the main missions of the church, and parents are called to apply this in their homes by making disciples of their children. There is a complementary role between the church and the home which impacts, teaches, and disciplines children and fathers are at the forward position of this calling.

“What is the church?”

The New City Catechism gives the answer, “A community elected for eternal life and united by faith, who love, follow, learn from, and worship God together.”

(Catechism – an effective way to teach, with questions and answers)

A congregation of followers of Christ who gather together for worship, prayer, fellowship, and service, often in a designated location.

How should fathers be involved with the local church?

1. WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

Worship – the English word “worship” (a shortened form of “worth-ship”) means to attribute worth to the object worshiped.⁵⁵

In worship human beings recognize God for his attributes and express this through adoration, praise, thanksgiving, service, and living holy lives. Worship constitutes the primary calling of humans.⁵⁶

But you have to show up.

“The average in-person weekly attendance at Southern Baptist Convention churches declined 18.75 percent, from 4,439,797 in 2020 to 3,607,530 in 2021.”⁵⁷ These

⁵⁵ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 496.

⁵⁶ Ed Smither, “Worship in the Life of the Church,” in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Jeremy Thompson et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

⁵⁷ Adelle M. Banks, “Southern Baptists Report Significant Attendance Drop,” *Baptist Standard*,

numbers show Covid had a huge impact on church attendance, but the trend has been going on long before the pandemic. “More people have left the church in the last twenty-five years than all the new people who became Christians from the First Great Awakening, Second Great Awakening, and Billy Graham crusades combined.”⁵⁸ The First Great Awakening was a religious revival that impacted the English colonies in America during the 1730s and 1740s. (Jonathan Edwards & George Whitefield). Second was 1790’s to 1830’s. I hope we all know Billy Graham; he preached crusades from 1947–2002.

Here at FBCLC, we encourage everyone to “Give us 2”

A. Sunday morning

B. Wednesday or small group

C. Not every time the doors are open

All your ministry/discipleship cannot take place within the church walls.

2. FELLOWSHIP

We usually think of parties and dinners, but in the New Testament it is much more. The Greek word for is *koinōnia*, which comes from the adjective *koinos*, meaning “common.” is a commonness; it is sharing something with someone else.⁵⁹ And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42

Devoted to fellowship

Connected to each other

The early church continued in fellowship (Acts 2:42).

This means they had a close relationship with each other.

This closeness consisted of

their common doctrinal allegiance,

their willingness to share material things,

the experience of Communion in the Lord’s Supper, and in sharing prayers.⁶⁰

3. SERVING

Luke 4:5–8 ⁵ And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷ If you, then, will

May 16, 2022, <https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/baptists/southern-baptists-report-significantattendance-drop/>.

⁵⁸ Bob Smietana, “The Great Dechurching’ explores America’s religious exodus,” *Religion News Service*, December 2, 2023, <https://religionnews.com/2023/09/07/the-great-dechurchingexplores-americas-religious-exodus/>.

⁵⁹ John M. Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 263.

⁶⁰ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 499.

worship me, it will all be yours.”⁸ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you .’ ”

The fact that we *should* serve God is obvious in Scripture (see Luke 4:8). Why we should *want* to serve God is a more difficult question. Every Christian asked might have a different reason for serving God; different people are motivated by different things. However, the Bible does make clear that, when a person is in a real relationship with God, he will serve God. We should want to serve God because we know Him; an inherent part of knowing Him is a desire to serve Him.⁶¹

We *want* to serve God...

- because “we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (Hebrews 12:28),
- because our service supplies “the needs of the Lord’s people” (2 Corinthians 9:12),
- because our service proves our faith and causes others to praise God (2 Corinthians 9:13),
- and because God sees and rewards our labor of love (Hebrews 6:10).

Each of these is a good reason to serve God.⁶²

How might we serve?

Look at your spiritual gifts:

“These terms point to that which God grants to believers for the carrying out of the work of ministry in the church.”⁶³

1 Co 12:4–7

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Peter 4:10–11

¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁶¹ Got Questions Ministries, *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2002–2013).

⁶² Got Questions Ministries, *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2002–2013).

⁶³ Chad Brand, “Spiritual Gifts,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed., ed. Chad Brand, (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2015), 1529.

4. PARTNERSHIP

Next to parents, the influence on the lives of children toward reinforcing their faith lies with “highly devoted congregations.”⁶⁴

Deut. 6:4–9 – ⁴“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.² ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

This command was given to Israel, God’s chosen people

Psalm 78:1–8 – 1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! ²I 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. ⁴We 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. ⁵He 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.

This passage addresses God’s people

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

The New Testament is where we see the emphasis on God’s people being the church.

“The proper ends for a local congregation’s life and actions are the worship of God, the edification of the church, and the evangelization of the world.”⁶⁵

Mark Dever

“Contrary to our superficial thinking, there never was a distinction in his mind between home and foreign missions. To Jesus it was all world evangelism.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 75.

⁶⁵ Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible*, 9Marks (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 69.

⁶⁶ Coleman, *Masterplan of Evangelism*, 23.

How can the church partner with fathers?

Family-Integrated model - seek to avoid age-segregated ministries in the church and instead seek to combine, or integrate, the whole family into the ministry of the church. A distinguishing mark of this model would be the worship services incorporating the entire family, without a separate worship service for the children or teenagers. But some Family-Integrated churches might have a nursery or preschool area.

Family-Based model - which resembles the traditional age-organized children and teen ministries. This model has been the standard of many larger churches and seeker-friendly churches. For worship, there usually is a separate service for children and sometimes for teenagers.

Family-Equipping model - which seeks to focus on parents and equipping them to do the work of discipleship of their children, while retaining certain age-specific ministries for children and teens.

Two things to emphasize in the CHURCH and in the HOME

1. The WORD

A pastor who consistently opens the Word of God to the congregation emphasizes the importance of God's Word in their lives. The same is true within the home. When a father applies the Word of God to his own life and teaches his children the same, he emphasizes the importance of the Word in their lives just as a pastor does to the congregation.

2. WORSHIP

Another way the church can partner with families is through worship. Worship is vital for the church and is even the driving force for many missions' organizations. As John Piper writes, "Missions exist because worship doesn't."⁶⁷ The idea of worship as a family mirrors the idea of worship in a church.

The home is a place where fathers can lead their children in worship so they can learn how to worship with the church.

"The best thing you can do for your kids is to teach them to worship. Why? Because we become like the object of our worship. The Bible teaches us when we worship an idol, we become like that idol. First the family molds the idol, and then the idol molds the family."

⁶⁷ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 35.

Worshiping with children at church
Worshiping with children at home

Family Worship

The church is a family made up of children of God. God is the Father, and his children gather to worship him, the one true God. Similarly, in a home where the father is the leader, he gathers his children to worship the one true God. The terminologies used in the Bible to describe God as Father, the church as a family, and believers as children makes the connection easy to see.

Reminders to help with family worship.

(Brevity, Regularity, and Flexibility)⁶⁸

BREVITY – 5–10 minutes is a good amount of time. Consistency is the goal, not the length of the devotion.

REGULARITY – Find a consistent time that works for your family. Some find it easier in the morning on the way to school, some find it easier at dinner. Fit it into the natural rhythm of your family.

FLEXIBILITY – Don't make it rigid, but be cautious of being too flexible. Sometimes being too flexible can lead to inconsistency.

Church and Family are not the same, and two ways we see that are the ordinances.

Ordinances

LORD'S SUPPER – Jesus instituted the Supper in connection with eating the Passover meal before His crucifixion. The ordinance consisted of Christ taking unleavened bread, giving thanks, distributing it to the disciples, and doing the same with the cup.⁶⁹

Requirements to take the Lord's Supper

- A. Regeneration. Only believers can experience Communion.
- B. Fellowship with a local church. Unrepentant believers under discipline were excluded from the Supper (1 Corinthians 5:11–13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11–15).
- C. Cleansing before partaking (1 Corinthians 11:27–32).⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 50–51.

⁶⁹ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 492.

⁷⁰ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 493.

BAPTISM - Christian baptism means identification with the message of the Gospel, the person of the Savior, and the group of believers⁷¹

These ordinances are great opportunities to teach your children about what they represent; the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Take Away: Do you make church attendance and involvement a priority for you and your children? Seek to begin to do that this week.

Resource: My Church Notebook published by Children Desiring God

Book: Family Worship by Donald Whitney

⁷¹ Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*, 489.

APPENDIX 5

EQUIPPING FATHERS HANDOUTS

This appendix contains the handouts that were passed out to each father during the sessions. There are blanks available for the fathers to write in their answers that were shared during the teaching sessions. This information met goal 3.

Week 1 – The impact the Gospel Has in the Home

Study Overview:

Week 1 we will gain a firm understanding of the _____.

Week 2 we will look at the _____ and how fathers take part in it.

Week 3 we will review practical ways a father can _____ his children.

Week 4 we will discuss how to _____ the Bible and the importance of God’s word in our homes.

Week 5 we will review the _____ and role that prayer has in a father’s life and home.

Week 6 we will unpack some specific ways a father can _____ with the local church.

If your child asked you, “What is the Gospel?” How would you respond?

“The Gospel is Essentially that God created us, we are accountable to him. Therefore, we’ve sinned against him, we’ve rebelled against him. For that rebellion, we deserve a penalty of death. And yet God, in his love, sent Jesus, the eternal Son of God, to become a human and live the life we ought to have lived, die the death that we deserved for our sin and rebellion against him, and then rise again so that as we are united to him by faith, we, too, rise to newness of life in the hope of the resurrection.”

Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel*

To have a firm grasp of what the Gospel means, there are 4 questions we need to answer.

5. Who is _____?
6. Who is _____?
7. Who is _____?
8. What is our _____?

1. Who is God?

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*

D. God is _____

1 John 4:8 – “The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

How does God express His love?

He keeps his _____ (_____)

1 Kings 8:56 - Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word

has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant.

Matthew 3:17 - And a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.”

His children know what he _____ and _____ about them.

E. God _____

Proverbs 3:11–12 - Do not despise the Lord’s instruction, my son,
and do not loathe his discipline;
¹²for the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.

“A toddler is not going to understand most of what that verse means, but you need to be thinking in biblical ways and, in turn, teach your children in simple words and phrases that he can begin to understand.”

Stuart Scott & Martha Peace, *Faithful Parent*

F. God is _____

Isaiah 6:3 - And one called to another and said:
“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

Holy - But God’s perfect holiness—the complete perfection of His attributes such as _____ and _____—is a humbling and even terrifying thing when revealed to weak and sinful men (e.g., Isa. 6:5; Luke 5:8; Rev. 1:17).

Isaiah 66:2 - All these things my hand has made,
and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord.
But this is the one to whom I will look:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word.

G. God is _____

Grace – showing unmerited favor toward someone else.

Eph. 2:8–9 - ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

2. Who is Man?

C. Made in Gods _____

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
Gen. 1:26–27

How do we bear His image?

Christlikeness

our _____ to God
our _____ from sin
our _____ growth.

D. _____

Gen. 3:6 - So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

“What is sin? Any feeling, or thought, or speech or action that comes from a heart that does not treasure God over all things.

John Piper

Consequences of sin

- 5) Death – Genesis 2:16–17
- 6) Broken relationships – Genesis 3:15–19
- 7) Indwelling sin – Romans 5:12
- 8) Unable to save himself – Genesis 3:7

“You do not want to be the parents of pagans. But if you are not strategic and careful, if you do not heed the word of the Lord, you will raise pagans by default.”

Albert Mohler

3. Who is Jesus?

E. _____ - John 8:58–59 - Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

F. _____ – John 14:6- Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

G. _____ – Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

“God used fatherhood to make me face up to my self-centeredness. As a husband, you learn to give up the dreams of doing what you want when you want and start considering your wife’s needs before your own. Fatherhood will continue that process.”

Deepak Reju

H. _____ – “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.” Luke 19:10

“A vital way fathers can show love and care for their children is by pursuing them. Pursuing their children by taking an interest in the children’s activities, to have fun with them, and to have honest conversations.”

4. What is our Response?

Fathers are to respond to God, their heavenly father, as children are to respond to their earthly fathers.

A. For salvation – Justification

B. In repentance - Sanctification

How do we respond to _____?

When we sin

How do we respond to our _____?

When we sin

Take Away: Review your notes and tell either your wife, one of your kids, or a close friend, which of the four topics (God, Man, Jesus, Response) resonated with you the most.

Resource: <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/why-we-need-gospel/>

Book: *What Is the Gospel* by Greg Gilbert

Week 2 - The Role of the Great Commission in the Home

Review: Last week we looked at the Gospel and we answered four questions;

- 1) Who is God?
- 2) Who is Man?
- 3) Who is Jesus?
- 4) What is our response?

This week we will look at the Great Commission and how fathers take part in it.

“God may call you to do more than disciple your children, but never less.”

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18–20 - And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Look at two components of the great commission

_____ - vb. **to go, proceed.** *Refers to the act of going in a particular direction. Figuratively, it refers to taking a particular course of action.*

Not _____

_____ - vb. **to make a disciple.** *Used to indicate the action of causing another to become a disciple.*

Not _____

What is a _____?

Someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way.

What is _____?

An individual and a corporate activity as we follow Christ and help each other along the way.

“Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Jesus did not give us specific locations where we are to make disciples.

Deut. 6:7 - ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you *sit* in your house, and when you *walk* by the way, and when you *lie* down, and when you *rise*.

These two components are both _____ and _____.

A Godly father is to be _____ – focused on the mission “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

There is no distinction in Scripture between the Great Commission at home and the Great Commission abroad, there is simply the _____.

Were a minister to disregard teaching his people publicly and from house to house, and to excuse himself by saying that he had enough to do to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling without concerning himself with that of others; would you not be apt to think such a minister to be like the unjust judge, ‘one that neither feared God nor regarded man?’ And yet odious as such a character would be, it is no worse than that governor of a family deserves who thinks himself obliged only to save his own soul without paying any regard to the souls of his household.

George Whitefield

What are some challenges to being “missional?”

A father is to be _____ – shepherding.

1 Peter 5:2 - Shepherd the flock of God that is among you.

Prov. 1:8 - Hear, my son, your father’s instruction.

“Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, *for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel*. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal.”

Martin Luther

What are some challenges to being “pastoral?”

Discipleship is caught, not *only* taught. Fathers lead their children, and as they lead them, they model what it means to follow Christ.

Matthew 4:19 “Follow me...”

Jesus was saying, “Live with me and learn by watching me. Own my values and priorities. Learn to become passionate for the things I live for. And follow my example by doing the ministry I have come to do.”

1 Cor. 11:1 - Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Have you ever seen your child “imitate” you?

“Every time you salute the captain, you make him a target for the Germans.”
Saving Private Ryan

Their purpose is “to provide, facilitate, and disseminate current research and proven and innovative strategies that will encourage and strengthen fathers and families.”
Fatherhood.gov

A Fathers leadership applies to their children even when they are _____.

“While grandparents, other relatives, mentors, and youth ministers are also influential, parents are by far the most important predictors of teenagers’ religious lives.”

National Study of Youth and Religion

“If a father does not go to church, no matter how faithful his wife’s devotions, only one child in fifty (2%) will probably become regular adult worshippers. If a father goes regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three quarters of their children will become churchgoers (regular and irregular).”

The Truth about Men and Church

Ephesians 6:1–4, ¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. ² **Honor your father and mother**, which is the first commandment with a promise, ³ **so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land.** ⁴ Fathers, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Notice the words used to refer to parents.

Verse 1 “parents” - *Refers to a person’s biological (or legal) parent.*

Verse 4 “fathers” - *Literally someone’s male parent.*

“Although it is possible for ‘fathers’ (Greek for father) to be understood here in a generic sense with reference to both parents...Paul is most likely focusing here on the men.”

RECAP: God may call you to do more than disciple your children, but never less.

“God has called fathers to walk patiently, purposefully, and prayerfully as we lead our families toward all that is ours in Christ...In the end, I want you to see Jesus. I want you to see him in a way that drives you to pursue him personally and to keep him before your wife and children in a way that causes them to seek him as well. In short, I want you to shepherd your family in the direction of the Good Shepherd.”

Voddie Baucham

Take Away: Discuss with your wife or a close friend this question, “Should you work on being more pastoral or more missional with your child(ren)?”

Resource: Alister Begg, Truth for Life. The Biblical Pattern for Fathers
<https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/biblical-pattern-for-fathers>

Book: Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes by Voddie Baucham

Week 3 – What Should a Father do to Disciple their Children in the Home

Study Overview:

Week 1 we gained a firm understanding of the Gospel.

Week 2 we looked at the Great Commission and how fathers take part in it.

This Week we will start to focus on practical ways a father can disciple his children. We want to practice the same spiritual disciplines we teach our own children

Week 4 - How to study the Bible.

Week 5 - How to pray for your children.

Week 6 - How to partner with the church.

Be encouraged! Look at where you already are.

1. What is true of a _____ father?

A. New _____ (Ezek. 11:19–20) - And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

B. New _____ (John 1:12) - But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

C. New _____ (Matt. 28:18–20) - And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

D. New _____ (Matt. 22:38) - And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

E. New _____ (2 Cor. 5:17) - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Peter 1:5–8 - For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“The one indispensable requirement for producing godly, mature Christians is godly, mature Christians.”

Kevin DeYoung

2. Are you growing in _____?

According to Deuteronomy 6:1–9 the father’s walk with the Lord is foundational in the spiritual leadership of their family.

Deut. 6:1–9 “Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, ²that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son’s son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. ³Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

⁴“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

v. 2 - This passage is addressed to _____
It benefits _____, _____, and your _____

v. 7 - “teach . . . diligently” - “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.”

What are some long lasting lessons your father taught you?

3. What _____ you?

My friends –

Proverbs 18:24 - A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Proverbs 22:24–25 - ²⁴Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, ²⁵lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

Proverbs 27:9 - Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.¹

Proverbs 27:6 - Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 27:17 - Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Who I follow –

Matthew 6:9–13 - The Lord’s Prayer - Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread, ¹²and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Bryan Loritts said it pointedly: “Part of being made in the image of God is we were meant to be fathered.”¹

My purpose –

Ecc 12:13 - The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Westminster Shorter Catechism – 1. What is the chief end of man?
Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

My ultimate authority –

the Word – next session

How I spend my time –

Jesus was strategic with his time; therefore, fathers must be strategic with their time.

4. Am I strategic with my _____?

“Take a careful assessment of any person’s habits, and soon you can tell, with little margin for error, what really captures his heart”

David Mathis

When your child is born, you have 6,570 days before they turn 18

At 5, you have 4,745 days left. At 10, you have 2,555 days left. At 16, you have 730 days left.

5. What competes for my _____?

John 3:30 – He must increase, but I must decrease.”

¹ Bryan Loritts, “Church Pulse Weekly Conversations: Bryan Loritts on Fatherhood and Race in the Church,” Barna, June 16, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/cpw-loritts/>.

The first of the Ten Commandments is, “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Ex 20:3).

See Handout “Journal of Desires”

Evaluating our desires for ourselves and those we have for our children can be a helpful way for God to expose the idols in our hearts.

“We begin to need them to be what they should be so that we can feel a sense of achievement and success. We begin to look at our children as our trophies rather than God’s creatures... They are given not to bring us glory but to bring him glory.”

Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*

RECAP: “The important point here is that training is inescapably relational. The trainer is calling upon the trainee to adopt not only his teaching, but also the way of life.”

Marshall & Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*

“There is always much rejoicing and thanksgiving whenever the teaching and discipline of a Christian home leads, not artificially but naturally, to a child’s acceptance of the teaching and discipline of the Lord Jesus himself.”

John Stott

Take Away: Fill out the journal of desires. Then share it with someone close to you.

Resource: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-grow-faith.html>

Book: *Disciplines of a Godly Man* by Kent Hughes

Week 4 – The Supremacy of God’s Word in the Home

Study Overview:

Week 1 – we gained a firm understanding of the Gospel.

Week 2 – we looked at the Great Commission and how fathers take part in it.

Week 3 – we began to focus on the condition of the father, and evaluate areas of our lives.

Week 4 – This week we’ll learn how to study the Bible. Study the Bible in a way to see and share the point of the passage

Week 5 – How and what to pray for your children.

Week 6 – How to partner with the church.

Accountability Check: Of the different topics we’ve discussed, what has been the most helpful to you the most?

If your child asked you, “What is the Bible?” what would you say?

Scripture puts forth many descriptions of itself.

- God-Breathed and Useful for teaching, correcting, rebuking, and training-----2 Tim 3:16
- Lamp to our feet, light to our path -----Psalm 119:105
- Living and active-----Heb 4:12
- Sword of the Spirit-----Eph 6:17

Look at how Jesus used the Bible. (Matthew 4:1-11)

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

³ And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

⁴ But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple

⁶ and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “ ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

⁹ And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’ ”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

What does Jesus respond with each time he is tempted? _____

What keeps us from studying the Bible?

Inductive Bible Study Method²

Inductive Bible study is an approach to God's Word focusing on three basic steps that move from a focus on specific details to a more general, universal principle. Through these three steps, we apply inductive reasoning, which is defined as the attempt to use information about a specific situation to draw a conclusion. Inductive Bible study can be done on many different levels. The shorter version is good for a brief devotional. The more extensive study is wonderful for digging deeper into the mind and heart of God.

1. _____ (What does it say?)

A father first observes the _____ and _____ of the passage he is reading.

If we neglect good observation of what the text says, we have no true foundation upon which to know Christ. We have great intentions, but in all the wrong directions. We are the people who failed to observe which weekend was the daylight savings time switch, and we show up to church an hour off from everyone else.

F. _____: Pay attention to the words. Count up how many times different words are repeated. Notice how different things are described or labeled.

G. _____: Identify the subject, verb, and object of a sentence. What are the main verbs? Who is doing what, and where and how are they doing it?

H. _____: How does the passage fit together? Break it into paragraphs. Pay attention to transitions.

I. _____: Is this poetry or prose? A letter or a narrative? Who is the author? Who is the original audience?

J. _____: What tone of "voice" is the author writing with? Does the passage inspire action, invoke emotion, or challenge assumptions?

2. _____ (What does it mean?)

Next, a father begins to work toward _____ exactly what Scripture says.

If we neglect good interpretation of what the text means, we might not know whether what we believe or do is biblical or not. We might be honoring the Lord, or we might not be. Although there may be many different applications, there is one correct interpretation of a passage. The correct interpretation is what the Author intended the reader to come to understand. A good example of poor interpretation of Scripture is found in Mark 12:18–24.

“If Scripture has more than one meaning, it has no meaning at all.”

John Owen

² <https://www.knowableword.com/2012/08/10/our-bible-study-method-oia/>

- A. The entire _____ of Scripture because it will never contradict itself.
- B. The surrounding context or the _____.
Context - In Scripture the context provides the situation behind the text. Every Bible passage has a context. If we lift individual verses from their context, we endanger interpretation. At worst, we run into error, heresy, or unbelief, or we lead others into those things. Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons use the Bible to support their doctrines, too.
- C. The _____ meaning, or that natural reading. Beware of spiritualizing or reading into a text. If the natural sense makes sense, don't look for any other sense.

3. _____ (What do I need to do now?)

Lastly, a father can apply the Bible _____ and _____ to his life.

If we neglect good application of how we ought to change, we are like foolish builders who build a home upon sand. We give lip service to Christ, but our hearts are far from him (Matthew 15:8-9). God wants to make us more like Jesus (Rom 8:29), and he won't rest until his Word accomplishes that purpose (Isaiah 55:10-11).

- A. How is God's Word relevant (notice: NOT "how do I make the Word relevant")
- B. Is there a teaching here to be learned and followed?
- C. Is there a correction to be noted?
- D. Does the passage give a rebuke to be heard and heeded?
- E. How does this passage train us to be righteous?
- F. In what ways should I change in light of Scripture, and what steps will do this?
- G. Remember: We always allow the Bible to change us, not the other way around.

There are 3 spheres for application. These spheres represent 3 different aspects of your life where you can obey the Lord and be conformed to the image of Jesus.

1. _____ represents everything you think and believe. This sphere involves thinking God's thoughts after him and believing his truth. It involves identifying lies you believe so you can replace them with the truth.

- How should you think about God? How should you think about others? How should you think about yourself?
- Do I see myself among the lowly, or among the high and mighty?
- Do I believe what this passage says? Do I believe that the Lord can rescue/save anyone?
- Why do I remain silent, caring more about my glory and comfort than God's glorious rescue of sinners?

2. _____ represent everything you do. This sphere involves imitating the Lord and his ambassadors, learning new skills so you can be more effective at building God's Kingdom, and laying aside your old patterns of selfish behavior.

- Who can help me be more brutally honest about my need for Christ? How can I invite that person's counsel?
- Am I faithfully proclaiming the message of Christ's rescue to others?
- How can I be more effective at connecting every conversation to the saving power of Christ to rescue the lowly?
- How can I pray for God to rescue my extended family? My neighbors? My co-workers?
- How can I season my conversation with salt to expose where people trust in themselves and need Christ?

3. _____ represents who you are. This sphere involves becoming a new person who desires the Lord above all and shows godly wisdom and selfless character.

- Am I open to the Lord's correction and salvation?
- How can I give more glory to God when he rescues me from my sin and foolishness?
- Where do I feel the pain of my weakness? Where am I resisting the Lord's efforts to change me?

Exegesis vs. Eisegesis

Exegesis and eisegesis are two conflicting approaches in Bible study. Exegesis is the exposition or explanation of a text based on a careful, objective analysis. The word *exegesis* literally means "to lead out of." That means that the interpreter is led to his conclusions by following the text. The opposite approach to Scripture is eisegesis, which is the interpretation of a passage based on a subjective, non-analytical reading. The word eisegesis literally means "to lead into," which means the interpreter injects his own ideas into the text, making it mean whatever he wants.³

2 Chronicles 27:1–2

"Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. . . . He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done, but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the LORD."

"The hardest thing about preaching is to get out of the way." Bible study is no different.

³ "Exegesis vs. Eisegesis," Got Questions, accessed June 4, 2024, <https://www.gotquestions.org/exegesis-eisegesis.html>.

RECAP: The Bible is the final authority to guide each member of the family, and it is also the textbook that is to be taught to the children. A father must make this book a prized possession in his own life before he can attempt to make it a prized possession in the lives of his children.

Take Away: Commit to setting a specific time aside each day to read and study your Bible. Follow the OIA method, and strive to read at least a little bit of the Bible every day.

Resource: <https://www.knowableword.com>

Book: Get a systematic theology book to keep in your home. This is to be a resource when your children ask you questions about God, the Bible, Jesus, or the Church. Such as, Basic Theology by Charles Ryrie.

Week 5 – The Necessity of Prayer in the home

Study Overview:

Week 1 – we gained a firm understanding of the Gospel.

Week 2 – we looked at the Great Commission and how fathers take part in it.

Week 3 – we began to focus on the condition of the father, and evaluate areas of our lives.

Week 4 – we learned how to study the Bible.

Week 5 – This week we'll learn the importance of prayer, and what to pray for your children.

Week 6 – How to partner with the church.

Overview: Prayer is a privilege and one of the most powerful activities a father can do with and for his children.

What is prayer?

Jerry Bridges writes that prayer “is a recognition of our own helplessness and absolute dependence on God.”¹¹

Helplessness - inability to defend oneself or to act effectively.

Absolute dependence - the state of relying on or being controlled by someone or something else.

Why is it difficult to pray?

Maturing

Progressive Sanctification

“Progressive sanctification is about how we live in between God’s laying the cornerstone and setting the capstone.”¹²

A cornerstone refers to the foundations while the capstone refers to the completion, and Christ is both.

Heb. 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, ²looking 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 ³is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Things to remember

1. If I do everything right as a father, will my kids turn out head and shoulders above other kids? No Biblical guarantee
2. What are the next books following Deuteronomy? Joshua then Judges.
3. God is the one who saves, no one else.
4. Adam & Eve had the perfect parent and the perfect environment, yet they still rebelled.

Chad Ashby gives us four specific ways

Luke 2:52

(1) Increase in wisdom

When we ask God to help our children increase in wisdom, we are not asking him to make them smarter. Knowledge is not wisdom. We are asking God to work in their hearts in such a way as to fear him, and fearing God is only the beginning of wisdom. Fathers want wisdom to grow in their children.

(2) Increase in stature

The second request is to increase in stature. As Ashby explains, “The Lord is developing each of our children in a special way—some tall, some short, some slow, some fast, some walking, some in wheelchairs. May they increase in understanding how their unique bodies are given to be used to bring him glory.”

(3) Increase in God’s favor

The third request is that they would increase in God’s favor. This prayer is about God’s grace in their life, their salvation, and a growing relationship with him.

(4) Increase in man’s favor

The fourth request is focused on their interactions with others, ministry, and their witness for Christ to the world. No matter where God leads their children, the prayer of every father should be for healthy and Christ-centered relationships with others and their future spouses, if God calls them to marry.

Take Away: Prayer is one of the most important and effective ways to disciple our children.

Resource: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/four-daily-prayers-for-your-children>

Book: *Spiritual Disciplines* by Don Whitney

WEEK 6 – The Role the Church Plays in the Home

Study Review:

Week 1 – we gained a firm understanding of the Gospel.

Week 2 – we looked at the Great Commission and how fathers take part in it.

Week 3 – we began to focus on the condition of the father, and evaluate areas of our lives.

Week 4 – we learned how to study the Bible.

Week 5 – we learned the importance of prayer, and what to pray for your children.

Week 6 – This week we’ll learn what the church is and the role it has in our lives and in our homes.

Overview: While family is influential and important, it should not stand alone in discipling children. The church should be a vital partner in that process. A father’s connection to a local body of believers is paramount to his own spiritual health and therefore for the health of his family.

“What is the church?”

The New City Catechism - “A community elected for eternal life and united by faith, who love, follow, learn from, and worship God together.”

How should fathers be involved with the local church?

1. _____ -
Worship – (a shortened form of “worthship”) means to attribute worth to the object worshiped.

“More people have left the church in the last twenty-five years than all the new people who became Christians from the First Great Awakening, Second Great Awakening, and Billy Graham crusades combined.”
Bob Smietana “The Great Dechurching’ explores America’s religious exodus,” 2023
2. _____ -
Acts 2:42 - And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

This consisted of...
 1. Common doctrinal allegiance
 2. Willingness to share material things
 3. The Lord’s Supper
 4. Sharing prayers
3. _____
Luke 4:5–8 - ⁵And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’ ”

We *want* to serve God because...

- “we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (Hebrews 12:28),
- our service supplies “the needs of the Lord’s people” (2 Corinthians 9:12),
- our service proves our faith and causes others to praise God (2 Corinthians 9:13)
- God sees and rewards our labor of love (Hebrews 6:10)

Spiritual Gifts

1 Cor. 12:4–7⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Peter 4:10–11 ¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

4.

Next to parents, the influence on the lives of children toward reinforcing their faith lies with “highly devoted congregations.”

Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*

Deut. 6:4–9 – ⁴“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.² ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Psalms 78:1–8 – ¹ 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.

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

“Contrary to our superficial thinking, there never was a distinction in his mind between home and foreign missions. To Jesus it was all world evangelism.”

Robert Coleman

How can the church partner with fathers?

Family-Integrated model - seek to avoid age-segregated ministries in the church and instead seek to combine, or integrate, the whole family into the ministry of the church. A distinguishing mark of this model would be the worship services incorporating the entire family, without a separate worship service for the children or teenagers. But some Family-Integrated churches might have a nursery or preschool area.

Family-Based model - which resembles the traditional age-organized children and teen ministries. This model has been the standard of many larger churches and seeker-friendly churches. For worship, there usually is a separate service for children and sometimes for teenagers.

Family-Equipping model - which seeks to focus on parents and equipping them to do the work of discipleship of their children, while retaining certain age-specific ministries for children and teens.

1. Two things to emphasize in the _____ and in the _____

A. The _____

A pastor who consistently opens the Word of God to the congregation emphasizes the importance of God’s Word in their lives. The same is true within the home. When a father applies the Word of God to his own life and teaches his children the same, he emphasizes the importance of the Word in their lives just as a pastor does to the congregation.

B. _____

John Piper writes, “Missions exist because worship doesn’t.”

“The best thing you can do for your kids is to teach them to worship. Why? Because we become like the object of our worship. The Bible teaches us when we worship an idol, we become like that idol. First the family molds the idol, and then the idol molds the family.”

Adrian Rogers

Family Worship

The church is a family made up of children of God. God is the Father, and his children gather to worship him, the one true God. Similarly, in a home where the father is the leader, he

gathers his children to worship the one true God. The terminologies used in the Bible to describe God as Father, the church as a family, and believers as children makes the connection easy to see.

Reminders to help with family worship.

_____ – 5–10 minutes is a good amount of time.

_____ – Find a consistent time that works for your family.

_____ – Don't make it rigid.

Church and Family are not the same, and two ways we see that are the ordinances

_____ – Jesus instituted the Supper in connection with eating the Passover meal before His crucifixion

_____ - Christian baptism means identification with the message of the Gospel, the person of the Savior, and the group of believers

Take Away: Do you make church attendance and involvement a priority for you and your children? Seek to begin to do that this week.

Resource: My Church Notebook published by Children Desiring God

Book: Family Worship by Donald Whitney

APPENDIX 6
T-TEST RESULTS

T-test: two sample assuming unequal variances		
	Pre-Test Total (Variable 1)	Post-Test Total (Variable 2)
Mean	139.0625	161.142857
Variance	182.4435	221.015873
Observations	32	28
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	55	
t stat	-5.988525774	
P(T<=t) one-tail	8.39497E-08	
t Critical one-tail	1.673033965	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.67899E-07	
t Critical two-tail	2.004044783	

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING FATHERS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN LENOIR CITY, TENNESSEE, TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
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This project was designed to equip fathers at First Baptist Church Lenoir City, Tennessee, to disciple their children. The project involved giving each father a pre-test survey to assess the current knowledge of the biblical role fathers have in discipling their children. A six-week curriculum was developed and followed by a post-test survey to determine the increase in knowledge and practice of fathers discipling their children. A strategic plan was developed to encourage the longevity of the project.

Chapter 1 introduces the ministry context of First Baptist Church Lenoir City, as well as the rationale, purpose, goals, and methodologies of the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological foundations for equipping fathers to disciple their children. These foundational Scriptures are Deuteronomy 6:4–9, Psalm 78:1–8, and Ephesians 6:4. Chapter 3 addresses the role fathers have in discipling their children. Chapter 4 details the curriculum development and administration of the pre- and post-surveys given to each father. Chapter 5 provides an overall evaluation of the project.

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