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EQUIPPING PARENTS OF COVENANT FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
OF WEST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY, TO BE FAITHFUL
IN THE DISCIPLESHIP OF THEIR CHILDREN

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APPROVAL SHEET

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Dedicatory, Alliterative American Haiku

To Margie, my mate,
And daughters' dedication
Steeled me, striving sure

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PREFACE

The road to this point has been an exhausting one; however, it has been blessed by my Savior, Jesus Christ, and I praise Him for His faithfulness. His mercies are new every morning (Lam 3:23); His right hand has held me up; and His gentleness has made me more useful in His kingdom than I deserve (Ps 18:35). I am grateful for the advice I heard at the beginning of my journey: “People earn doctorates, not because they are brilliant, but because they do not give up.” I have had various ups and downs in my classes and research, but through it all, my mind has been stretched. I had felt my mind calcifying after not having stretched it in academia for about a decade, and I desired to push myself to ponder and put into practice valuable material that could improve my service in the church and/or Christian education. More importantly, my heart has been expanded for ministry to God’s people.

I want to also thank my wife of twenty-nine years, Margie. She gave encouragement along the way that proved invaluable. She also knew that this journey of study and work would not *necessarily* pay off financially, but was first and foremost a labor of growth for my heart and mind for the ministry of the kingdom. I want to thank Amanda and Michaela, our daughters, for their encouragement and support. It has been enjoyable being in the trenches with them, since both of my daughters were working on their master’s work concurrently with my course of study. One of them likes to say, “You got this,” and it has helped motivate me. They also were my guinea pigs for two decades as I sought to put the principles of this thesis into action in my own family, and their recollections of both good and bad aspects of family worship and other forms of discipleship helped spur meaningful reflection as I produced the discipleship lessons I taught. I want to also thank restaurants that let me sit, nursing a bottomless, caffeinated

drink for as many as nine hours at a time. I found that writing at these establishments was more helpful for my focus than at home, so these were my hermitages for scores of days.

I also want to thank The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for their excellence and stand for Christ, orthodoxy, and orthopraxy. Thanks to all my professors, including those who taught me most often, such as Dr. Timothy Paul Jones and Dr. Michael Wilder. Dr. Jones' books especially helped me gain a better perspective on family ministry. Dr. John David Trentham has given helpful advice and leadership as my faculty supervisor, having to spend probably more time with me than his average advisee, and I thank him for his patience. Betsy Fredrick's editing helped me transform my ugly duckling work into something a little closer to a swan. I also want to thank Dr. Albert Mohler and all the older guard who stood for truth when the SBC and the seminaries were wavering and needed faithful leadership and a prayerful and courageous plan to change course.

Finally, I want to thank the church where I minister, Covenant Fellowship Church, of West Orange, New Jersey, for giving me the opportunity to minister to the parents and children there. This project was blessed by my fellow pastors, James Lee and David Lee, who gave advice for my lessons on family discipleship as part of my expert panel (thanks to Dr. Brian Borgman, my other helpful expert as well). Pastors James and Dave have, more than that, invested their lives into our church and into working together with others and me for the cause of the gospel. Their lives and commitment have taught me much about what it is to serve Christ.

Gloria in Excelsis Deo!

Nick Scotten

Lincoln Park, New Jersey

May 2019

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt 16:26).
“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52).¹

Parents desire the best for their children. They love them and want all aspects of their lives to prosper. However, what are the most important facets of life for which parents ought to strive to ensure their children find success? Is gaining the power, fame, and wealth of the world as important as being “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21)? Is there nothing more important than what “the Gentiles seek” (Matt 6:32)? Jesus clearly teaches that the health and wealth of the soul is a far more important goal than having all the baubles the world can provide. As a child, He grew in wisdom and the favor of God, exemplified in His desire to discuss the Law in the Temple and in His humble subjection to His human parents (Luke 2:51-52) and His Heavenly Father (Heb 5:8). What a blessing it would be for children to follow His childhood example. Parents are tasked with the goal of rearing children who reject conformity to the world (Rom 12:2) and embrace conformity to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). If spiritual prosperity is more important than temporal, then significant parental time and energy must be directed toward discipleship of their children.

¹ All Scripture references in the chapters of this project are from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted. With the transcripts of notes for the lessons taught at the church, found in appendices 2-3, the English Standard Version was used in the majority of cases.

Context

This project took place in the context of the ministry of Covenant Fellowship Church, of West Orange, New Jersey (CFC). The elder-led congregation employs four staff members. Two staff are full-time pastors, and I am one of the two who is part-time.

While I sometimes teach an adult Bible study and help lead in community group efforts and special events, the focus of this ministry project concerns my main task of ministering to children and their families. I lead a children's worship service every week, doing the planning for every aspect and delivering a sermon. This worship service takes place separately from the adults; adults have their own separate worship service; the youth, composed of middle and high school students, have their own worship service; I lead the elementary group; finally, children younger than kindergarten age have classes or nursery, depending on their ages. The ministry is fragmented, with parents and children not knowing what each other are experiencing in worship or learning from the Word. Unless there is a concerted effort made by parents and teachers to have parents know what their children are learning so that they can reinforce and further elucidate the main themes of the sermon, it is unlikely to happen.

After the elementary worship service, including the sermon, the elementary group of approximately twenty-five students is separated into two groups—one composed of kindergarten through second grade students, and one made up of third through fifth graders. The younger group usually reviews the theme of the sermon with a hands-on activity, led by a parent who assists in the worship service. I lead the enrichment activity with the older group, which can involve various kinds of experiences. A common activity centers around the use of a Sunday school four-page enrichment paper that helps focus on key topics that may support the topic of the sermon or are related in some way. Use of the Sunday school papers and other materials or activities I choose also allows us to delve more deeply into sermonic material or discuss additional topics that might be more

germane to upper elementary students' experiences, attention spans, and comprehension levels.

Besides the four-page enrichment paper that is utilized and completed in class and sent home, I send home other papers. Each week I hand out one or two enrichment "homework" pages that can help to either cement the sermon's themes in the minds of children or begin to prepare their thoughts to receive the following week's sermon or Sunday school discussion.

The church's main ministry to all parts of the family is on the Lord's Day as outlined, along with Bible studies for adults and teens during the week. Additionally, every other week "community groups" meet to discuss the adults' sermon, have fellowship, and pray for one another, with prayer and communication often extending beyond the Lord's Day. Adults are getting this kind of review and reinforcement fortnightly, but children are generally not.

Another ministry of the church is Vision School. CFC has been operating a five-week summer school program for nine years. It operates for six hours each day, providing a well-rounded program that includes spiritual, academic, and other enrichment opportunities for 140 students. The reason for mentioning this ministry is because the four of us on the pastoral staff each preach about ten sermons during the five weeks. We also develop relationships with the students and their families, and sometimes see families begin to attend our church, either as seekers or as ones who see our church as a better ecclesial fit for their families than their current churches (with the caveat that we are not trying to "steal any sheep"). The parents of these families are often poorly taught in their duties of family discipleship and add to the need of a special focus on the training envisioned in this thesis.

The church skews decidedly young, with the average adult age being in his thirties, and few being above their forties. The number of children in the church has been growing for many years, and the elementary ministry appears likely to continue to grow,

after having grown perhaps 10 percent annually over the last several years. Approximately half the adults in the church are believing, baptized members, and half are not members yet. Some parents are very committed to a vibrant and active faith, and some are not. When I have asked children and their parents about what kinds of spiritual instruction take place in the home, answers usually indicate that it rarely happens. One of the factors that contributes to a lack of overall spirituality in the church is that some families come primarily because of a cultural reason. Almost the entire church is Korean. Some of the Korean adults who attend are there because they enjoy being with people from their own ethnic group, along with the benefits afforded with that experience, as they share a comfortability with similar origins, identities, and culinary tastes, and not necessarily because of strongly religious reasons. There are some mixed-faith families, with one parent, often the mother, being a Christian, or at least committed to church attendance, and the husband not being converted and usually attending intermittently.

The average adult who attends the church is well-educated, and many are employed at very high incomes or own their own businesses—often to great profit. Both parents work in numerous families. Many have long commutes, so one or both parents are not home during times when devotions might naturally occur. Some use nurseries and preschools, as well as before and after school sitters, but many children have grandmothers who help. Parents are, in general, very diligent, with high standards for themselves and their children, especially in academic pursuits, with many gaining acceptances to Ivy League and other selective universities for themselves and their children. Many children, as well, are involved in musical and sport pursuits that require a considerable commitment, with expectations of excellence from both coaches/instructors and parents.

Rationale

The church's leadership is committed to the goal of the church becoming more Reformed and biblical in its theology and practices. One of the key historical marks of a

Reformed church is the presence of family discipleship in the home. Luther and Calvin emphasized this kind of discipleship, and American Puritans improved upon this focus by promoting the importance of daily family worship and instruction.² Additionally, historically, besides being useful for sermonic material in some Reformed contexts,³ a catechism has been one of the key methods of spiritual instruction for children in a Reformed home.⁴

The average family at CFC spends a great deal of time and energy promoting their children's academic, musical, and sports endeavors. They are generally motivated parents who take extraordinary pains to provide their children all the motivation and resources needed to be a success in the pursuits that they deem important. Most families do not apply the same zeal toward actively pursuing daily family worship and instruction as they do in academic, musical, and athletic pursuits. Also, to my knowledge, most parents are not regularly interacting with their children about what they have been learning at church, nor are they requiring their children to complete their Sunday school "homework." They would never be as lax about their children's academic homework, so a change of priorities is needed.

The CFC leadership desires to teach and encourage families to grow in knowledge and practice of the importance of spiritual growth, including the area of family discipleship. We desire to train parents to inspire and instruct their children by means of Bible, prayer, catechism, and review of the children's messages, including completing their enrichment "homework" pages.

² C. Jeffrey Robinson, "The Home is an Earthly Kingdom: Family Discipleship among Reformers and Puritans," *The Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 3, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2012): 18.

³ Jan Van Vliet, "Experiencing Our Only Comfort: A Post-Reformation Refocus in the Heidelberg Catechism," *Presbyterian Reformed Journal* 6, no. 2 (2014): 169.

⁴ Allen Stanton, "Seeds of Truth Planted in the Field of Memory: How to Utilize the Shorter Catechism," *Presbyterian Reformed Journal* 6, no. 2 (2014): 271.

The parents of CFC generally lack knowledge and motivation concerning providing spiritual instruction to their children compared to the focus they place on academic, musical, and athletic pursuits. As Meyer advocates for more well-rounded fatherhood in South Africa, it is my responsibility to advocate for faithful Christian discipleship to be given a high priority among the parents of my church.⁵

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis project was to equip Christian parents who entrust their children to the educational ministry of Covenant Fellowship Church of West Orange, New Jersey, to be more faithful and intentional concerning the discipleship of their children.

Goals

Covenant Fellowship Church commits itself to biblical and Reformed theology and practice. However, the average parent is only somewhat knowledgeable and committed to intentional family discipleship. Since the purpose of this study was to equip Christian parents to be more faithful and intentional concerning the discipleship of their children, the following four goals were chosen.

1. The first goal was to assess parents' (and especially fathers') awareness about the biblical command and practical methods to perform family worship, as well as how often parents are performing these duties.
2. The second goal was to develop a series of lessons to increase parents' convictions, awareness, and practices of family discipleship.

⁵ Juanita Meyer, "Restructuring the Christian Fatherhood Model: A Practical Theological Investigation into the 'Male Problematic' of Father Absence," *HTS Teologiese Studies*, 74, no. 1 (April 2018): 5. Meyer surveys efforts in South Africa to call men to be "responsible, committed, and loving fathers." She reveals her concern for men to be "social fathers" instead of merely "economic" ones. I am appropriating her concern for teaching fathers to be more well-rounded. For my purposes, I am concerned with equipping and encouraging both fathers and mothers to go beyond a worldly view of success in parenting and to hone their parenting focus on being more faithful in the Christian discipleship of their children.

3. The third goal was to increase parents' knowledge of scriptural commands for parental discipleship of their children and understanding of methods to accomplish this stewardship, by teaching the lessons developed according to the second goal.
4. The fourth goal was to increase parents' faithfulness and intentionality to discipleship of their children that they learned from the lessons taught by means of the third goal.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess parents' awareness about the biblical command and practical methods to perform family discipleship, as well as how often parents are performing these duties. This goal was measured by administering the Parent Discipleship Practices Inventory (PDPI) to families who have at least one elementary age child regularly attending the children's worship service.⁶ The goal was considered successfully met when ten parents completed the PDPI and the inventory was analyzed, revealing a clearer picture of the scriptural knowledge, regularity, and types of spiritual training employed by CFC families with elementary children.

The second goal was to develop a series of lessons to increase parents' convictions, awareness, and practices of family discipleship. This goal was evaluated by three members of the leadership of CFC who have significant understanding of, and experience in, implementing family discipleship. They used a rubric to evaluate the usefulness of the plan, communication methods, training elements, offering of parental resources, and the action steps to best reach the goal.⁷ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all rubric evaluation markers met or exceeded the sufficiency level. If the 90 percent standard was not initially met, then the plan was improved until it met the standard.

The third goal was to increase parents' knowledge of scriptural commands for parental discipleship of their children and understanding of methods to accomplish this

⁶ See appendix 1.

⁷ See appendix 4.

stewardship, by teaching the lessons developed in goal 2. This goal was measured by administering the same PDPI as a post-survey, which was used to measure the change in such knowledge. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test revealed a statistically significant increase in parents' knowledge of relevant scriptural commands and practical methods.

The fourth goal was to increase parents' faithfulness and intentionality to discipleship of their children that they learned from the lessons taught in the third goal. A weekly email was sent to parents as a reminder of at least one biblical passage about this parental duty and at least one method to accomplish it. Then, a question was asked as to how many days the previous week parents had followed through on discipleship. This goal was considered successfully by interviewing the four families with the greatest increase in frequency of days per week of family discipleship to ascertain the influences that led to higher frequency. I also sought to discover what improvements in spiritual and/or other growth were experienced because of more time spent on discipleship, as well as any struggles that have been encountered during implementation.

Definition and Limitations/Delimitations

The following terms need to be defined for this ministry project.

Marriage. Stott defines *marriage* as “an exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman ordained and sealed by God preceded by a public leaving of parents, consummated by sexual union issuing in a permanently mutually supportive partnership.”⁸

Family discipleship. Jones explains that *family discipleship* involves “parents . . . engag[ing] actively in their children's spiritual development,”⁹ whether in “planned

⁸ J. R. W. Stott, *Involvement*, vol. 2 of *Social and Sexual Relationship in the Modern World* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1984), 163.

⁹ Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to*

discipleship processes,” such as “family devotional times,” or “spontaneous spiritual conversations,” to “shape the souls of children.”¹⁰

Family worship. Stinson and Jones define *family worship* as the element of family discipleship which involves “formal training”¹¹ through “a regular time of pulling the family together” for learning the Word of God, praying, and/or employing other means of grace for spiritual growth. This is also called “family devotions” or “faith talks.”¹²

Family ministry. Jones defines *family ministry* as “the process of intentionally and persistently realigning a congregation’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the persons primarily responsible for the discipleship of their children.”¹³

Milestones. Haynes defines milestones as “markers of progression on the spiritual formation journey” that can be celebrated by families and/or the church and which serve to motivate a person “to continue walking the path” of spiritual growth.¹⁴

There were three limitations to the project. First, accuracy of pre- and post-survey data from the same PDPI is dependent on how honestly and correctly parents answer questions. To lessen this limitation, parents were encouraged to be honest and not worry about possibly looking deficient concerning their parental discipleship faithfulness on pre-surveys. Second, it was not the purpose of the project to determine the quality and quantity of family worship and other kinds of discipleship, but only that it was done.

Make Disciples (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011), 26.

¹⁰ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 25.

¹¹ Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 195.

¹² *Ibid.*, 87.

¹³ Timothy Paul Jones, “Foundations for Family Ministry,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 40.

¹⁴ Brian Haynes, *Shift* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2009), 42.

However, instruction was offered on how to do it well and parents were given suggestions about amounts of time that they might want to spend on certain kinds of discipleship. Third, if at least one parent from a family was not able to attend all the teaching sessions, then self-reporting that a parent listened to recordings was trusted.

Only one delimitation was imposed on this project: participants in the study were all professing believers in Christ.

Conclusion

While the teaching ministries of the church are important to the direct spiritual growth of every member of a Christian family, they are wholly inadequate as the entire spiritual diet. Gifted pastor-teachers have been given to the church “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph 4:12), and the key non-negotiable ministry all parents should be equipped to undertake is the discipleship of their own children. Chapter 2 is devoted to an examination of biblical and theological texts that attest to parental commands to disciple their children, especially fathers. Chapter 3 involves a discussion of theoretical and sociological works that inform the topic. Chapter 4 provides the details of the project. Finally, chapter 5 answers questions such as whether the project fulfilled its purpose, whether goals were met, what the strengths and weaknesses of the project were, how the project could have been improved now that its weaknesses are examined, what I learned about God and His kingdom, and what I learned about myself as a minister.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR
PARENTS BEING THE CHIEF AGENTS
OF DISCIPLESHIP OF CHILDREN

The Word of God designates parents as the chief agents of discipleship for their children, with fathers being the primary designees of this holy responsibility. This designation has been attested to in various conservative Christian contexts, where the Word of God is applied faithfully and unbiblical strains of feminism are rejected.¹ Some theses produced by students at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have admirably upheld these twin truths.² I will likewise seek to uphold both certainties for a large part of the chapter, but then I seek to explore other important considerations.

The church has an obligation to instruct fathers in their vital, divine duty to intentionally lead family discipleship, but it must not neglect to also highlight and encourage the important role of a mother/wife in this crucial battle for the soul of the next generation.

**Parental, and Often Specifically Paternal,
Discipleship before the Mosaic Law**

Deuteronomy 6 contains one of the most important passages concerning parental discipleship in the Word of God. However, it is useful to establish the fact that

¹ Vern S. Poythress, “The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 1991), 233.

² Bradley Bruton Boyette, “Equipping Fathers at Parkridge Baptist Church in Coral Springs, Florida, to Lead in the Discipleship of Their Children” (D.Ed.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017); James Benjamin Bowden, “Equipping the Men of First Baptist Church of Enterprise, Alabama, to Be Gospel-Centered Leaders in Their Homes (D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

parental discipleship through worship and other means was either commanded by God or performed by God's people before the Mosaic Law was given. Therefore, I will briefly establish this assertion of pre-Mosaic human obedience to divine expectation of family discipleship and worship by means of a survey of relevant biblical texts that refer to life before Moses.

Before the Patriarchal Period

God the Father, Himself, offers a first pattern of sorts in the Garden of Eden, through sacrifice as a means of discipleship. After the Fall of Adam and his helper, Eve, He sacrifices one or more animals to clothe their newly discovered nakedness (Gen 3:21). Kidner states that the killing of these animals was only for their temporal comfort, with no view toward atonement.³ However, Mathews argues that God was revealing that something had to die to provide an atonement for their sin. How much of this was meant as a teaching lesson for the benefit of Adam and Eve is difficult to know, but it speaks volumes to those who can see the unfolding of redemptive history, from the first altars built, to the Tabernacle and Temple, and finally to the cross.⁴ Augustine, Luther, and Calvin all attest to the Pauline doctrine of Romans 5:12-21 in which the sin of Adam (not Eve) led to the condemnation of the entire human race.⁵ While Romans 5 focuses on Adam's condemnation of the whole human race by his sin, 1 Timothy 2:14 seems to focus on the woman's culpability⁶: First Timothy 2:14 says, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." Though there is a negative aspect of

³ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2008), 77.

⁴ Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1-11*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: B & H, 1996), 233.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 159-60.

⁶ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), "1 Tim 2:14," e-book.

Eve's nature and performance mentioned in this passage, there are also creation and headship implications, revealing the primary role of the man in the spiritual leadership of the family, and thus the Fall.⁷

In Genesis 4, Cain and Abel made offerings to the Lord. It is reasonable to assume their parents instructed them in this duty, with Abel offering correctly in faith, which speaks to the accurate tutelage and example of his parents. Cain's poor offering speaks more to his own lack of faith and humility⁸ than to poor parental training, since God seems to indicate Cain knows how he should worship God rightly by telling him to do "well" (Gen 4:7), without any other explanation. With the birth of Seth and then his son Enosh, men were now said to begin to "call on the name of the Lord" (Gen 4:26). Later, the line of Seth would bring forth Enoch, a stellar figure of faith in this genealogy, who "pleased God" (Heb 11:5) and "walked with God" (Gen 5:24). Enoch would not have been able to please and walk with God without being instructed in how to do so and heralding these truths as a prophet (Jude 14-15).⁹

Sadly, Seth's family line that exhibited at least some faithfulness began to wane so much that only one descendant, Noah, found favor in the eyes of the Lord and was saved, with his family (Gen 6:8).¹⁰ Noah was called a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet 2:5), probably preaching by his words, and perhaps also by his building of the Ark. No doubt his sons heard him through word and deed.¹¹ After the Flood, Noah led his family in worship with the offering of clean animals to the Lord (Gen 8:20).

⁷ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11*, 222.

⁸ Kidner, *Genesis*, 81.

⁹ R. R. Reno, *Genesis*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 146.

¹⁰ Kidner, *Genesis*, 89.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

Patriarchal Period

Then, God reached into the pagan world that was proliferating and called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees.¹² He was often faithful to God, and by word and example taught his family many valuable lessons. He obeyed God by leaving Ur and then dwelling in the Promised Land, while knowing there was indeed a better and eternal inheritance (Heb 11:8-10). He built many altars to God instead of towers (Gen 12:7; 12:9; 13:18, and 22:9),¹³ and gave a tithe to Melchizedek (Gen 14:20). Abraham refused to take anything from the wicked king of Sodom (Gen 14:23),¹⁴ circumcised the males in his house (Gen 17:23-27), and prayed for Lot (Gen 18). He dismissed Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:14), required an oath before the Lord from Ishmael (Gen 24:3), and trusted in the power and faithfulness of God to raise his only son Isaac back from the dead when he slew him (Gen 22:10; Heb 11:17-19).¹⁵ Most or all these incidents would have necessitated him having to explain why he was doing these things, thus furnishing important means of disciplining his household by both deed and word. Other times, Abraham was faithless, such as when he deceived two host neighbors he fled to during famine to protect himself against possible suitors of his wife, Sarah,¹⁶ or when his lack of trust in God's provision for Isaac caused him to have a child with Hagar, ultimately causing future "alienation and separation" in his family.¹⁷

¹² Kidner, *Genesis*, 120.

¹³ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), "Gen 12:7," e-book.

¹⁴ Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 142. He was vouching that the Lord would enrich him, and this foreign king would not get the notoriety of enriching the patriarch.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 258.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

One passage that could easily be treated more fully is Genesis 18:19, though it is not one of three I will exposit in depth. In it, God says of Abraham, “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” The Abrahamic Covenant is contingent on God’s grace, no doubt, but it also finds its success when it is faithfully stewarded by instruction and commandment of God’s expectations, through precept and example, to the next generation.¹⁸ This revelation of Abraham’s fatherly duties also take place in the context of his prayers for the deliverance of Lot and his family in Sodom, whose cup had been filled with the iniquity that would bring their final destruction.

Jacob and Esau were certainly taught about the covenant that blessed their family. They knew it had been given to Abraham, and then to their father Isaac. Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau all valued it to a certain degree, though Esau casually and indifferently despised his birthright, choosing meager provisions over it (25:34).¹⁹ Jacob and Rebekah esteemed the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant, though they sought it through deceit (Gen 27). Jacob also built at least two altars and a pillar to the Lord (Gen 33:20; 35:7, 14), which would have passed on to his own nuclear family instruction about the importance of God’s worship and thankfulness for God’s protection.²⁰ Much later he blessed his family at his death and impressed upon them the importance of the Promised Land as a provision of God, the grievousness of sin, and the future provision of Shiloh (Gen 49:4-10, 28-29). Lastly, though his personal example and parenting were inconsistent, Jacob’s influence upon Joseph, blessed by God’s Spirit, prophecies, and providence, saved

¹⁸ Kidner, *Genesis*, 143. Gen. 18:19 reveals the parental duty of discipleship of children.

¹⁹ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 381.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 530. The first of these passages (33:20) involves an altar being built right after Jacob returns from Haran unharmed by Laban and Esau.

innumerable people from famine, including, most notably, his own covenant family, which brought forth the Messiah.

Joseph also did his part in his generation to impress God's truth on his family. He early shared the prophecies God gave him to his family (Gen 37).²¹ Joseph forgave his brothers and showed them the wisdom and graciousness of God's sovereignty (Gen 50:20). He brought his own sons to be specially blessed and adopted by Jacob (Gen 49).²² He also reminded his entire family of the importance of the Promised Land and followed through on his promise to bury Jacob in the Promised Land, while also commanding his family to take his coffin with them in years to come when God would visit them and restore them to their rightful land (Gen 50).²³

The book of Job is also important to include here in a survey of pre-Law examples of fatherly/parental leadership in worship and discipleship. The date of the authorship of *Job* is highly disputed.²⁴ Scholars have suggested authorship dates that can vary by perhaps a millennium—from the time of Moses to the exile.²⁵ More important, though, is the date of the life of the historical person, Job. Longman positions the historical character Job back at least as far as the patriarchal period, which would place him during the chronology of the patriarchal portion of Genesis.²⁶ Job sought to bless his family

²¹ Reno, *Genesis*, 336. Though it can be debated whether Joseph should have shared his dreams with his hateful brothers, his prophetic unction instructed his family about the Word of the Lord.

²² Kidner, *Genesis*, 226. Jacob's pronouncement is the last instance in Genesis of the Spirit-led blessing/cursing of people by God through a human instrument.

²³ Mathews, *Genesis 11: 27-50:26*, 861. The patriarch Joseph now gives them a final charge before he dies, teaching them about their future and about the importance of keeping their hearts on the Promised Land instead of their present circumstances in Egypt.

²⁴ Gerald H. Wilson, *Job*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 23.

²⁵ Robert Alden, *Job*, The New American Commentary, vol. 11 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 22.

²⁶ Tremper Longman III, *Job*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 24.

through worship. He was the priest in his home, offering up sacrifices for the possible sins his children had committed. He did this as a “conscientious” and “life-long” habit, being concerned about the holiness and forgiveness of his children.²⁷

Sabbath

The last topic I will offer concerning pre-Mosaic Covenant commands and examples of parental discipleship is the Sabbath. God rested on the seventh day of creation, making it a holy day of rest, in opposition to the first six days.²⁸ The Sabbath was not made because God needed rest, since He is omnipotent and does not “slumber nor sleep” (Ps 121:4). It was made to teach man to rest one day in seven from the work of his other six days and to seek spiritual strength and closeness with God.²⁹ It was more explicitly legislated as the fourth commandment in Exodus 20, but it was presupposed in Exodus 16:22-23, with prohibitions of gathering manna. This passage looks back to the creation week for its authorization before it is specifically and clearly commanded in Exodus 20.³⁰ In Exodus 20 itself, parents are enjoined to expect their children to rest on God’s holy day, and then this would be a day that could be given over to the marketplace of the soul instead of common work (Exod 20:8-11). I exclude the Ten Commandments from the Mosaic Covenant because they were spoken directly by God, not being mediated through Moses. After God delivered the Ten Commandments Himself, other laws, which comprise the Mosaic Covenant, were revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Having examined passages that pre-date the Law as it was mediated through Moses, I will treat in detail the first of three key passages concerning parental discipleship.

²⁷ Francis I. Andersen, *Job*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 85.

²⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, “Gen 2:1-3.”

²⁹ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 397.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 317.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

The most clear and expansive passage in the Old Testament concerning parental discipleship is Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy restates much of what is written in Exodus, but not slavishly; instead, Merrill notes that God would provide an “amplification and advancement of the covenant text first articulated to Moses and Israel at Sinai.”³¹ After rehearsing the Ten Commandments, an already abbreviated statement of the Law, God commands all people to “hear.” He commands attention and expects His people to respond³² with obedient ears and hearts.³³ He then announces what according to Deuteronomy 6:4 can be rendered in various ways other than what is rendered above, such as, “The Lord is our God; the Lord is one;” “The Lord our God is one Lord”;³⁴ and “Our God is the LORD, the LORD alone.”³⁵

Wright notes that this key familial discipleship passage begins with the “most fundamental of Israel’s ‘creedal’ traditions, the ‘Shema,’”³⁶ which clearly declares

³¹ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 22.

³² Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 95.

³³ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 22.

³⁴ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 168.

³⁵ J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 140.

³⁶ Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 95.

monotheism.³⁷ However, it does more than that. McConville asserts, “It declares that Yahweh alone is worthy of covenant love.”³⁸ The Shema is likely extolling such attributes as God’s integrity, incomprehensibility, and, most likely on its face, His singularity.³⁹ This kind of beginning to a passage instructing parental discipleship shows the necessity of a parent’s allegiance to God, and to Him alone. It also is rooted in doctrinal truth that is very narrow and exclusive, radically militating against the prophets of omnism and universalism, who extol the virtues of syncretism.⁴⁰

If there is only one God, then how should His children and followers respond to Him? They are to love this one and only God with all their heart, soul, and strength. The heart, in Hebrew, is not so much the seat of emotion, but the command center of the intellect and mind. Merrill comments that the soul could also be rendered “being or essential person,” and strength focuses on the physical “functions and capacities” of a person.⁴¹ Wright asserts that the command to love God with all the strength can be rendered as “with all your very-muchness,” and with the whole commandment being explained as “love the Lord your God with total commitment, with your total self, to total excess.”⁴² Jesus Christ proclaimed this commandment is to be the one greatest commandment (Matt 22:36-38) and a summary of the first table of the Ten Commandments, being the first four commandments. It is the basis of the entire book of

³⁷ Duane L. Christenson, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 143.

³⁸ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 141.

³⁹ Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 96.

⁴⁰ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 141.

⁴¹ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 164.

⁴² Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 99.

Deuteronomy⁴³ and the entire Bible. McConville believes the trajectory of the wording “require(s) a devotion that is single-minded and complete . . . with a person’s full capacities . . . abilities . . . and resources.”⁴⁴ The love that would be given to God would first be in response to the great love God had shown them, based on His fatherly relationship with them, calling and choosing them, delivering them from bondage, and making promises He would certainly keep.⁴⁵ Only one king of Judah is said to have this kind of whole souled devotion, King Josiah (2 Kgs 23:25). Paul surveyed all his helpers in the ministry and could only think of one, Timothy, who sought the interests of Christ Jesus with this kind of full and consuming love (Phil 2:21).

Having taught His children the singularity of Himself and how worthy He is of every faculty of a person’s being, the LORD turns next to the importance of continuing this thought process in the mind, lest it be forgotten. Though the Ten Commandments are written on stone, they do no good for God’s people if the people do not “internalize” the law. A love for the things of God will never be formed in an unconverted person, and most of the Israelites did not have the softened heart that came with the introduction of the New Covenant, in which God would put His law within their hearts (Jer 31:31-33).⁴⁶ God’s Word must be a constant source of meditation for the elect, if they are to understand the truth that will produce right thinking and acting unto His glory.⁴⁷

If God’s commandments are now the material that parental minds joyfully and constantly masticate, then the Lord’s words will be known and loved well enough to be readily taught to their children, just as someone who has any fixation of the mind and

⁴³ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 169.

⁴⁴ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 141.

⁴⁵ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

⁴⁶ Christenson, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, 143.

⁴⁷ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

cannot stop talking about it because of love and devotion to the topic. God’s Word is not just at the comprehensibility and interest level of the cleric or academic,⁴⁸ nor even only at just an adult level. No, the Law is to be taught diligently to their children. It must not just be a “law code” that is enforced, but ought to become what McConville describes as “the fabric of life and conversation.”⁴⁹ Craigie adds that biblically-centered focus should “permeate every sphere of . . . life.”⁵⁰

Merrill emphasizes that child training in the Scriptures will be “made indelible (on the heart of children) by constant repetition” so that the whole family is “occupied with covenant concerns.”⁵¹ Instruction occurs when children are sitting or walking, lying down or rising up. Merrill also observes that “the pairing of these sets of contrasting places and postures forms a double merism . . . encompass(ing) all of human effort,” so that training in all of life is its meaning. While the language is somewhat hyperbolic since it is impossible that every word between parent and child can teach the Law, the point is made that the Word of God must be given great honor and place in the fabric of family life.⁵²

The Scriptures are to be placed in certain locations that can help facilitate memory and use. Many Jews took the command literally.⁵³ Christenson avers that Jews used “phylacteries and mezuzot, small containers for parchments containing certain biblical verses” so that their hands/wrists, forehead, and gates each had the Word of God for available reading. Many hotels in Israel have a mezuzot attached to the doorpost of

⁴⁸ Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 100.

⁴⁹ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

⁵⁰ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

⁵¹ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 100.

the entrance to each guest room.⁵⁴ It would be difficult to fault Jews who go to these lengths to obey the commandments. However, they only wore them on certain occasions because they found them impracticable to literally carry everywhere they traveled, or even as they sat in their house. A metaphorical understanding is also then quite plausible since these literal commands appear to correspond to preceding verses about the law being inscribed “upon the heart,” “at home,” and “along the road.”⁵⁵

The Lord is very serious about His Law being revered and all-consuming to His people. He wants them to know who He is and to repeat and meditate upon His exclusive claim to their meditation and behavior. This only happens if they first love God with every part of themselves. Then, these lovers of God need to establish the habit of thinking about the Word of God often and finding ways to fill their hearts with it. However, they are not just to fill up their soul’s reservoir for themselves; they are to tap into that fullness of knowledge and love and diligently inculcate them into their children’s lives. This diligence will find them actively seeking to shed the light of God’s Word in any situation parents and children find themselves. Parents are commanded to teach the Word of God and its truth systematically and verbally, but they must also seek to take principles of God’s Word and apply them to the material of everyday life.

Psalm 78:1-8

Another key passage regarding parental discipleship of children is found in the middle of the Psalms. The first part of Psalm 78 reads,

Give ear, O my people, to my law;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,
Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children,

⁵⁴ Christenson, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, 143.

⁵⁵ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 168.

Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

For He established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers,
That they should make them known to their children;
That the generation to come might know them,
The children who would be born,
That they may arise and declare them to their children,
That they may set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments;
And may not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation that did not set its heart aright,
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Goldingay summarizes this psalm as “The Story That Needs Passing On,”⁵⁶ and Longman titles it, “So the Next Generation Will Know.”⁵⁷ It is not a psalm in the sense of praise, but is more didactic, summarizing the history of God’s people employed for the purpose of instruction.⁵⁸ It is written to instruct the next generation, in much the same burden as the writer of Proverbs, who desires his son to gain wisdom from what he commands.⁵⁹ This is no mere recitation of history, but to DeClaissé-Walford, it is a warning “to teach a particular lesson: that of the cost of disobedience to Israel.”⁶⁰ The psalmist calls on his hearers to give earnest and readily obedient attention to what they

⁵⁶ John Goldingay, *Psalms*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 700.

⁵⁷ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 289.

⁵⁸ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1877), 2:361.

⁵⁹ Longman, *Psalms*, 290.

⁶⁰ Nancy L. DeClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), “Ps 78,” e-book.

are about to hear, as the voice of God is far more important than the most eloquent voice of mere man.⁶¹

Asaph reveals that he is teaching in parables, and only the wise and discerning will understand and heed what he has to say.⁶² What he is about to deliver to them is deep and intense, but if they will listen carefully they will be rewarded. This kind of speech foreshadows Christ's teaching in parables (Matt 13:34-35).⁶³

The psalmist then shows explicitly the generational bent of his teaching. A deposit has been given to his generation from their fathers (or even ancestors),⁶⁴ and now it is to be passed on to the next generation. That which is to be transferred is not just explicit commands, but a retelling of the glory of God and His works among His people.⁶⁵ Their fathers are to pass this information on, buttressing the point that parents are crucial in their children's discipleship. As Spurgeon warns, "The more of parental teaching the better; ministers and Sabbath school teachers were never meant to be substitutes for mother's tears and father's prayers."⁶⁶ Delitzsch warns that children who are not effectively parented may mimic the wickedness of the "degenerate son that is to be stoned" (Deut 21:18).⁶⁷ It is negligence of the highest order for fathers and mothers to fail in this holy transmission of the knowledge of divine word and deed, tantamount to "hiding" it (Ps 78:4). While the world will leave God out of most disciplines, parents and the church

⁶¹ Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David* (McLean, VA: Macdonald, n.d.), 2:330.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2:331.

⁶³ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 718.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 719.

⁶⁵ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 2:364.

⁶⁶ Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 2:331.

⁶⁷ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 2:364.

must both be primed to insert the realization of the fear and appreciation of God in all aspects of life and thinking.⁶⁸

The surrounding idols of the culture will seduce children unless they are assiduously disciplined through instruction in the Word of God.⁶⁹ Parents need to treat this duty conscientiously, lest they be lulled into seeing it as just a religious tradition that is nebulously beneficial, instead of a commandment by God that is critical to the discharge of their parental responsibilities and the temporal and eternal welfare of their progeny.⁷⁰ Parents must have a confidence that the teaching of God's Word explicitly, coupled with testimonials of God's goodness and greatness, are not "worn out" avenues of grace but have been ordained by God to be effective means of blessing to children.⁷¹

Concerned parents will think generationally and set their hope on God's mercy for even more generations than that of their own children. They are discipling for the good of not only the next generation, but for the one following, and the one succeeding that, as well.⁷² Parents ideally hope their children will become effective in teaching their own children, but as grandparents they may be given special opportunities to help in this vital mission. However, it is important that instruction does not devolve into mere intellectual exercises of speculation but blossoms into lessons that highlight holiness and good works.⁷³ Children are to be directed toward putting their "confidence" in the Lord.

⁶⁸ Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 2:331.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 332.

⁷⁰ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 721.

⁷¹ Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 2:332.

⁷² Goldingay, *Psalms*, 721.

⁷³ Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 2:332.

Much of the first several verses of Psalm 78 has been positive, but there is also a warning that parental instruction must convey.⁷⁴ Discipleship must help children see the errors others have made so they may eschew them, while observing modeling of godly behavior, wedded with teaching, which will “encourage loyalty and obedience.”⁷⁵ They must be shown instances of Israel foolishly placing their “confidence” in impotent and foolish people and entities, instead of “setting their hope” in the Lord.⁷⁶ Spurgeon warns that because “it is to be feared that decline is more general than progress,” it is doubly important that prayerful and diligent pains are made in this important enterprise.⁷⁷ Finally, since the heart and spirit (Ps 78:8) are ultimately what can cause children to discern spiritual realities, receive Christ by faith, and choose to do right, it is incumbent upon parents to pray to the only One who has the power to reach that invisible seat of affection in their children’s souls to breathe life into their parental attempts at discipleship.

Ephesians 6:1-4

Introduction

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Psalm 78:1-8 are two key passages about parental discipleship in the Old Testament. While many New Testament passages inform biblical parenting, perhaps Ephesians 6:1-4 stands out as the key New Testament text, being worthy of close scrutiny.

Ephesians 6:1-4 contains directives for the relationship of children to their parents, and vice versa. The passage is especially focused on the leader and master of the home, though it does not exclude the matriarch. However, it is useful not only to highlight the father’s key role in spiritual leadership in the home, but also to shed biblical light on

⁷⁴ DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner *The Book of Psalms*, “Ps 78:8.”

⁷⁵ Longman, *Psalms*, 290.

⁷⁶ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 721.

⁷⁷ Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 2:332.

the wife's role. Therefore, before Ephesians 6:1-4 is discussed in depth, an excursus on the role of women in spiritual training is provided. There will be a brief examination of the immediate context of Ephesians 6 by highlighting the relationship of husbands and wives explicated before in Ephesians 5:22-33. Then there will be a survey of the rest of Holy Writ for relevant passages that focus on the role of women in the family, which can shed light on the topic of family discipleship.

Excursus on the Importance of Mothers/ Wives in Parental Discipleship

Ephesians 5:22-33. Ephesians 5:22-33 is a critical passage to consider before examining parental (and especially paternal) responsibilities of family discipleship in Ephesians 6:1-4. The wife is man's helper and "one flesh" with him in all kinds of endeavors, including the discipleship of children (Gen 2:20, 24). She will help her husband disciple the children better if he performs his job well, in blessing his wife. Part of his duty is realized when he "nourishes and cherishes" her, just like Jesus does the church (Eph 5:29).⁷⁸ Christ sanctifies and cleanses the church (Eph 5:26) so that she might be holy and without blemish.⁷⁹ He uses the Scriptures as the tool by which He accomplishes this important work (Eph 5:27). Likewise, the husband should first seek to disciple his wife with the Word of God. His receptive wife then becomes a more effective partner in discipling their children.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Peter S. Williamson, *Ephesians*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 263.

⁷⁹ Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 142.

⁸⁰ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 371.

The godly wife, for her part, submits to her husband in everything (Eph 5:24),⁸¹ which would include his leadership concerning family worship and discipleship. Just as she respects and follows Christ, she also submits and gladly follows her husband, being “made for him” (1 Cor 11:9). She implicitly wields authority over her children according to various Scriptures, including the fifth commandment.⁸² Her actions and demeanor help her children see what only she can best portray in the home—simultaneous submission (as wife) and authority (as mother). When her husband seeks to lead the family in worship, she portrays a supportive attitude before the children, adding credence to the importance of what her husband is seeking to lead before their children’s watchful eyes.

Malachi 2:10-16. The marriage relationship is more likely to produce godly children when there is a strong, loving relationship between husband and wife based on a common faith in the one true God. If a Christian man marries an unbelieving wife (or vice versa), this is a “detestable” thing that is a “breach of faith” and can easily lead to “apostasy.”⁸³ What about the marriage contracted by fellow believers? The man must not wrongly divorce his rightfully wed wife. One key reason is that God sees the “elevated character and purpose of marriage” as being the production of godly offspring.⁸⁴ He knows that treachery to the marriage covenant not only affects the husband and wife, but it is also likely to affect the children’s spiritual well-being. In the same vein, if a husband feels like dwelling in the corner of his house, unprotected from the rain, instead of having fellowship with a contentious wife, unprotected from her tongue (Prov 25:24), their

⁸¹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 392.

⁸² Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 137.

⁸³ Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), “Mal 2:10-12,” e-book.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, “Mal 2:15.”

relationship will certainly suffer. Concomitantly, their joint effectiveness in discipling their children will also be greatly hindered.⁸⁵

Competent and commanded to disciple their children. Men and women are both made in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:28-29). The Spirit of God is poured out on women as well as men (Acts 2:17-18).⁸⁶ Women are often with the children more than their husbands and must learn to love their children deeply (Titus 2:4). They need to be active in their discipleship in both word and deed in all of life, such as mentioned in Deuteronomy 6:5-9, which is directed at both men and women in the home.⁸⁷ They are commanded, with men, to teach their children the law of God (Deut 4:10), and children are commanded not to forsake their mothers' instruction (Prov 1:8-9). If women are capable of laboring with Paul in the gospel, but also becoming contentious with one another (Phil 4:3),⁸⁸ then they are certainly competent to be co-laborers with their husbands in spiritually teaching their children; however, they ought to be careful to be supportive and not argumentative. Also, Priscilla was able to understand the gospel to such an extent that she co-taught, with her husband Aquila, the preacher Apollos more accurately in the gospel; therefore, she would have been ready, like all Christian women should strive to be, to instruct her children to comprehend the Word of God (Acts 18:26).⁸⁹ When a believing father is not in the home,

⁸⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15-31*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), "Prov 25:24," e-book.

⁸⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament Series, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 115. Peter points out that the Holy Spirit will include in His ministry those who might get overlooked in some contexts.

⁸⁷ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

⁸⁸ Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 174.

⁸⁹ Bock, *Acts*, 592.

either temporarily or permanently, then a mother (or grandmother) should strive to be a Lois or a Eunice in teaching the Scriptures to her Timothy (either son or daughter) (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-15).⁹⁰

The extent of a mother's faithfulness to her parenting and wifely duties can bring either shame or blessing on her husband, herself, and the Word of God. If she forsakes the "rod and reproof" and does not spend enough time discipling her children, then this will rightly bring her shame (Prov 29:15). If women do not "love their husbands . . . love their children, [and are not] discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient [submissive] to their own husbands, [then] . . . the word of God may . . . be blasphemed [maligned]" (Titus 2:4-5),⁹¹ even in the hearts of their children, when they see spousal and parental dysfunction. A man would not be allowed to assume the office of elder unless his children were faithful and subordinate, and this would reflect on the success of the combined discipleship efforts of their father and mother in the home, having faithful children in the context of a faithful marriage (Titus 1:6).⁹² A widow would not be brought into the number of those taken care of by the church unless she had been devoted to both her husband and children (1 Tim 5: 9-10).⁹³ Additionally, a woman's submissive, gentle, modest, and chaste behavior may bless her unconverted husband and be a means of his salvation (1 Pet 3:1). Finally, this woman's deportment will also be a wonderful example to her children, who, by the blessing of God, will imitate her.

In conclusion of this excursus, a woman's role is an important in family discipleship. While men ought to take the lead in this vital task, women have a crucial role to play. If women have believing and faithful husbands, then they will assist his

⁹⁰ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, "2 Tim 3:14-15."

⁹¹ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 169.

⁹² Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, "Titus 1:6-7."

⁹³ Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 92.

vision for family discipleship, being supportive and active, and being ready to take the lead when their husbands are away from the home. If husbands are not believing, nor at least willing, then they must totally take the lead in family discipleship.

Ephesians 6:1-4:Analysis

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Children obeying parents. Children are commanded to obey their parents. This is clearly related to the fifth commandment, as a corollary to honoring them. This disposition of children’s hearts is commended by Jesus (Mark 7:10; 10:19) and by ancient writers of the Graeco-Roman world⁹⁴ such as Pythagoras, Philo, and Euripedes.⁹⁵ However, unlike many ancient family codes, subordinates are addressed instead of just the superior, with wives being addressed before their husbands prior to chapter 6; children before fathers; slaves before masters (in subsequent verses). This acknowledgement of subordinates, accompanied by earnest encouragements to bring glory to Christ by their obedience to divine order, helps ennoble those who might otherwise feel slighted.⁹⁶

Reasons given for obedience. Though women have been commanded to submit (*hypotasso*; a passive form of the verb), children are to actively obey (*hypakoua*), giving the sense of a more direct and pressing obligation.⁹⁷ Paul could easily have just told children to obey and then moved on to other topics. However, he provides reasons for

⁹⁴ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 396.

⁹⁵ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 144.

⁹⁶ Williamson, *Ephesians*, 283.

⁹⁷ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 396.

children to be disposed to this important commandment. He admonishes that they obey “in the Lord.” While there is some debate as to this phrase’s place in the canon,⁹⁸ I will treat it here as original based on Thielman’s observation that “in the Lord” is a common phrase Paul employs in Ephesians, including sentiments such as believers growing up into a holy temple “in the Lord” (Eph 2:21), that Paul was a prisoner “of the Lord” (Eph 4:1), and that church members were light “in the Lord” (Eph 5:8).⁹⁹ Bruce makes the observation that this commandment would have been made toward children who had two loyalties. The first would be loyalty to God, and children would need to obey God first and parents second. However, assuming parents are not commanding them to act in a manner contrary to God’s revealed will, they should render quick and full obedience.¹⁰⁰ Talbert takes *en kyrios* to mean “in dependence on the Lord,”¹⁰¹ which adds the important biblical theme of human inability to do what is pleasing to the Lord without Christ’s help (John 15:5) and the enablement of His Holy Spirit (Rom 8:6-7). Additionally, *en kyrios* could possibly be meant as synonymous with Paul’s encouragement that such obedience “is well pleasing to the Lord” (Col 3:20).

Paul then reminds children of why they should obey: this is the right thing to do (Eph 6:1).¹⁰² Paul employs the Greek word *dikaios*, which gives the sense that obeying parents is what is “fair and proper,” which accords with the universal dictum in the ancient world that those who were given life and sustenance by their parents should respond with

⁹⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), “Eph 6:1,” e-book. Williamson, *Ephesians*, 284. Williamson’s translation adds brackets around “in the Lord,” presumably because it is in dispute as to authenticity, but then he comments on the phrase as if it has authority.

⁹⁹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 397.

¹⁰⁰ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, “Eph 6:1.”

¹⁰¹ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 144.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

grateful obedience.¹⁰³ *Dikaios* can also mean “righteous” or “just,” which likely points to the fact that Paul’s commandment to children is rooted in the righteous Law of God, the fifth commandment,¹⁰⁴ which he clearly assumes is still in force in the New Covenant.¹⁰⁵

Paul then gives children an incentive to obey, quoting more closely from the fifth commandment as found in Deuteronomy 5:16, more than its first iteration in Exodus 20:12.¹⁰⁶ It is the first commandment with a promise. There are various possibilities about how to understand the fifth commandment as being the *first* commandment with a promise, since the second commandment appears to have a promise annexed to it, as well.¹⁰⁷ However, I agree with Talbert that Paul seems to have considered the more general blessing applied to those obeying the second commandment as not rising to the level of a promise.¹⁰⁸

More important to notice is the giving of a promise itself. Children could just be commanded, but Paul presents an incentive. He promises under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth” (Eph 6:3). The first half of the promise is identical to the fifth commandment’s promise in both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, but the second part is changed in an important detail.¹⁰⁹ Whereas Israelites would have been motivated by a specific land promise, those in Ephesus would not be interested in that aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant; instead, there is a

¹⁰³ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 397.

¹⁰⁴ Williamson, *Ephesians*, 285.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, “Eph 6:2-3.”

¹⁰⁷ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 398-99.

¹⁰⁸ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 145.

¹⁰⁹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 399.

general promise of living long on the earth.¹¹⁰ This promise can be taken for a blessed earthly life, but since God's people will inherit the New Earth, as well, Christians will be richly blessed in their eternal home, as well as in this present one.¹¹¹

Conclusion concerning parenting gleaned from the children's command.

Children, like all people, are often motivated by rewards and encouragements. Like adults, it could be said that they should obey out of pure love for Christ. However, the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit, proffers "special" rewards of longevity and land to spur obedience (Eph. 6:2).¹¹² He reminds children that they need the Lord's help to obey their parents, but they are truly obeying and pleasing Christ when they do. However, he protects them with the knowledge that they are not totally under their parents' control, if those parents command them to disobey their Heavenly Father. He also reasons with them that obeying their parents is the right action to choose, being obvious not only in the Word of God, but in their own society.¹¹³ Finally, he promises that it will be well with them, and their lives will tend toward longevity and prosperity (Eph 6:3). These are no small inducements, and a parent might think carefully about how he might sometimes mix rewards and promises with bare commands, to provide motivations that will help children obey.¹¹⁴ It requires wisdom to command and promise in useful ratios so that children do not get spoiled and act merely as Pavlovian dogs on the one hand, nor like unmotivated and dispirited zombies on the other.

¹¹⁰ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 400.

¹¹¹ Williamson, *Ephesians*, 287.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 285.

¹¹³ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 144.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

Fathers training and admonishing. Paul commands children, and fathers have been privileged to listen. Now, he counsels fathers, and children are permitted to hear what Christ requires of their fathers: “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). It is difficult to know why he only addresses fathers here, though certainly mothers should heed the admonition as well.¹¹⁵ Older women in the church are tasked with teaching younger women to “love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands” (Titus 2:4-5). Now it is time for men to be confronted with their familial responsibilities as heads of household and ultimately responsible for a well-managed household culture, including submissive children (1 Tim 3:4), as they might be tempted to neglect them, by treating them as of secondary importance to their worldly callings. The culture of the ancient Mediterranean world held the father responsible for teaching his children.¹¹⁶ Williamson notes that fathers had, in Roman law, almost total power over their children, and some might tend to wield this power in a “manner that (is) inconsiderate, disrespectful, or self-serving.”¹¹⁷ However, fathers whom Paul is addressing must not abuse their power by severe and prejudicial treatment.¹¹⁸

Fathers are taught to put off one destructive practice while embracing an edifying one. The destructive practice fathers are to put off is “provoking (their) children to wrath.” This phrase could be rendered as “inciting your children to anger.”¹¹⁹ The verb

¹¹⁵ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 10 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 170.

¹¹⁶ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 145.

¹¹⁷ Williamson, *Ephesians*, 287.

¹¹⁸ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 401.

¹¹⁹ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 145.

employed for “provoking” is the Greek verb *parorgizo*, corresponding to the noun *parorgismos* from the command not to let the sun go down on one’s *wrath* (Eph 4:26). Both passages warn against what Thielman calls the “bitterness and resentment that result from anger left to fester.”¹²⁰ Bruce urges fathers to consider whether the manner they deal with children is more “calculated to provoke resentment than ready obedience.”¹²¹ Sometimes children might be provoked when fathers take good intentions too far by expecting too much performance from their children, employing perhaps well-meaning discipline or restraint to an unreasonable degree,¹²² or, as Foulkes describes, heaping on children “unnecessary rules and regulations and endless petty correction.”¹²³ In a parallel passage Paul gives another facet of the destruction of the child’s psyche, with poor fathering tending to discourage or dishearten (Col 3:21).¹²⁴

Fathers must put off angering their children, but instead take up the edifying task of “bring(ing) them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Paul employs the same word *ektrepho* (bring up) for his beneficent duty toward his children and his wife (Eph 5:29)¹²⁵ and it carries the idea of nourishing the whole being of the persons under one’s care.¹²⁶ This nourishment and care must be “of the Lord.” Teaching and training of children done for their spiritual benefit must have reference to Jesus Christ. It must be

¹²⁰ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 401.

¹²¹ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, “Eph 6:4.”

¹²² Williamson, *Ephesians*, 288.

¹²³ Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 170.

¹²⁴ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, “Eph 6:4.”

¹²⁵ Theilman, *Ephesians*, 402.

¹²⁶ Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 170.

received from the Lord Jesus, with His authority powerfully buttressing it, and it should also include much focus on the truth of Christ.¹²⁷

Two words describe this teaching that is “of the Lord:” training and admonition. “Training” is the Greek word *paideia*, which Williamson believes connotes “the whole process of education and formation in life, including discipline.”¹²⁸ It can take on positive connotations, such as instruction, and can involve negative aspects, such as correction and chastening, with *discipline* being the best translation.¹²⁹ The other noun that describes the kind of education God requires of fathers is admonition, taken from the Greek word *nouthesia*, meaning instruction or correction.¹³⁰ It is used with reference to the kind of instruction that contains warnings, such as directing the thoughts of children to a consideration and avoidance of the punishments inflicted on rebellious members of Old Testament Israel (1 Cor 10:11) or unruly members of New Testament churches who refuse to heed admonition (Titus 3:10).¹³¹ This kind of teaching is most effective when it is attested not only by word, but deed, as parents embody their precepts with integrity.¹³²

Conclusion

The Scriptures are replete with instructions for parents to disciple their children. Before the Mosaic Covenant, there is abundant evidence of the faith being handed down from generation to generation through parental word and deed. Then, in the fifth commandment, and more fully explicated in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, parents are tasked with making child discipleship a daily and hourly priority, as explicit instruction in the Word

¹²⁷ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 403.

¹²⁸ Williamson, *Ephesians*, 288.

¹²⁹ Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 170.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹³¹ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, “Eph 6:4.”

¹³² *Ibid.*

is augmented by mention of God's precepts and principles as they apply to every area of life. Psalm 78:1-8 speaks of the need to instruct the next generation in the Law of the Lord and in the history of how He at various times powerfully moved among His people to be their deliverer and guide. Parents must relate the goodness of God through positive teaching, but they must also warn their children not to follow the example of the ungodly in the past who have rebelled against the Lord and suffered for their impertinence. Finally, Ephesians 6 especially teaches fathers to instruct and admonish their children, while being ready to point them to rewards as encouragements for faithfulness. This passage specifically identifies fathers as the ones most responsible for their children's discipleship, and as ones who might need to be reminded, lest they become negligent. However, the context of the husband/wife relationship in the previous chapter reminds men and women of the great importance motherhood has, and how a wife can be a great asset to her husband as they collaborate in the extremely important task of discipleship of their progeny.

CHAPTER 3
RELATIONAL, PRACTICAL, AND ECCLESIASTICAL
ISSUES CONCERNING FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP
AND WORSHIP

Introduction

This chapter addresses three main areas/sections of concern: the relational, practical, and ecclesiastical issues concerning family discipleship and worship. The first area of concern involves the family unit itself and its importance, along with forces that lead to its failure in the task of child discipleship. Since the family is composed of individuals, with the father and mother being charged with discipleship, it is crucial to examine the role of both the husband/father and the wife/mother. Lastly, in the first area, I seek to examine the discipleship opportunities that naturally present themselves when family relationships are healthy. The second section is a discussion of the place of family worship in a spiritually healthy family. Whereas the first area addresses discipleship opportunities as they present themselves naturally in the warp and woof of life, the second section of the chapter is concerned with time carved out for more intentional times of spiritual instruction. The third section will address the church's place in equipping and encouraging parents to be intentional in their God-ordained roles as the chief agents of discipleship of their children.

**Biblical Family Relationships of
Integrity and Discipleship**

J. S. Mills and J. H. Ruebush write, "The family is the heart of society, and the home altar is the heart of the Christian family. Decay in the heart means decay in the life

of society.”¹ They continue, “In every family . . . God should be first and above all. A godless family is infinitely worse than a roofless house.”² Jay Strother, in his chapter, “Family-Equipping Ministry,” asserts that the church’s work in seeking to disciple children will normally find little fruit if the family is not engaged; one of the primary reasons is that families have their children for much more time than the comparatively tiny amount that churches have them.³ Whether they know it or not, parents are the chief agents of discipleship for their children.⁴ The only question is whether their discipleship will be done well and blessed by God. Families that are healthy, biblical, and intentional most often provide the necessary ingredients that promote wholeness and blessing. These families are best positioned to invest in their offspring through teaching in word and deed that focuses on what Anthony refers to as “moral instruction, character development, and spiritual development.”⁵

Family Discipleship Important but Often Neglected

Families are, indeed, mandated by God to be the main agents of biblical discipleship in their children’s lives. However, parents are generally not doing much to meet that standard.⁶ Because children are eternal beings, families must prioritize spiritual

¹ J. S. Mills and J. H. Ruebush, *A Manual of Family Worship* (Dayton, OH: W. R. Funk, 1900), v.

² *Ibid.*, xxii.

³ Jay Strother, “Family-Equipping Ministry,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views*, ed. Timothy Jones (Nashville: B& H, 2009), 117.

⁴ Timothy Paul Jones, “Confessions of a Well-Meaning Youth Pastor,” in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 20.

⁵ Michelle Van Groningen Anthony, “The Relationship between Marital Satisfaction and Family Cohesion among Evangelicals” (Ed.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 89.

⁶ Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011), 99.

growth over any other kind of aspiration.⁷

Families should share a closeness that will produce relationships of love and respect. In such relationships, there is a much greater ability to pass on the faith and to shape children's hearts when opportunities arise. Such togetherness can manifest itself in doing chores, homework, service projects, and playing together.⁸ Attitudes and habits manifest themselves quite clearly at home, as parents relax and are themselves. May observes, "What [one is] speaks so loudly that (children) can't hear what (we) say."⁹ For instance, parents who portray honesty before children instead of involving them in their deceptions will effectively teach values of truth more than when they merely talk about honesty.¹⁰ Children will often become just like their parents, so it is crucial for parents to model godliness, instead of just speaking about it.¹¹ Hypocritical parents will especially not win over adolescents to right thinking and living.¹² Parents who are authentically strong in Christ, with integrity, will generally produce the same kind of children as themselves.¹³ Smith perceives that much Christian discipleship is "nonverbal and unconscious . . . [with] attitudes and relationships . . . [creating an] atmosphere" that greatly affects everyone in the home. According to Leon Smith, parents should be considered "as the nurturing ministers of the church in the home."¹⁴

⁷ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 102.

⁸ Edward C. May, *Christian Family Living* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1970), 31-33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹¹ Timothy Smith, *The Danger of Raising Nice Kids* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 28.

¹² Karen E. Jones, "The Family in Formational Years," in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael J. Anthony and Michelle D. Anthony (Nashville: B & H, 2011), chap. 2, Kindle.

¹³ Smith, *The Danger of Raising Nice Kids*, 61.

¹⁴ Leon Smith, *Family Ministry: An Educational Resource for the Local Church* (Nashville:

Most parents believe they have done their spiritual duty of pointing their children to Christ by taking them to church, especially to age-segregated activities. Parents take their children to church youth leaders for spiritual instruction, coaches for athletic training, and teachers and tutors for academic growth.¹⁵ Many parents use other caregivers so that they do not have to be bothered with children or diverted from their own career aspirations, except for a small part of their day.¹⁶ Chaotic schedules and preoccupation with money and material goods can squeeze out time that ought to be given to God. When will parents work with their own children, especially in spiritual matters, which they are clearly commissioned by God to do?

Karen Jones asserts that the church community has its place in the discipleship of children, but it is clearly secondary to the primary place of parents.¹⁷ Strother adds, “Unless the family’s schedules and priorities are reformed, church reformation will have little effect.”¹⁸ One of the greatest lessons parents must learn is to choose the Pearl of Great Price for their children (Matt 13:45-46). Many values clamor for the attention of parents and children alike, but there must be a willingness in parents to sacrifice the many good things that are available if they get in the way of their children being discipled by the best things. What is most important is intentionality in the pursuit of knowledge of God and faithfulness to working out biblical truth in every area of life.¹⁹ Haynes lays

Discipleship Resources, 1975), 28.

¹⁵ Timothy Paul Jones, “Historical Contexts for Family Ministry,” in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 26.

¹⁶ Michelle D. Anthony and Kit Rae, “Children’s Ministry in the Context of the Family for Spiritual Growth,” in Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministries*, chap. 11.

¹⁷ Jones, “The Family in Formational Years,” chap. 2.

¹⁸ Jay Strother, “Responses to Brandon Shields: Family-Based Ministry,” in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 132.

¹⁹ Brian Haynes, *The Legacy Path* (Nashville: Randall House, 2011), 34.

down a rule for his children that they would only be allowed one extracurricular activity in a week, which helps to maintain a “sane” family schedule.²⁰ This schedule locks out some activities that are good, but are not the best, and makes room for prioritized family time that is not allowed to be swept off the schedule. Therefore, the family has plenty of time with no agenda attached, which can involve positive words of appreciation, meaningful communication, physical touch, and creative togetherness.²¹ These unhurried times pave the way for teachable “God moments”—those natural times of spiritual reflection that rarely present themselves in the unrestrained tyranny of the urgent.²²

However, electronics tend to separate parents from children. Constant use of electronics provides a reason for isolation that obviates meaningful relationships and experiences that could create the milieu in which family discipleship flourishes.²³ Parental influence over a child’s moral development is greatly increased when they spend much time with their children, who learn much from observation and active parental modeling of godly behaviors and attitudes. A great deal of what children see is internalized, and they imitate what they observe.²⁴ Haynes rightly says that children need to behold “what it looks like to follow Christ more than they need to hear what it is like.”²⁵

²⁰ Haynes, *The Legacy Path*, 40.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 40, 44-45.

²² Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 197.

²³ Timothy Paul Jones, “Foundations for Family Ministry,” in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 46.

²⁴ Jones, “The Family in Formational Years,” chap. 2.

²⁵ Haynes, *The Legacy Path*, 10.

Importance of Parents' Personal and Marital Discipleship Commitment

Haynes observes, “The greatest obstacle parents have to overcome in leading their children spiritually is their own mediocre or morbidly religious relationship with God accompanied by a juvenile understanding of His Word. . . . Many of us have never been truly disciplined ourselves.”²⁶ Stinson and Jones challenge Christian families to be “gospel-empowered training bases for (spiritual) conflict,” equipping sons and daughters to do battle with forces that seek to destroy their souls.²⁷ If parents are not well-equipped themselves to knowledgeably and volitionally do battle with evil, then the question arises: Will the powers of darkness rule the Christian home, or God’s Spirit?²⁸ To better understand how they can serve Christ as parents who biblically disciple their children, men and women must examine their roles in the light of God’s Word, both as husbands/wives and as fathers/mothers.

The Role of Husbands

The spiritual climate of the home starts with the relationship between husband and wife. The husband, as head of the family, must take his relationship with his wife seriously, as being a portrait of the love of Christ.²⁹ If he does not portray Christ and the gospel well by His self-sacrificial love for His wife,³⁰ then the credibility and beauty of the gospel are undercut (Eph 5:25-32). He must love her whether she is being particularly lovable or not, because his love should not be conditional, but principled, reflecting the unfailing love of Christ.³¹

²⁶ Haynes, *The Legacy Path*, 17.

²⁷ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 14.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁹ Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader at Home* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 28.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 77-79.

³¹ Scott LaPierre, *Marriage God's Way: A Biblical Recipe for Healthy, Joyful, Christ-Centered*

A husband must shepherd his wife, as her most humble active servant-leader, in imitation of Jesus (Phil 2:6-8).³² He must follow Christ in his example, as Jesus teaches, “I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep and am known by My own” (John 10:14). As Jesus knows His sheep and has revealed Himself to them, even so the husband must know his wife (and children) intimately and be helpfully candid with them.³³ This relationship with his wife is what Witmer avers to be the “most intimate human relationship.”³⁴ It is one that requires a significant amount of time to cultivate, in both quantity and quality; it is a “continuous association”³⁵ and “partnership” around meaningful pursuits, being actively engaged in togetherness instead of living separate lives.³⁶ The husband must struggle to avoid addiction to electronic devices or anything else that would communicate distracted focus and insult to his wife.³⁷ The kind of communication that will water the tree of closeness and give him the ability to shepherd his wife involves fellowship in truthful, edifying, thoughtful ways, with unhypocritical interest.³⁸ He must be ready to unearth issues that may not be pleasant but are ultimately helpful in restoration of God-ward or spousal relationships that have been marred by sin and need to be bathed in forbearance and forgiveness that cover a multitude sins. He

Relationships (n.p.: Charis Family Publishing, 2016), 3.

³² Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977), 27-28.

³³ Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁵ Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 28.

³⁶ Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 33, 35.

³⁷ Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 56.

³⁸ Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 37-42.

confronts when that is the uncomfortable but only remedy for major matters.³⁹ The husband seeks to obey 1 Peter 3:7: “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” Paul mentions prayers at least in part because when husbands pray with their wives they communicate with God and each other at a very deep level that will promote unity and holiness.⁴⁰

The husband must be able to say to his wife, as the apostle Paul was able to say, “Follow me as I follow Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).⁴¹ He should hold two very important attitudes in tension: authority and trusting partnership. Sometimes he must make decisions for the family that may not be easily discerned nor happily received, especially if they are major ones that the head must tackle.⁴² However, the kind of relationship that will help the couple during difficult times that might engender disunity “require[s] an authentic vulnerability before his wife.”⁴³

The husband’s authority, though, does not require him to make all the decisions for the household. He should be comfortable delegating many tasks and responsibilities to his wife and trusting, supporting, and honoring her as one he desperately needs and effusively appreciates. Mack counsels that he should treat her with “tenderness, respect, chivalry, and courtesy.”⁴⁴ This kind of treatment will help get the married couple through

³⁹ Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 49.

⁴⁰ Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 44, 81.

⁴¹ Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 28.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴³ Curt Hamner, “A Theology of Marriage,” in Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministries*, chap. 6.

⁴⁴ Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 35.

the “turbulent” times that sink many marriages and ruin the kind of relationship that can become a successful partnership in the discipleship of their children.⁴⁵

A great deal more could be said here about the role of the husband, and some will be revealed throughout the rest of this chapter; however, the amount of material concerning husbands has been somewhat shortened to make room for a consideration of the role of wives in parental discipleship. Much useful material concerning husbands has been written in recent theses on family discipleship produced by doctoral students at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary⁴⁶; however, this work focuses more than they do on the role of the wife in ways she can partner with her husband and be a help and not a hindrance to his leadership in the important task of child discipleship.⁴⁷

The Role of Wives

The role of wife has already been shown in chapter 2 to be that of helper and submitter to the leadership of her husband. This is how it has been since the beginning (Gen 2), but it is always complicated because of sin and misunderstanding on both the husband and wife’s parts. Many self-identifying Christians have denied this role of submission for women, and even in Baptist circles, many have eschewed this biblical doctrine and practice.⁴⁸ However, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has been more

⁴⁵ Anthony, “The Relationship between Marital Satisfaction and Family Cohesion,” 146.

⁴⁶ Bradley Bruton Boyette, “Equipping Fathers at Parkridge Baptist Church in Coral Springs, Florida, to Lead in the Discipleship of Their Children (D.Ed.Min. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017); and James Benjamin Bowden, “Equipping the Men of First Baptist Church of Enterprise, Alabama to Be Gospel-Centered Leaders in Their Homes” (D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

⁴⁷ Philip Lee McKinney, “Adolescent Christian Formation and Mother Nurture and Involvement: A Mixed Methods Study” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013). McKinney treated the role of women in Christian formation several years ago. While I will partially travel the familiar ground of Boyette and Bowden in upholding the importance of male spiritual leadership in the home, I will also explore the crucial role of wife and mother in family discipleship.

⁴⁸ Susan M. Shaw, “The Paradox of Submission: Southern Baptist Women and Male Headship,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 383-84. Shaw discusses evangelicals and fundamentalists as being advocates of wifely submission, to greater and lesser degrees. She intimates that

vocal than most denominations in defense of this foundational scriptural concept.⁴⁹ It is one thing to uphold the doctrine ecclesiastically, and another for each married couple to submit their wills to divine decrees to the divinely ordered family structure. If the man is charged by God to lead in his home, including in the area of family worship, as much as is practicable, it is crucial that his wife support him. If she undermines family discipleship and worship in word, action, or attitude, she will very much hurt the chances of this enterprise being received by the children to their spiritual benefit. This assertion is buttressed by research which finds that when a married couple is experiencing peace instead of conflict, fathers are more likely to be involved in their children's lives (and thus, as part of their involvement, be able to disciple them).⁵⁰

Submission warped. However, on the other end of the submission spectrum are fundamentalists who go too far in proclaiming a husband's ultimate power. Some fundamentalist leaders will tell wives that they must follow their husband's will, even when it forces wives to actively sin. Some of them also do not even allow a woman to question her husband or explain why she believes he ought to rethink an issue.⁵¹ This kind of restriction on a wife would not allow her to give valuable insight into family discipleship and worship that she might otherwise give. The wonderful synergy of a

other Christians outside these circles would not countenance wifely submission. Among these would be Baptist groups that are more progressive than the average congregation in the Southern Baptist Church, and two such groups are the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Alliance of Baptists.

⁴⁹ Southern Baptist Convention, Committee on Baptist Faith and Message, *The Baptist Faith & Message: A Statement Adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention June 14, 2000* (Nashville: LifeWay Christian Resources, 2000), chap. 18. See also Shaw, "The Paradox of Submission," 383.

⁵⁰ Joseph H. Pleck and Sandra L. Hofferth, "Mother Involvement as an Influence on Father Involvement with Early Adolescents," *Fathering* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 267-86.

⁵¹ Steven R. Tracy, "What Does 'Submit to Everything' Really Mean? The Nature and Scope of Marital Submission," *Trinity Journal* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 291-92.

husband and wife in seeking to work together in family discipleship and worship will be probed later in the chapter, and it relies on a biblically-balanced view of submission.

Crucial nature of wives' support. A position consonant with the thrust of this project's advocacy is Single Qualification Submission.⁵² This kind of submission is "all-encompassing," but it ennobles the wife as a child of God, being equal in dignity and worth. It also allows a wife to refuse to submit to her husband if he tells her to do something that "clearly violates Scripture."⁵³ More germane to the discussion, however, is how it holds women to a high standard of submission, while holding men to an equally high standard of valuing their wives' opinions and seriously considering them in all areas of their marriage, including in the areas of family discipleship and worship.

Why is the place of submission in a wife's interactions with her husband so important? It is because when a man wants to lead in something like family discipleship and worship, it is important that his wife supports him. It is important for her to build up his confidence and morale.⁵⁴ He will not do it perfectly, and he will need feedback and suggestions from his wife about how to improve it. A supporting attitude can do wonders not only for her husband, but also for the attitude of children toward family worship. Children watch their father and are hopefully being taught that Christ is a loving, caring, thoughtful leader through what they see from their fathers' relationship to their mothers. They also watch their mothers and learn whether the submission of the church to the commands of Christ is a serious act of the conscience, or a hit-and-miss approach based on the whims and will of the child of God.

⁵² Tracy, "What Does 'Submit to Everything' Really Mean?," 293.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 294.

⁵⁴ Virginia Fugate, *On the Other Side of the Garden*, 2nd ed. (Citrus Heights, CA: Foundation for Biblical Research, 2004), 85.

The Role of Parents in Discipleship

Fathers

Though Satan's plan is to "marginalize" the head of the family and not allow his heart to be turned to his children (Mal 4:6),⁵⁵ the father/husband of the family is called to be a vigilant and diligent "priest, prophet, provider, and protector,"⁵⁶ for both his children and his wife.⁵⁷ The father is so important in the family that one study revealed that 93 percent of families followed their dad religiously when he converted to Christ.⁵⁸ It is debatable how much the church's responsibility lies in discipleship of children (and this will be discussed later in the chapter), but it is beyond debate that parents, and especially the father, should resist "going with the flow" of many modern churches,⁵⁹ and accept that they are charged with the duty of discipling their own children in the fear of the Lord.⁶⁰ While a man ought not be overbearing in his declaration of leadership, he should make clear to his children that he has been given authority as a steward of God, and they are "obliged to obey."⁶¹ He must also be consistent with his authority in the home. If he one

⁵⁵ Jones, "Confessions of a Well-Meaning Youth Minister," 12.

⁵⁶ Voddie Baucham, Jr., *Family Shepherds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 45.

⁵⁷ Brian Howard Honnet, "Family: A Context for Worship," in *Practical Family Ministry: A Collection of Ideas for Your Church*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones and John David Trentham (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 21.

⁵⁸ Brandon Shields, "Family-Based Ministry," in Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 101. While it is difficult to know to what extent the family followed God, there is a clear pull from the father to lead his family and for them to follow. Conversely, when the father is not leading the way, children often take note of his lack of enthusiasm and imitate it.

⁵⁹ Timothy Paul Jones, "The Faith at Home Movement: What Makes It Distinct and What Gaps Still Remain," in Jones and Trentham, *Practical Family Ministry*, 11.

⁶⁰ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 35-36. Baucham is not as balanced, for better or worse, than my comment. He writes, "Fathers, not youth ministers, children's minister, or preschool ministers . . . are charged with this duty of discipling the next generation," revealing his belief that no generationally separated ministries should exist in the church.

⁶¹ Jeff Pollard and Scott T. Brown, eds., *A Theology of the Family* (Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2014), 361. Principles for fathers taken from pp. 360-69 are from Puritan Richard Baxter.

day is loose in expectations, and the next day is very strict, that will be very confusing and is liable to exasperate them (Eph 6:4). Therefore, fathers must cut a wise middle ground in which they never relinquish their authority, but they exercise it with wisdom and care, lest they seem capricious or despotic.⁶² However, if their deportment is full of godliness and integrity, then attempts at discipleship will be afforded more respect. Conversely, if a father does not have control over his tongue or his passions, or is foolish in his speech or actions,⁶³ children are more likely to rebel.⁶⁴

Intentional paternal relationship. Just like with his relationship with his wife, the father must be engaged with his children. The family must get beyond conversation in the home that has, in Whitney's words, "degenerated into an indistinguishable series of monosyllabic grunts."⁶⁵ A good relationship with both spouse and children is a more effective door to ministry than the ministrations of the most skillful youth or children's minister.⁶⁶ In the milieu of a close relationship, parents can take advantage of spontaneous, happy and sad events, at home, in the car, and anywhere.⁶⁷

Major events such as baptisms, funerals, marriages, and church membership vows provide meaningful times for reflection and discussion about the great realities of life and God's place in them. The same could be said for the role of creation, in all its beauty

⁶² Pollard and Brown, *A Theology of the Family*, 362.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 361-62.

⁶⁵ Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 11. Whitney quotes from a BBC report.

⁶⁶ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 82.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 162.

and power, or sibling rivalry and other forms of ugliness.⁶⁸ The father must resist the temptation to retreat to his proverbial man cave but must be involved in the lives of those whom he shepherds. In this regard, he must also protect his family's ability to "share life"⁶⁹ together, against those forces which would cause them to be strangers to one another, such as an overabundance of sports and other enrichment activities.⁷⁰

Shepherding a child involves what Tripp refers to as an "emphasis on issues of the heart. It enables [the father] to get underneath the behavior and address the thoughts, motives, and purposes of the heart."⁷¹ Discipleship of children should include mostly formative discipline. Biblical discipline should aim at going beyond changing a child's behavior. Smith states that it should become, as much as possible, an "intimate, personal relationship designed for growth and learning through imitation, dialogue, and observation."⁷² Fathers should seek, according to Baucham, to teach, restrain, command, remind, and pray for their children.⁷³ If this is done well, the average child will respond positively and will not need an abundance of corrective discipline. If parents "connect" relationally first, then they will often not have to "correct" second, or at least it will be in a loving context.⁷⁴ Parents who are open about their own failures are often able to get their children to open up about theirs, giving them an excellent opportunity to disciple

⁶⁸ Anna Laura Gebhard and Edward W. Gebhard, *Guideposts to Creative Family* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), 21, 114-15.

⁶⁹ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 41.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁷¹ Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), 164.

⁷² Smith, *The Danger of Raising Nice Kids*, 25.

⁷³ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 125-32.

⁷⁴ Smith, *The Danger of Raising Nice Kids*, 76.

their children's perceptions about weakness, sin, and disappointment.⁷⁵ When needed, however, discipline should go beyond encouragement toward godliness, to warnings about the consequences of sin, rebukes, and sometimes corporal punishment.⁷⁶

“FOCUS”ed fatherhood. Fathers (and mothers) should apply God's Word to various areas of life, putting Deuteronomy 6:5-9 into practice. Anthony claims that normal activities and experiences provide the best soil for knowing God intimately.⁷⁷

Steen gives a mnemonic device to help parents FOCUS on spiritual growth:

1. First, seek Him yourselves, since you cannot lead others to a love and reverence for God if you do not have them yourself.
2. Opportunities come knocking—listen for them—in such times as special days and special conversations.
3. Color Outside the Lines—Besides the Scriptures and prayer, there are times when God's creation can teach something beautiful, and so can a time of (shared) evangelism or service.
4. Understand that your children do not always understand what you are teaching them spiritually, either formally or informally, and children should know that they will not be chided or feel threatened to admit they don't; parents should praise any amount of growth and seek to wisely build on that.
5. Simple activities are important, such as short devotionals, questions about Sunday School, one Bible verse in a lunch box, or memorizing a short blessing.⁷⁸

Mothers

Mothers often feel quite unspiritual. There is not as much time for Bible study, prayer, and church activity as before motherhood.⁷⁹ It is important to understand that there are different stages of life. There certainly is less time for self because now life is

⁷⁵ Smith, *The Danger of Raising Nice Kids*, 69-70.

⁷⁶ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 133-40.

⁷⁷ Michelle Anthony, “Equipping Parents to Be the Spiritual Leaders in Their Home,” in Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministries*, chap. 10. I agree that this is an important way to point young ones to God, but the way Anthony phrased her statement seemed to undermine the value of family worship as being of only secondary importance comparatively, and this is certainly debatable.

⁷⁸ Jones and Trentham, *Practical Family Ministry*, 45-47.

⁷⁹ Donald S. Whitney, “Family Ministry and Motherhood,” *The Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 2, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 2012): 86.

consumed with children.⁸⁰ However, when a mother understands that her service to Christ is not lessening, but changing, it will hopefully buoy her spirits. She is now no longer having as much to do with ministry outside her family, but inside.⁸¹ She is evangelizing her children and investing in their lives so that they will become followers of Christ. She is drawing on the times of spiritual strength she was storing up for times like this.⁸²

It is important for the mother and wife to not castigate her lack of time in the spiritual disciplines.⁸³ However, she should do what she can; if she has only a few minutes, she should not feel guilty.⁸⁴ In this season of life, she is doing what God has called her to. Her children and husband are learning much from her loving selflessness. Monica, mother of Augustine, is a good example for emulation.⁸⁵

Family Worship

The second section in this chapter concerns family worship. It involves more focused and planned family times than the discipleship mentioned in the first section, which in part deals with spiritually-attuned parents using the events and articles of life to point their children to spiritual lessons. Family worship, on the other hand, is scheduled and deliberate, not so much finding opportunities in “life,” but pulling back from life’s

⁸⁰ Whitney, “Family Ministry and Motherhood,” 86.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 86.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁸⁵ Matthew Haste, “‘So Many Voices’: The Piety of Monica, Mother of Augustine,” *The Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 4, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 2013): 6-7. Monica was a fourth-century mother of the extremely influential theologian Augustine, is one of the most famous mothers of church leaders. Augustine’s *Confessions* reveals many aspects of Monica’s wifely and motherly character and actions that he believed were noteworthy. Haste observes that Monica “is a helpful model of Christian piety because she practiced the biblical virtues of persistent prayer, confident faith, and humble service to others.” She held the unenviable place of wife and mother to those who spurned the gospel, but God used her patient prayers and sacrificial service to lead them to Christ and His service.

events and entering a sacred time of solely seeking God. Individual worship is also important, but this section will only treat worship taking place among family members.

Elements of Family Worship

If the father is to lead his family in worship,⁸⁶ one might ask what elements are involved in its worship. The Word of God and prayer seem to be the most commonly prescribed elements in the literature about family worship. John Knox said the Word of God was an important focus, employing both reading and exhortation, along with praying together.⁸⁷

Concerning reading the Bible, Beeke advises parents to read through the entire Bible, with a balanced approach between the Old and New Testaments, with perhaps ten to twenty verses each gathering.⁸⁸ Gebhard encourages parents to also give special line-by-line explanation as they read familiar parts of the Scriptures, such as the Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, Psalm 23, and the Beatitudes. Additionally, she counsels parents to familiarize children with commentaries, concordances, Bible dictionaries, and atlases.⁸⁹ She and others also advise parents to identify and facilitate memorization of key passages that are most useful for future recall.⁹⁰ Beeke also exhorts all competent family members to take turns reading sometimes, and always with strong expression.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 73.

⁸⁷ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 31.

⁸⁸ Joel Beeke, *Family Worship Bible Guide* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2016), xii.

⁸⁹ Gebhard and Gebhard, *Guideposts to Creative Family*, 63-65.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 116-17.

⁹¹ Beeke, *Family Worship Bible Guide*, xii.

Husbands and wives should pray together often (1 Pet 3:7).⁹² As a couple, and with children, intercession should encompass many topics, such as the church, pastor(s), teachers, government leaders, school, neighbors, missionaries, extended family, major problems of war, disaster, and crime.⁹³ Also, some families find spiritual sustenance and encouragement in blessings recited at family worship or at the dining table.⁹⁴

Some writers highlight other useful aspects of family worship. Singing is the third most prescribed activity of family convocations. Alexander praises singing for inciting holy emotions; he also emphasizes that those who sing in family worship are provided opportunities to sing skillfully,⁹⁵ which also helps make God's praises beautiful in church. Haynes extols the benefits of singing in the family in times such as the morning before school and as part of an extended time of worship on the Lord's Day.⁹⁶ Some give suggestions for what to sing. Beeke encourages parents to choose psalms and hymns that are easy to sing.⁹⁷ Singing of the Psalms has the extra benefit of helping children commit substantial portions of Scripture to memory that can be called upon to biblically respond to various movements of the soul and situations in life. David and Virginia Eden mention that songs are valuable because they "linger" in the mind long after worship; they suggest families consider making songs of their prayers.⁹⁸

⁹² Whitney, *Family Worship*, 26.

⁹³ May, *Christian Family Living*, 118.

⁹⁴ Gebhard and Gebhard, *Guideposts to Creative Family*, 131-33.

⁹⁵ James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002), 127.

⁹⁶ Haynes, *The Legacy Path*, 45, 53.

⁹⁷ Beeke, *Family Worship Bible Guide*, x.

⁹⁸ David Edens and Virginia Edens, *Making the Most of Family Worship* (Nashville: Broadman, 1968), 25, 38.

Beyond these three staples of family worship can be added other books that teach biblical truth. Catechisms are useful to highlight key theology and basic beliefs and practices.⁹⁹ They are “old and trusted family discipleship tool(s).”¹⁰⁰ Many orthodox denominations have revered catechisms that have a multitude of biblical doctrines that can be learned by children in an effective question and answer format that provides a simple, straightforward method for parents to train their children in truth.¹⁰¹ The use of catechisms helps church members raise a new generation of young people who are theological literate, ready to defend the faith, and unified in familial and ecclesiastical doctrine.¹⁰² Besides catechisms, parents might find usefulness in devotional books, Christian biographies,¹⁰³ *Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Holy War*, and other Christian allegories,¹⁰⁴ and materials that train children in finances, leisure, use of gifts, and callings.¹⁰⁵

Place, Length, and Frequency of Family Worship

Where shall the family gather to worship God? Whitehouse declares that wherever it takes place, it is useful to change rooms occasionally, to break up monotony for young children who get distracted and bored easily.¹⁰⁶ However, most encourage there

⁹⁹ Beeke, *Family Worship Bible Guide*, x.

¹⁰⁰ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 63.

¹⁰¹ Presbyterians have the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms, as well as a more contemporary children’s one; Baptists have Keach’s, Spurgeon’s, the Baptist Catechism (1677), and a modernized, baptistic version of the Westminster Shorter Catechism; Lutherans have Luther’s Catechism; many Continental Reformed churches utilize the Heidelberg Catechism.

¹⁰² Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 64-66.

¹⁰³ Gebhard and Gebhard, *Guideposts to Creative Family*, 86, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Beeke, *Family Worship Bible Guide*, x.

¹⁰⁵ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 165.

¹⁰⁶ Donald S. Whitehouse and Nancy S. Whitehouse, *Pray and Play* (Nashville: Broadman, 1979), 11.

to be one place dedicated to family worship. The family dining table is a common place that is encouraged. Since eating happens frequently, and diners are already present (assuming the family is in the good habit of eating together), family worship can most easily begin there.¹⁰⁷ The consistent gathering at the dining table can also be most conducive to strike up meaningful conversations on a host of topics.¹⁰⁸ Some families find blessing in reciting, singing, and/or chanting blessings, prayers, and songs that are specifically appropriate for meals.¹⁰⁹

Others find that retiring from the dining room table to perhaps the living room is preferable. Still others find the bedroom at bedtime to be a good place and time to focus on spiritual matters.¹¹⁰ During different seasons of the year, some families seek to eat or worship outside, giving them a chance to point out God's work in creation while singing songs and reading Scriptures with those themes.¹¹¹

There is general agreement that brevity is the soul of devotional wit, especially with young children.¹¹² Beeke recommends twenty-five minutes in the evening and ten minutes in the morning.¹¹³ Haynes similarly counsels prayer, Scripture, and blessing occur in efficient order before students or parents need to leave the house.¹¹⁴ Others especially focus on time spent in devotions being age appropriate.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ Beeke, *Family Worship Bible Guide*, x.

¹⁰⁸ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 189.

¹⁰⁹ Gebhard and Gebhard, *Guideposts to Creative Family*, 131-33.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

¹¹² Beeke, *Family Worship Bible Guide*, xi.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹¹⁴ Haynes, *The Legacy Path*, 53.

¹¹⁵ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 79.

There is an interesting disagreement regarding how frequently family worship should occur. Schemm calls for morning and evening prayers as being biblical and conducive to trusting God.¹¹⁶ Whitney states that it was common in first century Christian homes likewise to have family worship twice a day, with a short time in the morning and a longer time at night.¹¹⁷ This idea of twice daily family devotions, with brevity in the morning and more substance at night, agrees with what Beeke advises, as mentioned. Alexander also counsels heads of families to congregate their families twice daily.¹¹⁸

The Westminster Confession of Faith enjoins fathers to institute worship at least once daily in their homes.¹¹⁹ Baucham references the Westminster and Second London Baptist Confessions, as well, in support for once daily family gatherings.¹²⁰ John Knox also called for family worship to occur at least daily,¹²¹ as does Steen more recently.¹²²

Haynes advocates weekly family worship. He recognizes the sad state of the Christian church regarding parental faithfulness in discipleship. He desires that families grow together once a week during what he styles “faith talks.”¹²³ Jones agrees, believing weekly faith talks naturally follow creation and ecclesiastical time frames, and that they

¹¹⁶ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 187.

¹¹⁷ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 28-29.

¹¹⁸ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 18.

¹¹⁹ G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964), 166. This page contains the sixth paragraph of chap. 21 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, stating that “private families daily” are to worship. This does not necessarily mean from the language that more than one time a day is forbidden, but it seems to insist on at least once a day for the family to meet for worship.

¹²⁰ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 73.

¹²¹ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 31.

¹²² John Ellis Steen, “Family: A Context of Discipleship,” in Jones and Trentham, *Practical Family Ministry*, 48.

¹²³ Haynes, *The Legacy Path*, 45.

provide enough consistency to become engrained habits. He also believes it is “unrealistic” to “burden” families with the expectation of daily worship, especially those who have no acquaintance with it at all. Haynes and Jones both take this pragmatic approach to get families into a rhythm of family worship, while Jones hints that he is pleased if families then go beyond weekly faith talks to daily ones.¹²⁴

Haynes also points out to Christian families the blessing of the Lord’s Day for family spiritual times of growth together. He sees it as a day with great possibilities for advance in knowledge and love of God, when it is sanctified as a special day in parents’ minds and actions.¹²⁵ Lawson also extols the spiritual benefits of one full day in every seven being given over to rest, with the obvious prospect to then focus on the soul more in family contexts, beyond ecclesiastical ones.¹²⁶ It is encouraging to see writers extolling the benefits of using the first day of the week for family spiritual growth since it has in recent decades become a day committed to other pursuits by many families.

Preparation for Quality Family Spiritual Growth

If God’s worship in the family is so important, then it is worth doing well and thoughtfully. Whatever books and other materials used ought to be examined before use.¹²⁷ Sometimes brief and pointed times of focus on God are practicable and most beneficial, and at other times, longer periods can be carved out of the family’s schedule to delve more deeply into the Scriptures, pray for a more sustained season, sing more songs, or discuss more deeply something helpful for spiritual growth. Factors to consider include age of the

¹²⁴ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 156.

¹²⁵ Haynes, *The Legacy Path*, 48.

¹²⁶ Michael S. Lawson, “The Old Testament Teaching on the Family,” in Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministries*, chap. 4.

¹²⁷ Edens and Edens, *Making the Most of Family Worship*, 44.

children,¹²⁸ time of day, and what else has transpired in the day; the head of the home should be willing to be flexible and adaptable depending on the condition of his family and the circumstances of the day,¹²⁹ with input from his wife, who is often more attuned to the needs of the children.

As hinted, sometimes it might be helpful to change venues in the house or even go outside to take advantage of different scenery that will help emphasize what is being considered during worship, or just to add variety to avoid the practice feeling stale.¹³⁰ Instead of just reading the Scriptures, sometimes it might be more meaningful to dramatize Bible stories, to make them “come alive.”¹³¹ Also, crafts and holiday/special day traditions can help to reinvigorate spiritual interest, since children have a short attention span and benefit from creative, well-planned times of family worship to keep them meaningfully engaged.¹³² Allowing every member to lead in something occasionally can help keep them engaged, as well as learning how to lead family worship in the future themselves.¹³³

There are sometimes objections to family worship. Parents might complain that they do not know how to lead worship, or they are too busy.¹³⁴ Other parents might have allowed their children to engage in a multitude of extracurricular activities, all of which may be beneficial in and of themselves but leave no time for family worship. It is important to carve out at least dinner, as much as possible, as a time when oneness and

¹²⁸ Whitehouse and Whitehouse, *Pray and Play*, 11.

¹²⁹ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 51.

¹³⁰ Whitehouse and Whitehouse, *Pray and Play*, 31-33.

¹³¹ Reuben Herring, *Your Family Worship Guidebook* (Nashville: Broadman, 1978), 9.

¹³² Herring, *Your Family Worship Guidebook*, 107.

¹³³ Gebhard and Gebhard, *Guideposts to Creative Family*, 34.

¹³⁴ Beeke, *Family Worship Bible Guide*, ix.

worship can happen.¹³⁵ Some fathers might not believe they are able to conduct family worship because of inexperience; however, the next section provides some interventions by church leaders to help equip heads of households.

Role of the Church in Encouraging Family Worship and Discipleship

The next section will address the church's place in equipping and encouraging parents to be intentional in their God-ordained roles as the chief agents of discipleship of their children. This section deals with some of the history of failures and successes of the church in promoting this concern, while examining some more encouraging recent developments toward preparing parents for discipleship. It will include an examination of different philosophies and methods churches are presently employing to promote familial and juvenile spiritual growth. Next, there will be an examination of the relative strengths and weaknesses each approach presents. Lastly, there will be a discussion of practices churches can employ to encourage and equip parents to disciple their children.

Ministry Paradigms of the Last Two Centuries

Over a span of more than two hundred years, families have become more segregated than previous generations because of various forces, including mass public education¹³⁶ and non-agricultural occupations. Sunday schools helped meet a need of many children without biblical and academic education, but they could also tend to leave parents out of the process. There has also been a tendency for segmentation to occur in the church. As Nelson and Jones introduce *Trained*, they assert, "Three distinct trends have characterized church-based ministries to families in the industrialized western

¹³⁵ Haynes, *The Legacy Path*, 40.

¹³⁶ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 20.

world.”¹³⁷ One such trend was the Comprehensive-Coordivative Family Ministry. Samuel W. Dike, among other pastors, valued the role Sunday schools and other efforts played in reaching young people with the gospel. However, he was concerned that parents were not doing their part in spiritual instruction at home, nor were many churches doing enough to facilitate cooperation in this task. Thousands of church leaders resonated with his concerns and increased their communication with parents about God-given responsibilities for their children’s discipleship, and for approximately the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the “Home Department” concept was useful for this purpose.¹³⁸

The influence of the “Home Department” did not last more than a quarter century. In the wake of the Second World War, the Segmented-Programmatic Ministry to Family Members became more predominant. Generally, all members of the family were taught different material, and there was not much coordination between the various ministries of the church—parents did not know what their children were being taught, and vice versa. This also coincided with the wider acceptance and expectation of “professional, age-focused ministers” who were often seen as the only ones responsible for discipleship of children.¹³⁹ However, according to Haynes, “Jesus never said, ‘Bring your kids to church so the professionals can lead them spiritually,’” though this seems to have been the sum of their ministry to children.¹⁴⁰

A third trend also common in the last half of the twentieth century was the Educational-Programmatic Family Ministry. It was somewhat of an improvement over the Segmented-Programmatic Ministry to Family Members in that it sought to encourage

¹³⁷ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 19.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴⁰ Brian Haynes, *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2009), 30.

family relationships, which were seen to be deteriorating. There was some fruit from this focus, but it concentrated more on good familial relationships than on equipping parents to disciple their children.¹⁴¹

Intentional Family Ministries

Recently, more commendable models of intentional family ministry have developed. These ministry models are Family-Based Ministry, Family-Integrated Ministry, and Family-Equipping Ministry.¹⁴²

Family-Based Ministry maintains the age-segregated model more than the other two ministries, calling for different age groups to meet independently of others, as part of its complete ecclesial offerings. The belief is that many unsaved young people will never hear the gospel outside of this context.¹⁴³ Brandon Shields, one of the ministry's proponents, advocates educating families about their duties to disciple their children; however, he notes that many Christian families are no longer intact. Children from these families, and also from non-Christian families, are unlikely to benefit from effective parental discipleship, and so an age-segregated model can provide what is not being provided in the home.¹⁴⁴ Jones notes that though this kind of ministry could have a deleterious effect on meaningful relationships between older and younger members that the Bible commends, there is a concerted effort in the family-based ministry model for different ages to mingle in various events hosted by the church, to overcome the lack of relationship building that segmented ministry might engender.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 21.

¹⁴² Jones, "Foundations for Family Ministry," 41-42.

¹⁴³ Shields, "Family-Based Ministry," 107.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁴⁵ Jones, "Foundations for Family Ministry," 43.

Family-Integrated Ministry has the same appreciation for fellowship of all age groups; however, there is no need to sometimes specially mix them because they are already mixed. There are no separate Sunday schools, youth groups, or worship services. All ages are present at each assembly.¹⁴⁶ Voddie Baucham, one of this view's main proponents, rightly says, "Fathers, not youth ministers, children's ministers, or preschool ministers . . . are charged with this duty of discipling the next generation."¹⁴⁷ With no separate ministries, a simplicity can be attractive. Parents will naturally know what to discuss with their children concerning the messages they sat under because their children were there, too, and they do not need to be informed about what their children should have learned. However, how much little children learn when they only receive messages that are often more adult in comprehensibility is debatable. Also, if parents are rightly assumed to be the primary agents of discipleship in their homes, what is to be done by a church for children who do not have parents who can disciple them?¹⁴⁸ Also, if the focus is so much on intact families led by a father, then churches need to be prepared to address how they can minister to less traditional families and to singles.¹⁴⁹

Between the Family-Based and Family-Integrated foci is the Family-Equipping Ministry. Family-Equipping Ministries agree with Family-Integrated Ministries that the family is the chief entity responsible for discipleship.¹⁵⁰ They also agree with the Family-Integrated Ministry that most children are old enough to join the worship service and get at least some profit out of it, with parents discussing the sermon afterward to help give it the

¹⁴⁶ Jones, "Foundations for Family Ministry," 43.

¹⁴⁷ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 35-36.

¹⁴⁸ Strother, "Responses to Paul Renfro," 85.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁵⁰ Shields, "Family-Based Ministry," 115.

most effective ability to bear fruit in children's hearts.¹⁵¹ However, they also believe that a portion of the church's teaching ministry is best age-segregated because of its ability to teach in ways that will be far more immediately comprehensible and relevant to that age group. Since parents are believed to be the chief agents of discipleship of their children, though, they do not just teach children in separate Sunday schools and then do nothing else. Instead, they communicate clearly what was taught and then give suggestions for parents as to how they might continue the conversation at home concerning what their children learned in class.¹⁵² Each of the family ministry perspectives has proponents who make useful and true points for their view. However, most of the authors of selections in *Trained in the Fear of God* find the middle road position, Family-Equipping Ministry, to be the best model for a church to follow in facilitating discipleship of children in the faith.¹⁵³

Practices Churches Can Employ to Encourage Parental Discipleship

Church leaders must first teach parents about their duties relating to discipleship of their children.¹⁵⁴ According to one poll, more than 80 percent of parents are never individually encouraged to disciple their children.¹⁵⁵ This instruction ought to happen, and must not be offered with the flavor of suggestion, but must be consistently and boldly expected.¹⁵⁶ Since it is so important, it should be reflected in the church mission

¹⁵¹ Shields, "Family-Based Ministry," 120.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁵³ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 27-28.

¹⁵⁴ Jones and Trentham, *Practical Family Ministry*, 11.

¹⁵⁵ Jones, "Historical Contexts for Family Worship," 27.

¹⁵⁶ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 33.

statement,¹⁵⁷ as long as its importance never overshadows the gospel nor devalues the place of singles in the church.¹⁵⁸

Some parents will understand this duty through their own reading of Scriptures or witnessing it in their own childhood homes or elsewhere; others will be totally ignorant. Still others will know, at least to a certain extent, their responsibility, but will “lack a sense of urgency,”¹⁵⁹ and squander valuable opportunities. Parents must not just be told about the importance of family discipleship but should be able to observe it in their leaders. Haynes stresses that each church leader must be “a Christ-follower, a husband, a father, and then a [church leader].”¹⁶⁰ A key component of their exemplary behavior must consist in well-managed families in which faithful discipleship is evident in practice and result.¹⁶¹ Additionally, mentor couples can assist new parents and anyone else who might need help by offering wisdom, prayers, and assistance concerning family discipleship or other topics.¹⁶²

The Faith-at-Home-Movement, as it sometimes is called, needs to be founded, from church to church, on studied and convinced affirmations of the biblical and theological underpinnings for its justification instead of social-scientific ones. It also requires the church to be intentional in its advocacy by altering the way it structures its ministries, so they do not deprive, but rather bolster, the ability of parents to disciple their children.¹⁶³ This theme should sometimes show up in sermons, but it also can be greatly

¹⁵⁷ Jones and Trentham, *Practical Family Ministry*, 22.

¹⁵⁸ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 28, 222.

¹⁵⁹ Brian Howard Honett, “Family, a Context for Worship,” in *Practical Family Ministry*, 19.

¹⁶⁰ Haynes, *Shift*, 40.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁶² Anthony, “The Relationship between Marital Satisfaction and Family Cohesion,” 146.

¹⁶³ Jones and Trentham, *Practical Family Ministry*, 8.

bolstered by parent seminars, parent conferences, and family celebrations, as well as during milestones of children's lives, which will be discussed later.¹⁶⁴ These family seminars and conferences ought to give explicit teaching about how to lead family worship, or "faith talks," regularly, while also training parents to lead children in "God sightings," helping their children see God's hand, attributes, and will in the fabric of life.¹⁶⁵ They should also recommend discipleship methods and plans for parents, giving adequate preparation to parents so they might know how to use them.¹⁶⁶

Milestones

Churches do well to consider celebrating and commemorating certain milestones in children's lives to focus parent and child discipleship at life's key spiritual and developmental markers. A key point person(s) responsible to track such milestones will help ensure they are remembered and celebrated. Also, some leaders and congregants find physical tokens of commitment associated with milestones helpful to remember and celebrate steps along the path to obedience and relationship with God. There will be disagreements, depending on churches, as to what kinds of milestones to celebrate and how to do so, but the concept of milestones seems to be a wise appropriation of the natural rhythms of life. Churches will also need to decide if any of the following milestones should be left totally for the family and not be addressed by the church at all. Some of these milestones might overlap as well, or seem superfluous, but the concept can be of use in most churches profitably.

Milestone 1 is the birth of a child. This is an ideal time for a church to furnish a seminar that helps parents understand biblical teaching about their new roles and gives

¹⁶⁴ Haynes, *Shift*, 44-45.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

them a decidedly discipleship bent toward their view of parenthood, including ways to pray for and bless their child. It could involve a stated commitment by the parents to rear their baby in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and a charge to the members to pray for and support these new parents.¹⁶⁷ Milestone 2 involves parents beginning devotions with their children and pointing them to Christ, ending, under the blessing of God, with salvation and baptism.¹⁶⁸ Milestone 3 addresses issues faced in adolescence. Materials could be provided to parents to help discuss important issues, such as sexuality.¹⁶⁹ Milestone 4 involves middle school students and a commitment to sexual purity.¹⁷⁰ Milestone 5 is a commemoration of the passage to adulthood.¹⁷¹ Milestone 6 is a celebration of high school graduation. Before high school graduation, special classes are offered on biblical perspectives about such themes as finances and stewardship of chores and possessions. Worldview classes such as the *Truth Project* help more fully prepare teens to stand on the truth of the Bible and be able to detect and refute falsehoods as they advance to college or career.¹⁷² Milestone 7 seeks to transition students to adult responsibilities in the church.¹⁷³

Conclusion

Parents are responsible for the discipleship of their children. However, unless the church is intentional in training them to take such responsibility, many parents will

¹⁶⁷ Haynes, *Shift*, 51-54.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 60-62.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 75-79.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 82-90.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 93-95.

¹⁷³ Curt Hamner, "A Theology of Marriage," in Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministries*, chap. 6.

not. A church must have a plan in place as to how to exhort and expect such parental duty, executing it diligently and prayerfully, or parental discipleship is unlikely to flourish.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project was to equip Christian parents who entrust their children to the educational ministry of Covenant Fellowship Church of West Orange, New Jersey, to be more faithful and intentional concerning the discipleship of their children.

The first goal was to assess parents' (and especially fathers') awareness about the biblical command and practical methods to perform family worship, as well as how often parents are performing these duties. The second goal was to develop a series of lessons to increase parents' convictions, awareness, and practices of family discipleship. The third goal was to increase parents' knowledge of scriptural commands for parental discipleship of their children and understanding of methods to accomplish this stewardship, by teaching the lessons developed according to the second goal. The fourth goal was to increase parents' commitment and accountability to discipleship of their children that they learned from the lessons taught by means of the third goal.

The Weekly Development Process

Week 1: Crafting a Document Seeking Approval for Research

Before I taught and conducted the research with those attending the classes, I sought approval from the Ethics Committee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to conduct research with human subjects. I also reached out to the three experts to review my lessons and give me feedback. Two of the pastors were easy to contact and the both agreed to participate, but one pastor was more difficult to reach, requiring several calls and emails, and my communications to obtain an affirmative bled into week 2.

As part of the approval, I crafted a survey that would be given before and after the lessons.¹ These surveys would give me the information needed to compare what study participants knew and practiced in family discipleship before and after the classes. The survey asked forty questions, employing the Likert Scale.

The survey asked many kinds of questions about each participant's spiritual life, attitudes, knowledge, and practices. The first few questions established the suitability of participants, including if they are Christians, married, and have minor children. Next, participants rated themselves concerning how much they know about family discipleship from the Scriptures, how faithful they are to what they know, and how much they desire to be knowledgeable and faithful concerning family discipleship.

Next in the survey, participants were asked questions to ascertain whom they think is responsible for the discipleship of their families. They were asked whether they believe the church or parents are mainly responsible for family discipleship. Further, parents were asked about how regularly they personally partake in activities like prayer and Bible reading. Then, they were asked if they have a clear goal and plan to disciple their children. Finally, they were asked whether they engage their children and spouse in activities and questions that help facilitate spiritual growth.

Week 2: Gathering an Expert Panel to Review Lessons

Another step involved cobbling together a team of three experienced pastors, approved by my advisor, who were willing to evaluate my project and give their feedback concerning family ministry. As mentioned in week 1, it took me longer than a week to confirm the expert panel since one pastor was more difficult to reach.

¹ See appendix 1.

One pastor whose help I enlisted was Brian Borgman. He has continued as the founding pastor of Grace Community Church, Minden, Nevada, since 1993.² The other two pastors I enlisted are fellow pastors where I minister, at Covenant Fellowship Church. I wanted to have confirmation from my fellow pastors about the direction I was going with my studies because it is important that we are united concerning the Bible's teaching in the general truths and practices concerning family discipleship that we are espousing for the direction of the congregation. James Lee is the senior pastor. I have served with him for eight years, and he has mentored me in various ways concerning ministering to children and their families.³ David Lee is the associate pastor at Covenant Fellowship Church, having served there for seven years.⁴

Week 3: Lesson Outlines

I examined all that I had written for chapters 2 and 3, as well as reviewing key books I had already read, so that I could arrive at an outline for the lessons I thought would allow me to cover the most important information that the class ought to hear, without getting lost in that which was too academic or peripheral. I arrived at the following general

² He received the M.Div. from Western Conservative Baptist Seminary and D.Min. from Westminster Seminary. Borgman is currently an instructor for Reformed Baptist Seminary, Lusaka Ministerial College, and the Copperbelt Ministerial College, the last two of which are in Zambia. He is the author of *After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption; Spiritual Warfare: A Biblical and Balanced Perspective; Feelings & Faith: Cultivating Godly Emotions in the Christian Life; and My Heart for Thy Cause: Albert N. Martin's Theology of Preaching*. He has also written many articles in journals and online, including "Redeeming the 'Problem Child': Qoheleth's Message and Place in the Family of Scripture," and a Gospel Coalition book review of "Thriving at College," by Alex Chediak. I include these two articles as evidence of his interest in family ministry issues.

³ Before James Lee followed God's call to the ministry, he earned a J.D. from Cornell University and practiced law for many years. Then he received the M.Div. from Westminster Theological Seminary (PA). While in seminary, he also served in youth ministries.

⁴ David Lee, too, served in children's and youth ministries while earning his M.Div. at Westminster Theological Seminary (PA), and he also served as youth pastor for several years at Covenant. He then transitioned to become the associate pastor at Covenant, where he oversees the educational ministries of the church and preaches, among many duties.

outline, which was given the title “E-6 Fathers Teaming with E-5 Mothers to Disciple Their Children”:

1. A call to personal commitment to growth in Christ
2. Family discipleship especially the responsibility of fathers
3. Marriage: Crucial component of family discipleship
4. The who, what, when, and where of family discipleship/worship
5. Family discipleship in church history & review.

Week 4: Development of Lesson 1

The first lesson called for the administration of the survey to get a baseline for the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of the participants, before any pedagogy commenced. After collecting of the surveys, I would first be concerned with calling the participants to personal commitment to growth in Christ. While I was interested in diving immediately into the subject at hand—family worship—I became convinced that if I did not first address their own personal, spiritual commitment, then the whole series of classes would be resting on a perilous foundation. The church is composed of a variety of spiritual commitments among its members, from those who are very committed to Christian discipleship, to others who are only coming because of familial and cultural concerns. I did not know who would ultimately accept an invitation to the class. Therefore, I decided to make sure that those who came who were not very knowledgeable of, or actively pursuing, personal Christian discipleship, would receive instruction about this very important topic. Certainly, also, some others who are knowledgeable about personal commitment might have become backslidden in one or more related areas, so they certainly could also profit from this first theme in lesson 1.

Lesson 1 would begin with a brief treatment of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, enough for the participants to observe that there are two foci in the passage.⁵ One has to do with

⁵ See appendix 2.

personal knowledge and love of God; the second section involves training one's children to know about God and His Word as it relates to all of life. Lesson 1 would focus on the first of those two aspects—the participants being adult believers who knew God and loved Him. Unless they had a personal commitment to God in this way, their desire to disciple their children would be doomed to failure, especially as their children grew and became able to discern how hypocritical their parents were in expecting their children to follow God, while not faithfully doing so themselves.

The lesson would cover many related topics. One was the gospel itself, in case anyone attending actually was only a nominal Christian. Second, we would discuss the various means of grace and practices involved in a personal commitment to discipleship. One commitment would involve a resolve to be an avid prayer warrior. We would discuss the importance of constant communion with God, communicating with Him throughout the day in praise, confession, thanks, and supplication. I also would focus on Jesus' command that people should regularly be alone to have more concentrated times of meaningful prayer, hopefully avoiding electronic devices and situations that might hinder maximum benefit from time with God. Lastly, I would encourage the use of a prayer list so that the most important prayer requests the Lord lays on their hearts are not forgotten, but are consistently lifted to the Father, who commands His children to keep knocking.

The second practice I would focus on was reading and meditating upon the Word of God. We would discuss Joshua 1:8-9 and Job 23:12, in which success in life correlates with meditation upon Scripture and application of its principles to life, along with treasuring its contents above all else on the earth.

The third practice I would mention was consistent and expectant attendance at church. Children will learn much from one's attitude about church attendance by what activities are allowed to supersede church attendance. I would challenge my hearers to not let anything but emergencies and illness keep them from church, instead of sports and other activities that sometimes keep some congregants from showing up. I would tell

them that Lord's Day attendance is the very least to which they should be committed. However, I would also challenge them to frequent other ministries of the church, such as prayer meetings, community groups, etc.

The last personal practice I would exhort them to embrace was pursuit of personal holiness. This involves actively filling the mind with that which is pure and lovely and avoiding ungodly entertainment and other avenues that focus the mind on impure thoughts. I would encourage them to imitate those in the church and other contexts whose lives are exemplary.

After each lesson of the series, I would review and present homework to be completed by the next lesson. Then, at the beginning of each new lesson, there would also be a review, followed by a time for partners to discuss what they were learning and encourage each other if they were experiencing struggles.

Week 5: Development of Lesson 2

Lesson 2 was entitled "Family Discipleship, Especially the Responsibility of Fathers."⁶ The lesson would review Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and then expand, focusing on verses 6-9 that involve pointing children to God's Word in all kinds of situations. Then, Psalm 78:1-8 would be expounded, in which participants would be given a vision of generational faithfulness and the beauty and importance of the next generation being disciples. Focus would also be placed on the fact that fathers appeared in the passage to especially be charged with the responsibility of teaching their children the ways of the Lord, including not only teaching positive commands, but also pointing out falsehoods and sins in the culture and training children to discern between good and evil. Brief comments would be made on other passages that focused on fatherly influence, such as Joshua 24:15; Job 1:5; Genesis 18:19; and Malachi 2:15-16 and 4:5-6.

⁶ See appendix 2.

Finally, Ephesians 6:1-4 would be read, with focus on fatherly duties to train children in Christ. Parental duties in general would be shown to involve expecting children to obey quickly, good-naturedly, and completely. Fathers, for their part, must train and admonish children in the Lord, while not exasperating them, avoiding leniency and despotism.

In week 5 I asked the church to begin to announce that there would be upcoming classes on family discipleship, to whet their appetites and begin to sow the seeds for the importance of parents attending.

Week 6: Development of Lesson 3

Lesson 3 was entitled, “Marriage: Crucial Component of Family Discipleship.”⁷ After reviewing Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, Ephesians 5:22-33, and Ephesians 6:1-4 would be expounded. Husbands must be loving servant leaders if they are going to represent Christ in His relationship to the church in a truthful and honoring manner. Wives must submit to their husbands with a good attitude to show the beauty of the church, when it follows Christ obediently. When husbands and wives do not perform their roles in this manner, they project a lying portrait of the relationship between Christ and His church.

Fathers would then be especially encouraged to listen to their wives’ exhortations and suggestions. Wives are given as helpers in the extraordinary role of discipleship, and men need all the help they can get. Women are often more able to discern and take to heart the feelings of children, and they often help their husbands understand when they are exasperating children with unreasonable expectations, etc.

Week 7: Development of Lesson 4

In lesson 4, a special focus on being together as a family for meals would be highlighted, as well as parents in general not allowing work to cause them to be practical

⁷ See appendix 2.

strangers to their children.⁸ This includes avoiding distractedness because of electronics that can make those living in the same house seemingly insensate to one another. Instead, parents can encourage togetherness around many activities. With togetherness, there is oneness and more opportunities for openness and shepherding.

Sometimes this togetherness in Christian pursuits should rightly extend beyond the home. Parents should be active themselves in planning and executing works of service to bless God and neighbor. Parents should not just perform these activities on their own, but they should involve their children when it is prudent to do so. Children will never learn to serve others unless they get practice, and usually this means imitating their parents. Parents can train their children to see needs and think about how they might be a part of the solution, such as raking leaves, removing snow, sharing their hope in Christ with someone struggling, taking a meal to a shut in or someone similarly alone, or participating in a renovation project in the neighborhood, school, or church building.

Then, parents would be exhorted to be vigilant for openings in the fabric of life to highlight God's Word and mindset on a subject. It could be in the mundane, such as the passing of a day, the rising of the sun, or the beauty of a flower. It could also be in the special events of life, such as happy times like marriages and baptisms, as well as sad events like funerals and disasters, in which they could address the key premises and God's design for these events, to understand them better. Next, I included a call for parents to be vigilant about who else might be given the privilege to exert a significant influence on their children, like teachers and other adults in their lives, neighborhood children, etc.

I would then address elements of family worship, such as when, how long, where, and what elements were important to be included, such as Bible reading and prayer, with singing being an important element to seriously consider adding. Parents would also be encouraged to use catechisms, Christian biographies and allegories, and

⁸ See appendix 2.

other devotional and character strengthening books. Lastly, objections to family worship would be enumerated, examined, and debunked.

Week 8: Development of Lesson 5

The final lesson would include a review of all material, but then deal with discipleship in church history.⁹ The point was for families to understand that family worship and intentional discipleship is hardly a new idea, but one that has been advocated in all previous centuries by earnest Christians.

Finally, an identical survey as the one administered in lesson 1 was to be given for the respondents to fill out as a post-survey. They were to be collected, and prayer for faithfulness to God's will in Christian discipleship, both personally and in the family, was offered.

Now that the lessons were written and I had a decent idea when I could expect them to be returned by my experts after their evaluation, I conferred with the senior pastor for a commencement date for the classes. These dates were then announced over several weeks.

Week 9: Expert Panel Review

After completion of the lessons, I emailed them to the three experts. This group of men employed a "Curriculum Evaluation Rubric."¹⁰ They evaluated the curriculum to determine its level of biblical faithfulness, the sufficiency of its content for training parents in faithful discipleship, and the appropriateness of its methodology to effectively equip and encourage parents to fulfill their parental discipleship duties.

⁹ See appendix 2.

¹⁰ See appendix 4.

Week 10: Expert Panel Results and Responses

Once all five lessons were evaluated by each of the experts, I considered their praises and criticisms by means of the rubric employed and/or other comments, however they were offered. I made changes to the lessons in such suggested areas as more focus on the gospel, removing language that could seem too formal by focusing on warm, personal devotions over mechanical performance, considering altering the order of the lessons, and adding more personal anecdotes from my life because of my many years of parenting. I also began fleshing out the importance of the marriage relationship in family discipleship, planned a demonstration of how family worship might be conducted, and added more ideas for how families could serve together in ministry opportunities. Each of the lessons met or exceeded the goal of 90 percent sufficiency according to the rubric, submitted by two pastors.¹¹

Weeks 11-15: Lessons 1 through 5 Presented

Generally there is not a strong turnout for midweek meetings at the church. Therefore, I attempted to take away any impediments that might hinder participation or edification. The first thing I did was supply a babysitter to be sure that families with younger children could attend. The class chosen for instruction was only thirty feet from the nursery, so this made it very convenient for parents.

Second, I provided dinner for each study so that families would not be hungry or think they could not come because they needed to provide food for their children. It is sometimes daunting for parents to get home from work (often very late in the New York City area), get dinner, and then make it to class by 7 p.m., so this was a key strategy.

¹¹ A third pastor read it twice and gave helpful constructive criticism. He just did not follow through in submitting the rubric as I asked, and he made clear that he was quite busy, with longer return times, so I did not push back and make a second request for that documentation. However, I am confident he would have given satisfactory marks once his valuable suggestions were adopted.

Third, parents were encouraged to come in person, but if they could not, lessons were livestreamed. Several families watched it live over the internet, or watched later electronically when it was more convenient. This option allowed families who could not be a part of the group for some reason to hear these crucial messages for the good of their families.

Fourth, all those participating were enrolled in the class via Google Classroom. This allowed me to have the participants' emails and give encouragement via email during the week. I sent at least one email each week to remind them what they had learned and encourage them to be faithful in applying what they were learning.

Fifth, all participants were given a notebook with class notes that had blanks to be filled in, to help participants focus.¹² I bought a three-ring binder for each person and put an attractive cover on it so that it would be a permanent reminder of the course and could be reviewed in the future.

Sixth, for each class, I gave time for reviews and questions. Then I previewed what we would learn in the following classes so participants would see the whole picture. I also gave participants time to discuss what they were learning with one another and to counsel one another. I brought books that applied to topics we were addressing, hoping to entice parents to buy their own copies.

Seventh, participants were given homework after every study to put into practice what they were learning. Not only did they get a reminder each week, but they also knew that they were going to confer with someone at the beginning of the next class as to how well they followed through on their homework. This allowed for the pressure of review by another person, but it also allowed for venting about struggles that they encountered, as well as opportunities for encouragement.

¹² See appendix 3.

Finally, after people paired and discussed how things were going concerning discipleship, they were encouraged to share with the group what they learned in their discussions. I wanted to make sure that if one group was especially instructed or blessed by what was said in their interactions that they could share it, to the benefit of the whole class.

Lesson 4 turned out to be too pregnant with information and too important to rush through, so about a fourth of the content was held off until lesson 5 and taught there, along with the whole fifth lesson, which was relatively short. There was still sufficient time to give the post survey afterwards.

Week 16: Interviews

Fourteen people took the classes, including twelve who listened to all five lessons and were able to take the pre- and post-surveys. I was concerned about getting four couples (more than half the class) to agree to a survey. Therefore, I sought to convince them as a group both during the class and in emails of the importance of the interviews for better analysis of the efficacy of my research. I also told them that it would be a useful exercise to help them think through the implications of what they had learned and how they could profit from it going forward. Four couples rather quickly responded and said they would be happy to be interviewed. Ten questions were asked,¹³ copious notes were taken, and the interviewees' answers are analyzed in chapter 5.

Week 17: Surveys Compared

Pre- and post-surveys were compared, and a statistical analysis of the effectiveness of the classes in improving knowledge and attitudes of parents concerning the discipleship of their children was conducted. Upon further reflection and before statistics were derived, it was determined that only nine questions were most useful for

¹³ See appendix 5.

comparison. Many of the questions that had seemed helpful while making the survey seemed unimportant considering the classes taught and the relevant questions that might be asked to note improvement in practice and attitude. The scores were compiled and compared. A t-score was computed to ascertain whether there was a statistically valid reason for thinking the lessons taught significantly raised participants' knowledge of, and commitment to, family discipleship. Results are found in chapter 5, along with analysis.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

This chapter serves as a capstone to the project. The purpose of the project was to equip Christian parents who entrust their children to the educational ministry of Covenant Fellowship Church of West Orange, New Jersey, to be more faithful and intentional concerning the discipleship of their children.

It is important to reflect on the project to determine its strengths and weaknesses. This evaluation will help me individually, and hopefully my church in toto, to better plan for future attempts along these lines with the parents in our church. It will also hopefully help anyone reading this work to replicate the positive aspects of this project, while observing facets that were not as useful, so they can avoid those pitfalls. This chapter also serves as a vehicle to evaluate whether the purpose and goals were adequately met. Finally, this chapter ends with personal and theological reflections with reference to this project.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this thesis project was to equip Christian parents who entrust their children to the educational ministry of Covenant Fellowship Church of West Orange, New Jersey, to be more faithful and intentional concerning the discipleship of their children. Chapter 1 introduced the rationale for this project, involving several facets. One part included the church's desire to be a genuinely Reformed church in theology and practice, while acknowledging that we had much room for improvement, especially in family discipleship in most families. Another aspect of the rationale involved a need for families to choose the greater value of a close family unit that carves out time for oneness, including focus on spiritual growth in family worship and God-centeredness. This was

identified as a need because focus on children's extracurricular academics, sports, musical instruction, etc., often seems to hold a higher place in the estimation of the average family in the church than family discipleship. These purposes were proven to be valid. Based on the pre-surveys compared to the post-surveys, and the interviews, families needed a new ethos that put family discipleship ahead of other aspirations for child growth. Parents revealed through post-surveys and interviews that they now understand the importance of spending more meaningful time together, since that is the only milieu in which family discipleship could flourish. Several families not only were ignorant of, or not committed to, the important biblical practice of family worship, but were also ignorant of the legacy of Reformed churches maintaining this standard.

The second chapter established a theological basis for making family discipleship an important goal. Then, an in-depth examination of Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:1-8; and Ephesians 6:1-4 established the fact that parents, and especially fathers, are charged with intentional family discipleship. Finally, Ephesians 5:22-33 was examined to establish the relationship between husbands/fathers and wives/mothers needed to form a synergy that can work together for successful discipleship of children and demonstrate the gospel in the relationship Christ has with His church. Based on the surveys and interviews, it is evident that this kind of biblical study was necessary. Parents especially pinpointed Deuteronomy 6:4-9 as being the most helpful text to promote a vision of God-centeredness in their interactions with their children. It was also apparent in my discussions with husbands that some of them had vague notions of being spiritual leaders in their home but really needed it to be made biblically plain and compelling to them so that they could be strengthened for this important work.

The third chapter examined husband/wife issues in more detail. Then, family worship and discipleship in history were examined. Next, the elements of family worship were considered. Later, the place, length, and frequency of worship were examined. Parents told me they were appreciative that I showed how doable family worship can be.

They appreciated that it was acted out so they could picture themselves in the same role. They also were grateful for the scenarios I offered that helped them see possible pitfalls and how to avoid them.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

This project involved four goals. The first goal was to assess parents' (and especially fathers') awareness of the biblical commands and practical methods to perform family worship, as well as how often parents are performing these duties. The second goal was to develop a series of lessons to increase parents' convictions, awareness, and practices of family discipleship. The third goal was to increase parents' knowledge of scriptural commands for parental discipleship of their children and understanding of methods to accomplish this stewardship, by teaching the lessons developed according to goal 2. Finally, the goal 4 was to increase parents' commitment and accountability to discipleship of their children that they learned from the lessons taught by means of goal 3.

Goal 1

The first goal of the project was to determine the level of knowledge and commitment to family discipleship among the parents who participated. Before the first class, the PDPI was administered and received.¹ After the first class, it was also analyzed, and results were recorded for comparison with the post-survey results later. Therefore, the first goal was accomplished. The twelve participants were encouraged to be honest, and to help give them a sense of confidentiality, they were told to write a four-digit number instead of their name as identification. Most filled the survey out in person, but others completed it electronically since a portion of the class was remote, either live streaming or watching later. It took most people ten to fifteen minutes to complete the forty-question survey, which asked various queries, including questions about their personal devotional

¹ See appendix 1.

life and their knowledge of scriptural commands involving family worship and their actual, tangible commitment to be actively engaged in family discipleship.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a series of lessons to increase parents' convictions, awareness, and practices of family discipleship. It took me several weeks to write the lessons; then it took approximately two weeks to both receive comments from the expert panel and to consider and adopt many of their suggestions. I was grateful that each of the three men who evaluated the work had very different comments. Their praises and criticisms were helpful to focus on gospel motivations over formalism and to add personal anecdotes and demonstrations to help add meaning to the lessons. I had significant discussions with two experts because they had more time to verbally expand on their comments. After these discussions, based on what they wrote in the margins of my lessons and on the rubric, I made additions, subtractions, and alterations to my lessons. Two of the three experts approved the lessons by means of the rubric, scoring them at or above the threshold needed to be ready for teaching the lessons.² Therefore, this goal was considered successful.

Goal 3

The third goal was to increase parents' knowledge of scriptural commands for parental discipleship of their children and understanding of methods to accomplish this stewardship, by teaching the lessons developed according to the second goal. This goal was accomplished first by means of teaching five lessons, with homework at the end of each class and an email during each week of the classes as a reminder of key teachings

² As mentioned, one pastor read it twice and made comments, but he failed to fill out the rubric. He made clear that he no more time to help, so I did not push for him to fill out the already requested rubric. However, I adopted his suggestions and am confident of his approval once changes were made.

they had learned, along with an encouragement to put what they learned about family discipleship into practice.

Then, a post-survey was employed to test the efficacy of the lessons, emails, and homework employed. The first post-survey was identical to the one used as the pre-survey. Twelve post-surveys were received, matching the twelve pre-surveys, and they were statistically examined for whether they revealed significant improvement from the pre-surveys to the post-surveys.

The nine questions used for statistical analysis are numbers 9, 10, 12-15, 17, 18, and 20.³ Each of these questions used the Likert scale, allowing for six different choices. The value “1” was assigned to “strongly disagree,” and there were gradations of choices that ended with “6” being assigned to the answer “strongly agree.” The only anomaly came when someone chose two numbers. When that rare event happened, I took the mean of the two numbers. For instance, if someone chose both “3” and “4,” then I assigned a 3.5 for that value.

Data from the twelve surveys. Every participant’s post-survey revealed growth when compared to the pre-survey. However, there was a wide disparity of growth. From what I know of the respondents, some have heard similar material before, and others are relatively new to knowledge and experience about family discipleship. Therefore, it was not surprising to see some survey takers reveal a much larger growth than others. Table 1 shows the total of the nine questions for each participant’s pre and post-survey.

³ See appendix 1. After more examination of the survey in the light of the lessons I taught, these were the questions that I thought would correctly show whether what I taught had been efficacious. I chose to compare only these questions before I received data from the post-survey.

Table. Pre-survey total score compared to post-survey

Participant	Pre-survey total	Post-survey total
1	41	48
2	37	50
3	41	43
4	48	51
5	41	41.5
6	20.5	39
7	31	43
8	42	43
9	40	47
10	36	41
11	37	53
12	34	41

Statistical data and interpretation based on the pre-surveys and post-surveys. There was a statistically significant positive effect ($t_{(11)} = 4.45, p = .0005$) on perceived reliability from the pre-survey to the post-survey, using a one-tailed, paired t -test. The mean score for the pre-survey's nine questions was 4.15, and the mean score of the post-survey's same nine questions was 5.00.

Goal 4

Finally, the fourth goal was to increase parents' commitment and accountability to discipleship of their children that they learned from the lessons taught by means of the third goal. The method of gathering information was qualitative in nature, involving an interview with four families. Ten questions were asked, and an hour was originally allotted for each interview. However, the average interview took about forty minutes to complete.

These questions were asked to gather meaningful data. However, they were also asked so that couples would recall what they had learned in the five lessons and pinpoint the information and suggestions that were most helpful to their commitment to parental discipleship. It also required them to examine how their application of what they learned has been and will impact their parental and marital relationships, including what kinds of obstacles might need to be considered and overcome. Lastly, the tenth question opened a dialogue concerning my continued shepherding in their lives. It is important that I follow

up these lessons in some helpful way, instead of just delivering information and thinking my job is finished.

The interviews revealed helpful information from four participating couples. Recording the answers in all four interviews would only tend to add pages to this work that are not in themselves very helpful. In examining the interviewees' responses, several themes emerged in which two or more couples were offering the same answers to a given question. These emerging themes are related below.

Question 1: How focused on intentional discipleship were you before taking the parent discipleship classes?

Two families were somewhat intentional before the classes, being especially focused on spiritual conversations and being consistent in the "small things" like prayers before school, dinner, and bedtime; however, neither of them had been recently consistent in intentional family worship and Bible study. The other two families had more of a general notion that family discipleship should take place, but they needed it to be put in the forefront of their minds and be given encouragement and training to become faithful.

Question 2: How have the classes and encouragement helped you be more intentional?

Each of the four families said the classes helped them be more intentional. One family has begun to have their children daily memorize a new Scripture verse(s) and study the Bible more. Two families now see a shape and form to family worship that used to be more nebulous in their minds, causing lack of confidence. Now they believe that family worship is very doable, especially with practice, and it can be simple and short. Two of the men mentioned that now they understand that they are most responsible for the spiritual leadership of their families.

Question 3: What Bible passage or passages really helped you understand your responsibility to disciple your children?

All of the families thought Deuteronomy 6:4-9 was helpful in causing them to understand the importance of placing God-consciousness in conversations and events

throughout the day. Other passages were mentioned, but Deuteronomy 6 seemed to have made the most impact.

Question 4: What practical suggestion(s) were given that better helped you understand how to disciple your children effectively?

The practical suggestion most commonly mentioned by the four parents was that devotions should happen often, but they do not have to be long. Keeping it brief will help avoid exasperation and promote enjoyment.

Question 5: What are the biggest obstacles to intentional parent discipleship that you have identified by means of the course or through recent reflection?

Several of the issues that parents mentioned as being obstacles to intentional parent discipleship were busyness of lives that makes it hard to have meaningful dinner times, difficulties or lack of commitment in relationship with God or spouse, and figuring out how to tailor devotions to the age and interest of their children, while knowing how to respond when their children balk at family worship.

Question 6: How are you planning to overcome these obstacles?

One family said they were not terribly confident in leading family worship because of their lack of Bible knowledge, so they are planning to read the entire Bible—something they have not done before. Another family has decided that they want to start with Sunday night Bible study and try to be successful with that before they start attempting other days. Another family who was not interviewed but shared during class said somewhat the same thing, but they will make it three days a week, which is, to the best of their schedules, what they can do. Another interviewed family identified the importance of considering schedules and making family worship a priority. Lastly, one parent said it was very important that marital dissension needs to be fixed before they can be unified in the discipleship of their children.

Question 7: Are you and your spouse on the same page when it comes to commitment and application of parent discipleship principles in your home?

All four families gave an unqualified affirmation. Most gratifying, though, was one couple who said that because of the classes, they are now unified for the task of being intentional in family discipleship.

Question 8: Have there been any obstacles to marital unity in the shared goal of parent discipleship?

Not that this involves an obstacle, but two wives report that they sometimes need to let their husbands know they are becoming too long-winded in family worship or hot-headed when reacting to poor behavior of children. These husbands recognize the invaluable help their wives provide in helping them not exasperate their children in these ways. Another wife said something similar but confessed that she can sometimes be judgmental and needs to be more encouraging than discouraging, especially because her husband is somewhat new to leading family worship.

Question 9: How do you plan to address these obstacles to promote parent discipleship?

Like answers from other questions, families identified starting slowly into family worship, one day a week, with a hope to increase over time. Also, one father mentioned a need to study the Bible more himself, so he can confidently teach his own family.

Question 10: How can I as a shepherd best continue to remind and encourage you in your responsibility to faithfully disciple your children?

This was the most precious question to broach with the interviewees and made me feel blessed to have a hand in shepherding God's precious sheep. Each of the families asked me to ask them once a month how things are going in family discipleship. They all wanted this accountability. One encouraged me to give a truncated version of the material I taught once a year as either a refresher or as new spiritual food for untrained parents. Finally, two parents said that weekly emails that rehearse what their children are learning in Sunday School, with suggested Bible readings for further study and any other material that encourages parents to interact with their children about the Bible are a blessing. This response gave me renewed encouragement to keep sending them, with the knowledge that they are bearing fruit.

Strengths of the Project

The project had several strengths. The first strength was that the project filled a definite need among parents for the kinds of lessons taught; certainly, the statistical data bears that out. Also, several families commented on how appreciative they were for what they had learned about family discipleship, both biblically and practically. One kind of couple were those more mature and educated in the Christian life, and while they learned some new concepts and practices, they said that their main appreciation was that it was a jolt in the arm to do what they knew they should have been doing but had neglected. New ways of looking at the issue will help them go about family discipleship principles in new and fresh ways, but the main blessing was putting it into the forefront of their minds. The other kind of couple was not as knowledgeable about their duties and how to go about them. They had vague notions, but they really needed someone to teach them and give them confidence that it can be done.

The second strength involved the various things done to get couples to the lessons. Covenant Fellowship has a spotty track record involving coming en masse to midweek studies, so I strategized how to ensure, prayerfully, that there would be a good turnout. I emailed several times leading up to the event to stress both the blessing they would receive in attending the classes and how they would be a blessing to me by attending, since I needed a certain number of participants to ensure the success of my capstone project for my doctoral work. Next, I asked people face-to-face at church. Third, I told them that there would be food and babysitting to help relieve the stress that comes from making these kinds of decisions that might involving rushing around after work or not having a good enough babysitting option to meet the families' needs. I must give anonymous credit to a friend at the church who also personally emailed everyone to encourage them. That showed a lot of care, and I would not doubt if one or two extra families came because of his appeal.

A third strength was the time given in each class for participants to discuss with a partner, and then sometimes with the class, what they were learning, how they

were putting it into practice, and/or what they were struggling with in the implementation of family discipleship. There were times when their struggles piggybacked into opportunities for clarification. I hoped I had given a good balance in my lessons between painting family devotions as an ideal daily activity versus the reality that some days will be almost impossible to pull off. One family shared that they were overwhelmed with the idea and were going to seek family worship on the Lord's Day and try to establish that first. Then they might be able to add more. Another family said they believed they could have meaningful family worship three times a week, with two being on the weekends. I am glad they were able to share this because I wanted everyone to start reasonably instead of trying to have daily worship and feel like a failure if it did not work out immediately. I hope the participants can build on these foundations, find success, and then they might move into daily family worship.

Similarly, a fourth strength was homework assigned. I gave homework for things like personal devotions, planning for family worship, having family worship, and seeking to find God moments throughout the day as they might present themselves to someone who has a discerning and expectant heart. Classmates knew that they would be partnered with someone at the beginning of every week to discuss how their homework went, which helped each of the class members to reflect and gave good peer pressure, knowing that there would be accountability.

A fifth strength was the books I made available for parents to peruse, as well as the many recommendations in the notes. I was sure that parents would want recommendations, so I gave them readily.

A sixth strength involved highlighting the roles of husband and wife in the discipleship of their children. Like many conservative, evangelical Christians, I believe that the father is ultimately responsible for discipleship, and it is important that men feel the weight of that responsibility, since some often shirk this responsibility or let their wives deal with these matters. I am also glad that I was able to add a component to help

women see their role biblically, and to embrace it. They need to be ready to help and encourage their husband's efforts with a good attitude, while being ready to give advice and help as needed. They also should be ready to lead when their husbands truly cannot do so. I was also pleased with the marriage component of the teaching, which made it clear that their relationship spoke volumes about the gospel and about Christian love and commitment.

The seventh strength was the ability through Google Classroom to livestream and archive the messages so those who could not attend live would still be able to learn from the courses. I was also able to have a small number of pre- and post-surveys completed this way, as remote learners were instructed to fill out the survey before they began the first class and to take the post-survey only after seeing each of the segments. They were given instructions about how to fill out the survey correctly.

An eighth and last strength was the follow up, in the form of emails and interviews. I sent an email in the middle of each week to remind parents about what they had been learning and what they were hopefully being committed to that week. The interviews were also a great way to get more connected with the thinking, struggles, and aspirations of each couple. I was happy at the end that each couple welcomed me to ask once a month how their family discipleship efforts are going.

Weaknesses of the Project

There were also some weaknesses in the project. One more week would have been ideal because lesson 4, especially, should have been cut into two, giving more time for discussions, role playing, and video watching, as we were able to see and experience family worship in action.

The second weakness is related. I should have included video representations of family worship that were more instructive, showing best and worst practices. Though I did, for a few minutes, enact devotions with the class as my make-believe family, videos would have been more effective.

The third weakness is that I should have provided free copies of some of the best family devotion guides so that couples had them in their hands and could have acted them out in that extra week of teaching lesson 4. Giving them resources and then having them interact with them and feel comfortable before trying them with their children may have made a big difference in initial success and confidence.

Finally, a fourth weakness was something I could not help. I had influenza several days before the first class, and its effects made it difficult to deliver the material between coughing, gasping for breath, and taking draughts of cough suppressant. Everyone was very kind and said they could hear well and were not distracted by my malady. This was confirmed by the bodily present class each lesson, and I was also grateful to have several students who watched online say that they could hear everything well and that they thought my voice was strong. I was amazed and gave God the credit. Relatedly, online students also commented that they liked how I addressed them sometimes, which made them feel even more of an important part of the class.

What I Would Do Differently

At the risk of some redundancies from the strengths and weaknesses written above, there are several things I would have done differently. First, I would like to have split lesson 4 into two parts and employed more videos to give the couples positive role modeling, while being shown practices to avoid. This extra lesson could also have given participants mock practice sessions in which they could get their feet wet before trying it out on their children.

Second, I would have brought more resources for parents to feel and thumb through, while having several available for free, as a gift from the church to those ready to make use of the wonderful resources available.

Third, I would have liked to change the pre-survey/post-survey. I would cut out many of the questions and have only those that could measure improvement based on the lessons taught. Also, every question considered should have been in a Likert Scale

model, with one point being given to “strongly disagree” and six points being given to the response “strongly agree.” Some of the questions were not useful because of the way they would naturally be scored and the fact that their answers were the opposite of the Likert Scale model mentioned.

Theological Reflections

The purpose of this project was to equip parents to be intentional in the discipleship of their children. Men are ultimately responsible to be priests of their families, but wives should be included in the classes because their partnership is crucial. The following theological reflections guided this project.

First, both parents are responsible for the discipleship of their children. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 reveals the importance of parent’s love for God, coupled with a commitment to study His Word. They should be feeding their own souls daily and coming together to pray, as well. When they are full of love of God and His Word, they can do an admirable job teaching God’s principles directly from the Scriptures, as well as referring to His will and ways as they apply to the warp and woof of life. They are to help their children see God’s role in the mundane and special events of life.

Second, the husband, according to Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:4, 1 Corinthians 11:1-3, and Job 1 is ultimately responsible for the spiritual focus of the home, so he must take his role seriously and not abdicate it to his wife. Some men are lazy or fearful and gladly let their wives fill the void that they leave. It is important for men to be confronted with their responsibilities and made accountable to follow through. This will take thought, commitment, and time away from the “man cave” or workaholism, but it must be done.

Third, Ephesians 5:22-32 reveals that the marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and His church, and so it is a means of revealing the gospel. However, it is only helpful in painting Christ in the right light if the husband is a loving and self-sacrificing man. First Corinthians 14:35 intimates that a man should be ready to answer

his wife's questions about spiritual questions, so it behooves him to be well studied so he can do this wisely. Similarly, the role of the church in response to the gospel is only rightly displayed if the wife is submissive and helpful, desiring to bless her husband with help that he desperately needs, and she uniquely possesses, as she complements her husband.

Fourth, the church must take up its role in the correct way. The church is not the chief agent of discipleship for children. It can rightly offer instruction and other spiritually enriching activities for children, but parents are responsible for training their children in the ways of the Lord (Eph 6:4). However, the church also is charged with training up church members in the ways of God, which includes biblical parenting. Church leaders must make as one of their goals the transformation of parents into intentional discipleship makers. They are parents' helpers, equipping them for their important parenting tasks.

Personal Reflections

I am grateful to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for providing an opportunity to create this project, which was so useful in my maturation as a pastor. This project helped me see my ministry in a brand new light and made it obvious one way that I could influence the parents of the church. It is much easier just to focus on teaching children, but it should not end with that. While ministering to their children, I am being given an opening to reach those children's parents. My ministry to the children is much more likely to meet with real fruit if I spend meaningful time each week reaching out to those children's parents. Those parents are the ones who have them seven days a week, and they will stand before God more than anyone else for their stewardship of the eternal resource with which they have been entrusted. The more effort I put into helping parents see their responsibilities, as well as the power of the gospel and the Spirit's work, the better I ensure blessing on the next generation, by God's grace.

Parents desire good for their children, but they sometimes lack focus and direction. The world screams to them that their children should be talented at academics,

sports, etc., but it will never point out the “one thing (most) needful” (Luke 10:42), namely spiritual pursuits. Parents need to be reminded of eternal rewards and how they outstrip a crown of laurel. They also must be instructed in how to lead their children in the ways of the Lord. They pick up bits here and there, but they should be given a clear declaration of their duty before God, coupled with a useful road map of how to get started and how to continue. This instruction should be augmented by prayer, reminders, and counsel because it is often bewildering and frustrating being a parent, especially with resistant children. As a pastor I need to make myself available, as well as ask pointed questions so I can give advice and know how to pray more effectively.

At this stage of my life, with children grown, I am happy to be able to say that I was reasonably faithful in family discipleship. While there were some failures, there were also, by God’s grace, successes, and I am so grateful that my two daughters are serving the Lord. I am grateful to have successes and failures as a resource to share with parents. It is important to share both successes and failures because life is real, and a fake spirituality that does not allow others to benefit from my regrets is a foolish façade.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to equip Christian parents who entrust their children to the educational ministry of Covenant Fellowship Church of West Orange, New Jersey, to be more faithful and intentional concerning the discipleship of their children. The purpose of the project was successfully attained, and all four goals of the project were successfully accomplished.

In chapter 1, the needs of the church for more instruction in Christian family discipleship were made clear. Chapter 2 examined the multiplicity of passages that revealed a familial worship maintained before Sinai. Then Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 78:1-8, and Ephesians 6:1-4 were studied in more depth, to establish the role of parents in the discipleship, as well as particularly the father as the head of the family who is most responsible for its implementation. The chapter also explored Ephesians 5:22-32 to

establish the importance of a biblical marriage in the discipleship of children. Chapter 3 laid the groundwork for theoretical and practical issues related to parental discipleship, including the relationship of husbands and wives. Chapter 4 described the project and what was done in each of the many weeks of the project to bring it to fruition. Finally, this chapter included the project purpose, goals, strengths, weaknesses, things that could have been done differently, theological reflections, and personal reflections.

The project fulfilled its purpose of equipping parents of Covenant Fellowship Church of West Orange, New Jersey, to be intentional in how they disciple their children. The initial feedback was excellent both anecdotally and by means of the surveys. Follow up through interviews was encouraging as well, with the request by all four families that I follow up with them once a month to provide accountability and encouragement in the discipleship of their families. I will also be highlighting these principles with all the families I send weekly emails to (those whose children I currently minister to or have in the past), which is most of the families in the church. I am currently talking to leadership about the possibility of having a condensed version of this taught yearly, to remind those who are already know and to instruct those who are new to these principles. By God's grace, this focus will not be a flash in the pan, but will be used by God for a great many years to come for the eternal well-being of all involved.

APPENDIX 1

BASICS OF BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP INVENTORY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of practices and perceptions of the participant in the area of leading children in biblical discipleship at home.¹ This research is being conducted by Bradley B. Boyette 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.

Personal Identification Number: _____ (Please use a four-digit number)

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

¹ Many questions and wording were taken from a thesis on a similar topic written by Bradley Bruton Boyette, "Equipping Fathers at Parkridge Baptist Church in Coral Springs, Florida, to Lead in the Discipleship of Their Children" (D.Ed.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017). He said he was indebted for the formation of his survey to the assistance of the work of Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 202-3. All rights reserved, used by Boyette's written permission.

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

Part 2

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

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 very 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 easily 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 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 know the areas in which my believing children are struggling in their sanctification.
SD D DS AS A SA

33. I spend time encouraging my wife's spiritual walk.
SD D DS AS A SA
34. I encourage my children to spend time reading the Bible and praying.
SD D DS AS A SA
35. 35. I use everyday situations as opportunities to instruct my children with biblical principles.
SD D DS AS A SA
36. 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
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

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.
Nick Scotten

APPENDIX 2

TEACHER'S LESSONS FOR "E-6 DADS HELPED BY E-5 MOMS"

Lesson 1: A Call to Personal Commitment to Growing in Christ

*Thank you for taking part in these classes on family discipleship!

*You are helping me complete a portion of my doctoral studies, and you are also helping yourself. There is no more important job you have on the earth than being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ personally, and then making disciples, following the Great Commission. And what people are you responsible to make disciples of? Many can be named, and, oh, how I hope you will be faithful to share the Gospel with many people. However, your most important mission field for discipleship is your own family. What if you became rich and respected in your profession, but poor and ashamed when it came to your commitment to God and your stewardship of your role in shaping the souls of your children. After all, what kinds of things do you think you will have to answer for when you stand before the Judgment Throne of God—your riches that perish, or your riches that are eternal? What kind of respect do you think will matter in eternity, the level of respect you had in your profession, or the level of respect God can accord your commitment to Him personally and to rearing up your children to be His followers?

*Before I teach you anything else, I ask that you fill out a pre-survey to give me a baseline with regards to your spiritual life, knowledge, and family discipleship.

SURVEY EXPLANATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

I ask that you fill out a survey, honestly evaluating what is true about where you are now concerning many questions about your spiritual life, knowledge of what the Bible says about family discipleship, and how active you are in the discipleship of your family. Your name will not be asked, and you will just write a three-digit (or longer) number on the top of the form. Make sure it is a number that you can write later when you take a post-survey. You could pick your birthday, your street number, your zip code, or whatever you think you will remember. I will not be doing detective work to figure out who you are! I will not look at your individual answers to this survey, so please be very candid. You will fill out a survey at the end of this course that will ask the same questions. The only thing that will be done is to compare your first, pre-survey with your post-survey as a group, to ascertain what level of growth you as a group experienced based on the

lessons. I will not be interested in the level of growth one individual experienced, for confidentiality's sake, but rather what the average was.

GIVE TIME TO FILL OUT THE SURVEY (15 MINUTES)

PASS OUT NOTES WITH BLANKS TO FILL OUT, SO STUDENTS CAN ENGAGE THEIR EYES AND HANDS AS WELL AS THEIR EARS

This series of classes is focused on parents discipling their own children to be followers of Christ. I want to let you know an overview of this course so you can know where we are going:

1. We are first going to discuss how important it is to be true and committed disciples ourselves, or our attempts to disciple our children will be unsuccessful.
2. Secondly, we are going to see important passages that show us God's command for us to disciple our own children.
3. Thirdly, we will discuss two aspects of family discipleship:
 - a. Having family worship, and how to do that.
 - b. How to point our children to Christ in everyday life.
4. We will then see that God especially commands fathers that the buck stops with them as to the ultimate responsibility of leading their families in following Christ.
5. Then we will discuss how a healthy marriage portrays the Gospel and creates a good team that can rightly disciple children.
6. Finally, we will see how this focus on family discipleship has been with the church since its earlier days, and we do well to learn from those who followed Christ before us and be inspired by them, knowing that we are not strange fanatics if we become faithful disciplers of our children, but are just being obedient to Scripture and imitating godly people who have gone on before us and left a good example.

One of the key biblical texts concerning this important topic is **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.¹

There are three parts of this passage I want to focus on: Personal growth and discipling your children.

¹ English Standard Version was used in the majority of cases for notes for the lessons.

- 1) You are to know God and love Him with **all** your being.
- 2) You are to strive to **pass this love** on to your children by diligently teaching them in word and deed, whether by focused times of explicitly teaching from the Bible, or implicitly, by referring to God, His character, and commandments as they apply to the special or mundane events of life.
- 3) Your **modeling** of Christ-likeness, which can teach your children more than just your words.

What are family discipleship and family worship?

*Family **discipleship**.* Family discipleship is the overarching term and involves “parents...engag(ing) actively in their children’s spiritual development,”² whether in “planned discipleship processes,” such as “family devotional times,” or “spontaneous spiritual conversations,” to “shape the souls of children.”³

*Family **worship**.* That element of family discipleship which involves “formal training”⁴ through “a regular time of pulling the family together” (family devotions) for learning the Word of God, praying, and/or employing other means of grace for spiritual growth. This is also called “the family altar,” “family devotions,” or “faith talks.”⁵

- 3) We will deal with the first issue in our first lesson: Loving and knowing God with all our being.

LESSON AIM: YOU ARE COMMANDED TO **GROW** IN YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND LOVE HIM WITH ALL YOUR BEING. IF YOU ARE NOT ACTIVELY DOING THAT, YOUR ATTEMPTS AT DISCIPLESHIP OF YOUR CHILDREN WILL LIKELY BE SERIOUSLY LACKING.

- I. Are you a child of God?
 - A. Have you truly **repented** of your sins? Do you have a holy hatred for sin that accepts God’s view of sin and turns away from it, or do you have a rebellious heart that insists on deciding for yourself what you

² Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011), 26.

³ Ibid., 25.

⁴ Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 195.

⁵ Ibid., 87.

want to do? Acts 3:19: “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out...”

- B. Are you putting your **faith** in Christ as your only Savior and Lord- Eph. 2:8-9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Are you trusting only in Christ’s death for you on the cross and not in your own ability to be good enough to earn God’s favor?
 - C. I don’t ask this because I think any of you tonight are outside of Christ, but just in case anyone needed to hear that message because it is not truly real in your heart yet. All that I teach after this is built on your first being truly a believer yourself.
- II. Personal spiritual growth occurs when a Christian seeks to grow in his or her love for Christ. The discipleship of your family is doomed to failure if you are not first growing in Christ **yourself**.
- A. Importance of Parents’ Personal Discipleship Commitment
 - 1. Luke 6:40: “A disciple (a learner; in this case, your child) is not above his teacher (you, as the parent), but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”
 - a. You need to be a godly teacher for your children to pattern themselves after.
 - b. Where you are godly, they have a powerful **example** to imitate.
 - c. Where you are ungodly, they have an equally powerful example in the wrong direction.
 - B. Christian writers on family discipleship make a scary observation. Ask yourself whether this is true in your case: “The greatest obstacle parents have to overcome in leading their children spiritually is their own **mediocre** or morbidly religious relationship with God accompanied by a juvenile understanding of His Word...Many of us have never been truly disciplined ourselves.”⁶
 - 1. Another writer wrote, Christian families are meant to be “Gospel-empowered training bases for (spiritual) conflict,” equipping sons and daughters to do battle with forces that seek to destroy their souls.⁷
 - 2. If parents are not well-equipped themselves to knowledgeably and willfully do battle with evil, how will they teach their children?⁸

⁶ Brian Haynes, *The Legacy Path* (Nashville: Randall House, 2011), 17.

⁷ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

III. Are you currently and actively growing in Christ personally?

1. 2 Pet. 3:18: “But **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...”
2. I Tim. 4:12b-16: “Be an **example** to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading (the Bible), to exhortation, to doctrine...Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”
 - a. This is written by Paul to train Timothy, a church leader, how to actively grow in his own faith and knowledge so he can bless those whom he pastored.
 - b. This same kind of principle, however, can easily apply to parents, who give themselves wholeheartedly to their own growth in grace and are then, by word and example, able to lead their children in following Christ.
 - c. Again, listen to these words as a parent: Meditate on the things of God; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the teachings from God’s Word. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”
 - d. We know that only God can save, but Timothy is told that his faithfulness as a pastor will save those who are taught by him. To the extent that a faithful pastor’s teaching and life can lead others to eternal life, by God’s grace, even so I think it is a faithful analogy that a faithful parent’s teaching and life can lead his/her children to eternal life. I believe this is a general promise, like that of the Proverbs, that doesn’t always come to pass, but it is a principle on which to see God’s general working in the lives of families, and one that should bring great seriousness and Judgment Day earnestness to our discipleship of our children.

QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE BASIC MEANS OF GRACE THAT WILL HELP YOU GROW IN CHRIST?

ENTERTAIN ANSWERS...

3. The basics: prayer, Bible study and meditation, faithful attendance at church, and striving after holiness
 - a. Prayer: What is your **prayer** life like?

- (1) I Thess. 5:17: “Pray without ceasing”—an ongoing communion with God, lifting up praise, confession, thanks, and requests throughout the day.
- (2) Phil. 4:6-7: “Do not be anxious about anything, (STOP YOUR WORRYING!) but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”
- (3) Mt. 6:6: “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”
 - (a) While the other two verses focus on a heart attitude that prays to God throughout the day, here is a command that you get alone with your Heavenly Father for special times of prayer; in my opinion, at least once a day.
 - (b) Have a devoted, focused, uninterrupted time with Him alone.
 - (c) Avoid anything or anyone being a distraction. This may be hard with young children, and there may be days you can’t. Perhaps the best time is before they wake up, or it might be when you put them to bed. Try to carve out time, as best you can, while knowing that God knows your heart and your effort, even if your performance is occasionally impossible to happen!
 - (d) Recommendation: Prayer list

b. The **Bible**

- (1) Josh. 1:8: Joshua is taking over after Moses, and God is telling him how he will successfully take up his mentor, Moses’, mantle: “This Book of the Law (THE BIBLE) shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” Careful reading is commanded, that includes meditating and focusing on how to apply it obediently to daily life.
- (2) Job 23:12: “I have not departed from the commandment of (God’s) lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.” Some might find that it is helpful to say: “Before I eat breakfast, I will eat the words of God because they are more important nourishment.”
- (3) A prayer that might be prayed before you read the Word—Ps. 119:18: “(Father), open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”

c. Faithful attendance at **church**

- (1) Ps. 122:1: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’”
 - (a) Our attitude about going to church should be happiness and eagerness.
 - (b) It is a place where we meet with God’s people, sing and pray, get fed the Word of God, and partake of the Lord’s Supper monthly.
 - (2) Heb. 10:24-25: “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not **neglecting** to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”
 - (a) It is in church that we can stir one another to love and good works, not on our own.
 - (b) We are not to neglect to meet together in the ministries of the church, as is the habit of some.
 - (c) Some back in the first century were already getting in the habit of skipping church, but God commands us not to be like them, whose habits are not helping their souls.
 - (d) Imagine your boss telling you he or she expects you at an important meeting. Or perhaps you have an important meeting with a client which will enrich you. Will you blow those meetings off because you have something more important to do? Probably not. It would take some big impediment to keep you from advancing your career or your profit.
 - (e) So how much of an impediment keeps you from church? Is it more or less than what keeps you from advancing your career and money?
 - (f) Or moving to another thing that gets in the way: Are children’s (or adult’s) **sports** more important than God’s appointment with you? Is work? Is apathy or drowsiness? Is entertainment? Are your children’s coaches and instructors’ schedules more important than God’s? Please, if there is anyone who tries to impose on your schedule a conflict with God’s appointment with you at church, just say **no!**
 - (g) Your attitude toward church attendance on the Lord’s Day and other times will teach your children volumes about how important it really is.
- d. Striving after **holiness**; fighting sin and seeking to grow in your devotion to God

- (1) I Pet. 1:14-16: “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”
 - (a) In our condition of rebellion against God, we were conformed to obeying our sinful passions.
 - (b) But now our conduct must be conformed to holiness, as we seek to be more and more like our holy God and less and less like the world.
- (2) Phil. 4:8-9: Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things...”
 - (a) Crucial goal of having your mind actively filled with godly things and refusing to allow ungodly entertainment and other ungodly thoughts to fill your mind.
 - (b) The importance of hearing the words and noticing the lives of godly spiritual role models who will spur you on to higher levels of faithfulness.

IV. BREAKOUT SESSION: Discuss with your spouse or a neighbor in this class about two topics:

- A. One area already mentioned in which you want to thank God He has helped you grow, and how that growth is exemplified in your lives.
- B. One area already mentioned in which you desire to grow. Discuss specifically how you can make it happen, so that it is not just a nebulous concept, but becomes an action plan in your lives.

*GIVE FIVE MINUTES

IN THE NEXT LESSON, YOU WILL GET A CHANCE TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR SPOUSE OR A NEIGHBOR IN THE CLASS YOUR PROGRESS IN GROWTH IN CHRIST

HOMEWORK:

1. SEEK TO ACTIVELY GROW YOUR OWN SPIRITUAL LIFE THIS WEEK BY COMMITMENT TO PRAYER, BIBLE READING AND MEDITATION, FAITHFUL CHURCH ATTENDANCE, AND HOLINESS IN PUTTING OFF SIN AND PUTTING ON GOOD WORKS; BE READY TO DISCUSS YOUR FAITH JOURNEY NEXT WEEK WITH A PARTNER.

2. ALSO, PLEASE HAVE A NUMBER WITH YOU NEXT CLASS TO TALK TO YOUR PARTNER ABOUT: HOW MANY DAYS YOU SPENT A MEANINGFUL TIME ALONE WITH GOD IN PRAYER AND/OR BIBLE/DEVOTIONAL READING.
3. BEGIN THINKING ABOUT WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE AT YOUR HOUSE WITH YOUR FAMILY HAVING REGULAR FAMILY WORSHIP (OR “FAITH TALKS”) AND ALSO TAKING ADVANTAGE OF “GOD MOMENTS” WHEN YOU CAN POINT YOUR CHILDREN TO GOD OR HIS TRUTH IN THE SPECIAL AND/OR MUNDANE EVENTS OF LIFE.
4. THIS TYPE OF HOMEWORK AND ACCOUNTABILITY CAN EASILY SEEM LIKE AN EXTERNAL CHECK OFF LIST, SO PLEASE KEEP TWO THINGS IN MIND AS WE CLOSE:
 - a. SEEK TO HAVE WARM TIMES WITH GOD IN WHICH YOU ENJOY HIS PRESENCE AND APPRECIATE HIS GRACE FOR YOU IN CHRIST.
 - b. KNOW THAT YOU CANNOT HAVE MEANINGFUL WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE WITHOUT HIS SPIRIT’S HELP, SO ASK FOR IT AND CONFESS THAT YOU ARE COLD AND FORMALISTIC UNLESS HE WARMS YOUR HEART AND HELPS YOU SEE GREAT VALUE IN HIMSELF.

Lesson 2: Family Discipleship, Especially the Responsibility of Fathers

REVIEW:

1. Deuteronomy 6 teaches our duty to love God with our whole being.
2. We can grow in the grace and knowledge of God by faithfully employing the means of grace God has given us for this purpose, including:
 - a. Having a vibrant prayer life that includes solitary times devoted to prayer and also an attitude of prayer and communion that finds us speaking to God throughout the day.
 - b. Reading the Scriptures faithfully each day.
 - c. Prioritizing church and community group attendance, especially on the Lord's Day, but also being eager to join in other ministries of the church on other days of the week, as well as we can.
 - d. Seeking to grow in holiness, as we put off ungodly actions and thoughts and actively put on good works and meditate on what is praiseworthy.

BREAKOUT:

1. Get with a partner and discuss how your week in seeking to grow in holiness went. Discuss how many times this week you had a meaningful time with God in meaningful prayer and/or reading of the Bible. Also discuss any other issues concerning growth in grace that you feel comfortable talking about.
2. Also discuss with a partner if you had any thoughts about what family worship looks like, or can look like, if you prioritize it in the home.

LESSON AIMS:

1. YOU ARE TO STRIVE TO PASS YOUR LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD ON TO YOUR CHILDREN BY DILIGENTLY TEACHING IN WORD AND DEED, WHETHER BY FOCUSED TIMES OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION, OR BY VIGILANTLY REFERRING TO GOD, HIS CHARACTER, AND HIS COMMANDMENTS AS THEY APPLY TO THE SPECIAL AND/OR MUNDANE EVENTS OF LIFE.
2. THE WORK OF DISCIPLESHIP FINDS ITS ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE FATHER/HUSBAND OF THE FAMILY, ESPECIALLY IN FAMILY WORSHIP.

PASS OUT NOTES TO BE FILLED IN, WHILE LISTENING

- I. Deut. 6:6-9: "You shall teach them (the Scriptures) diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your

eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

- A. Parents are to tap into that fullness of knowledge and love they cultivate personally in their own lives and then diligently train their children in these ways.
- B. This diligence will find you actively seeking to **shine** the light of God’s Word in any situation you and your children find yourselves.
 - a. You parents are commanded to teach the Word of God and its truth in special times dedicated to explicit instruction.
 - b. You must also seek to take principles of God’s Word and relate them through conversation to your children, regarding the special and/or mundane events of life.
 - c. Involving your children with you in acts of service to advance the kingdom of Christ is a powerful way of discipling your children, since actions often speak much louder than mere words.

II. Another key passage in the Old Testament concerning family discipleship is Psalm 78:1-8: “Give ear, O my people, *to* my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide *them* from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know *them*, the children *who* would be born, *that* they may arise and declare *them* to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation *that* did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.

A. One commentator summarizes this psalm as “The Story That Needs Passing On,”⁹ and another titles it, “So the Next Generation Will Know.”¹⁰

- 1. The psalmist shows explicitly the generational bent of his teaching.

⁹ John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol. 2, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 700.

¹⁰ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 289.

2. A deposit of God’s truth has been given to his generation from their fathers (or even ancestors),¹¹ and now it is to be passed on to the next generation.
 3. That which is to be transferred is not just explicit commands, but a retelling of the glory of God and His works among His people.¹²
 4. Their fathers are to pass this information on, and this emphasizes the point that **parents** are crucial in their children’s discipleship.
- B. Much of the first several verses of Psalm 78 has been positive, telling parents to pass on God’s Word to their children, but there is also a warning that parental instruction must include.¹³
1. Discipleship must help children see the errors others have made so they may reject them, while observing modeling of godly behavior, wedded with teaching, which will “encourage loyalty and obedience.”¹⁴
 2. Children must be shown instances of Israel foolishly placing their “confidence” in impotent and foolish people and groups, instead of “setting their hope” in the Lord.¹⁵
 3. In a more contemporary application, parents should **expose** ungodliness and anti-biblical philosophies, so that children will understand there is right and wrong, and they might learn to evaluate what they see and hear according to the Word of God.
- III. KEY PARENTAL DISCIPLESHIP PASSAGES TEACH THAT FATHERS ESPECIALLY ARE CHARGED WITH LEADING THE DISCIPLESHIP OF THEIR CHILDREN.

- A. Psalm 78:3-8: As we read this passage again, focus on the role of **fathers** in the discipleship of their children:

Our **fathers** have told us.

⁴We will not hide *them* from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

¹¹ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 719.

¹² Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1877), 2:364.

¹³ Nancy L. DeClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), “Ps 78:8,” e-book.

¹⁴ Longman, *Psalms*, 290.

¹⁵ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 721.

⁵ For He established a testimony in Jacob,
 And appointed a law in Israel,
 Which He commanded our **fathers**,
 That they should make them known to their children;
⁶ That the generation to come might know *them*,
 The children *who* would be born,
That they may arise and declare *them* to their children...
 We already looked at this passage, but I want to notice the focus on fathers
 in this discipleship passage.

1. Fathers were charged to teach the Bible to their children. Does that mean that mothers have nothing to do with it? Of course not! But fathers are here the focal point of responsibility. Men need to be confronted with responsibility, or they will often shirk it, so men, this is part of the case toward your responsibility!
 2. In verse eight, though men and women were no doubt rebellious, fathers were held responsible for stubbornness and rebellion against God, as representatives for the whole generation.
- B. Malachi has powerful passages about the importance of fathers with regard to marriages/children.
1. In Malachi 2, God decries the rampant divorce of Malachi's day and says that the goal of **godly offspring** is being put in jeopardy when men commit treachery against their wives by divorcing them (2:15-16).
 2. Then, in the last chapter of Malachi (4:5-6): Repentance will involve fathers turning their **hearts** again to their children, and vice versa. Fathers, are your hearts turned toward your children, or are they turned toward workaholicism and retreating to your man cave?
 3. Story told about Stephen Paxson of the hog farmer knowing the number of his hogs, but not the number of his children.
- C. Joshua 24:15: Joshua says that as the father and husband of the home, he declares that while he cannot control others' homes, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
- D. Genesis 18:19: God says of Abraham that He has "chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice..."
- E. Job 1:5: Job, as the **priest** of his family, would regularly conduct worship with his children present, consecrating them and offering sacrifices for them.
- F. Ephesians 6 teaches the role of fathers in the discipleship of their children:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: ³ "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."⁴ And you,

fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

1. Our main focus will be on fathers, but it is important to start with the first command—for children to obey both father and mother.
 - a. This is the right thing for them to do.
 - b. It is a commandment that brings a promise of wellness and longevity to children's lives. Children should get in the habit of obedience because it is right, but it is important to reward them sometimes, so you can encourage them. Often, this is verbally, but it can certainly go beyond that, as long as your children don't just become like Pavlovian dogs who only respond because there is a treat on the other side of obedience.
 - c. Children must **obey** both father and mother.
 - (1) Mothers, fathers—Are you okay if your children only obey you, if they don't respect or obey your spouse?
 - (2) Or do you undercut the authority of your spouse?
 - (3) Wives, do you uphold the will of your husband for your family when he is not at home, or do you do whatever you want when he is not there and make that clear to your children?
 - (4) Men, are you upholding the authority of your wife by backing her up when need be, especially when a firmer hand that might include serious discussions and spanking sometimes is needed?
 - d. Parents must inculcate an ethos of obedience in children from the very earliest ages that is rendered immediately, sweetly, and **completely**. Parents do their children and themselves a great hurt when they indulge their children and allow backtalk, sullenness, and incomplete obedience.
 - (1) I have been ministering to children and their families in Christian schools and/or church for almost three decades.
 - (2) Usually, obedient children in school and church come from parents who require it at home. Usually, poorly behaved children come from parents who are not doing a good job requiring obedience at home. There are exceptions, but this is a general pattern that cannot be denied. Your children need to love you and fear you—just as our relationship should be to God. This fear is not hatred and terror, but the healthy respect you have toward anyone in authority whom you appreciate, but have a healthy respect that will not cross that person because you know it will not pay to cross him/her.
 - (3) Also, parents must model godly behavior themselves if they can expect their children to do so. Certainly by the time your children are pre-teens, they will see whether you are hypocrites or not. **Confess** your sins to your children when you do fail them, which will also provide a very meaningful portrayal of an honest, Christian life which is ready to confess when called for.

2. Fathers
 - a. Of course, mothers are important in this relationship, but Paul here focuses on the fathers because they are ultimately responsible for their families but might be more likely than mothers to abdicate and ignore that responsibility, often being distracted by jobs or recreation.
 - b. They are to bring children up in the **nurture and admonition** of the Lord.
 - (1) Nurture is best rendered “discipline.”
 - (a) It takes on pleasant aspects such as instruction.
 - (b) It can also involve unpleasant tasks such as correction and chastening.
 - (2) Admonition is the other noun that describes the work of fathers. They are to add seriousness to obedience by warning their children of consequences for disobedience.
 - c. However, fathers need to make sure not to **provoke** their children to wrath.
 - (1) They must not wield the authority they have over children in a “manner that (is) inconsiderate, disrespectful, or self-serving.”¹⁶ Women are often more considerate of their children’s feelings, and men must learn to do that more.
 - (2) Fathers must not use severe treatment that prejudices a situation before learning all the facts,¹⁷ that tends to make children angry and disheartened. Just think of how Jacob’s favoritism for Joseph led to other sons having jealousy and finally murder in their hearts.
 - (3) Fathers must hoe a wise middle ground, neither lenient nor despotic.¹⁸
 - (a) Not **lenient**: Don’t be a pushover; say what you mean, and mean to **enforce** what you say. Children need boundaries and the assurance that what you command, you will check on and expect, or there will be consequences. Do your children know to treat your words to them with respect because you will inspect what you say you expect? Do they?
 - (b) However, not **despotic**: Don’t bark out orders or ignore the weaknesses of your children. Consider their age and immaturity and understand that your Heavenly Father is patient and **gentle** with you in your many sins.

¹⁶ Peter S. Williamson, *Ephesians*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 287.

¹⁷ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 401.

¹⁸ Richard Baxter, “Leading a Family for Christ,” in *A Theology of the Family*, ed. Jeff Pollard and Scott T. Brown (Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2014), 362.

HOMEWORK:

1. SEEK TO ACTIVELY GROW YOUR OWN SPIRITUAL LIFE THIS WEEK BY PRAYER, BIBLE, FAITHFUL CHURCH ATTENDANCE, AND HOLINESS IN PUTTING OFF SIN AND PUTTING ON GOOD WORKS.
2. PLEASE HAVE A NUMBER WITH YOU NEXT WEEK TO TALK TO YOUR PARTNER ABOUT: HOW MANY DAYS YOU SPENT AT LEAST FIVE MINUTES ALONE WITH GOD IN PRAYER AND/OR BIBLE/DEVOTIONAL READING. BE READY TO DISCUSS WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING. ALSO DISCUSS THE BLESSING OF FOCUSING ON DAILY FAITHFULNESS TO READ THE WORD OF GOD. LASTLY, DISCUSS ANY STRUGGLES THAT COME WITH THIS COMMITMENT TO DAILY DEVOTIONS.
3. THOUGH YOU WILL GET MORE INSTRUCTION ON FAMILY WORSHIP IN FUTURE LESSONS, PLEASE START THINKING ABOUT HOW YOU MIGHT START CONDUCTING IT, IF IT IS NOT YOUR REGULAR PRACTICE NOW. ALSO, SEEK TO LOOK FOR “GOD MOMENTS” WHEN YOU CAN POINT YOUR CHILDREN TO GOD, HIS WORD, AND/OR HIS MINDSET, AS YOU LOOK FOR CHANCES TO DO SO IN SPECIAL OR MUNDANE EVENTS OF LIFE.
4. HOW MANY OF YOU WOULD LIKE A COMPLIMENTARY DEVOTIONAL BOOK GIVEN TO YOU NEXT WEEK THAT YOU CAN FOLLOW, THAT WILL HELP YOU LEAD FAMILY WORSHIP?
5. THIS TYPE OF HOMEWORK AND ACCOUNTABILITY CAN EASILY SEEM LIKE AN EXTERNAL CHECK OFF LIST, SO PLEASE KEEP TWO THINGS IN MIND AS WE CLOSE:
 - a. SEEK TO HAVE WARM TIMES WITH GOD IN WHICH YOU ENJOY HIS PRESENCE AND APPRECIATE HIS GRACE FOR YOU IN CHRIST.
 - b. KNOW THAT YOU CANNOT HAVE MEANINGFUL WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE WITHOUT HIS SPIRIT’S HELP, SO ASK FOR IT.

Lesson 3: Marriage—Crucial Component of Discipleship

REVIEW:

1. **Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78** contain key passages about the importance of family discipleship.
They include a call for parents to pass on the faith to their children, both straight from the Bible and in conversations that present themselves in the special and mundane events of life.
*Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ps. 78:1-8.
2. Therefore, family discipleship, based on those two passages, has both a regular, hopefully daily, biblical teaching and worship aspect, and also an ongoing watchfulness for teaching opportunities that take advantage of the events of life to highlight truths about God and His Word.
3. Parents will not be effective at discipling their own children unless they are first growing through prayer, Bible, church participation, and pursuit of holiness in their own lives.

OVERVIEW:

1. Discuss with a partner how the week went as you sought to improve your personal commitment to God, including how many days you spent a meaningful time alone in prayer and/or the Bible or a devotional book.
2. Also, discuss what you believe God is calling you to do as the key agent of discipleship for your own children.
3. Review: Ephesians 6:1-4.
4. Examine the importance of a happy, healthy, and holy marriage relationship in the discipleship of your children from Ephesians 5:22-32, and other verses.

BREAKOUT SESSION:

Please take a short amount of time to discuss with your spouse or another partner how your devotional life went this week, including how many days you were able to devote to God a meaningful time on your own in prayer and reading the Word or devotional books. Also discuss what you believe God is calling you to do as the key agent of discipleship for your own children

GIVE FIVE MINUTES

Does anyone have a 10-15 second testimonial about how God has been working in you this week regarding personal or family devotion to God? Please keep it short and sweet.

LESSON AIMS:

1. HUSBANDS AND WIVES WILL VIEW THEIR MARRIAGES AS EVEN MORE VALUABLE BECAUSE OF HOW THEY REVEAL THE GOSPEL, IN THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.
2. HUSBANDS WILL APPRECIATE THEIR WIVES' PARTNERSHIP IN FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP.
3. WIVES WILL UNDERSTAND AND VALUE THEIR ROLE AS ASSISTANTS TO THEIR HUSBANDS' LEADERSHIP IN FAMILY WORSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP, WHILE BEING READY TO OVERTLY LEAD WHEN THEIR HUSBANDS ARE NOT ABLE TO.

PASS OUT NOTES TO BE FILLED IN, WHILE LISTENING

- I. Key NT Scripture to review: Ephesians 6:1-4
 - A. Children are to obey, and parents must give them strictness, while not **crushing** their spirits by being unfeeling and harsh.
 - B. Fathers are the focus of having the responsibility to lead their children in the ways of God.
 - C. The passage before this focuses on both fathers and mothers, in their roles of husbands and wives, and that relationship is crucial in successful discipleship.
- II. EPHESIANS 5:22-33 (AMONG OTHER PASSAGES) TEACHES THAT THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP IN THE HOME TEACHES A GREAT DEAL ABOUT WHAT THE RELATIONSHIP IS BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH, AND WHETHER THE GOSPEL IS WORTHY TO BE EMBRACED, OR NOT.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband.

- A. A husband and wife picture the relationship between Christ and the **church**.
- B. A husband/father pictures Christ and will either **portray** Christ well or paint Christ in a bad light.
1. The husband is the head of the family.
 2. He is not to use this leadership to serve himself, but to **serve** his wife.
 3. Love, nourish, and cherish are key verbs that describe how a godly husband acts toward his wife, and the more loving a man is to his wife, the more she and the children can see the love of Christ for His church.
 4. He is involved in the process of her sanctification and nourishment by means of teaching her the Word of God and helping her apply it to her life, as well as being a good example himself of obedience to Christ, so that she and the children might see a faithful picture of Christ. Discuss I Cor. 14:35: If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home.
 5. He is to value his wife; she, perhaps, like Priscilla (Acts 18:26), can explain the Gospel and show great insight into her own reading of the Word of God.
 6. He is also to value her as one who can be instrumental in the salvation and discipleship of their children, like Lois was to Eunice, and Eunice was to Paul's most faithful assistant, Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15).
- C. A wife is commanded to **submit** to her husband. This is not a popular position today, but it is clearly biblical. It is very important not to listen to the prophets of this world that tell women that they cannot possibly be happy unless they do whatever they want to do, no matter what their roles of wife and mother call for. Prophets of feminism call marriage slavery and say it must be abolished. However, we will see how a wife has a unique role in the family that can teach children a great deal about Christ's authority in your home.
1. "In everything," not just the things in which she feels like submitting, but everything.
 2. "As to the Lord," obeying him as she ought to obey Christ.
 3. If children see their mother **willfully** ignoring the leadership of their father, they are being taught that a Christian doesn't need to obey Christ either.
 4. A wife's submission should involve supporting a husband's attempts to lead his family in worship, with a good **attitude** and helpful demeanor.
 5. When she has a supportive attitude, it helps the children have a good attitude towards it, as well.
 6. A woman's role in the relationships of the home is crucial. She actually plays two roles in the family, and she is the only one who can. She is to be obeyed by her children on one hand, while obeying her husband on the other. If she follows Christ well in this balancing act, her life will be a double testimony to submission to God's will.

7. Wives, if you submit to your husband and require your children to do so as well, and your husband backs you up in love, your children are far more likely to obey you, too. HOWEVER, if you insist on being autonomous and self-willed, you will contribute to tearing apart your home and will do great damage to the success of the discipleship of your children.
8. Husbands, if you don't do your part in loving your wife, you are alienating the one who is your valuable partner in rearing your children for Christ.

D. Make sure your kids understand that your marital relationship means a lot.

1. Don't let your kids' demands force you to ignore one another.
2. Be **affectionate** with your spouse in front of your kids, in appropriate ways, and show through your attitudes to each other how Christ and the church love one another.
3. Allow your children sometimes to see how you arrive at decisions and how sometimes the Mom submits to Dad, or how Dad desires to bless Mom and bless her instead of doing what will please himself.
4. If there is **conflict** between you two, and it has become ugly in front of the kids, consider discussing it with them, when things are amicably resolved, using it as a teaching moment, which may include confession of sin and requesting forgiveness to spouse and/or children, as appropriate. Let your kids see how everyone is a sinner, but the Christian deals with it biblically.

III. Fathers, you are most responsible for the discipleship of both your wife and children, as their vigilant and diligent "priest, prophet, provider, and protector."¹⁹

A. You should conduct family worship as much as possible, and we will discuss in the next lesson about how to do so.

1. Do you have to be gone so long at work? Same question to you, wives, if you work outside the home?
2. Are you trying to be home with your family as much as possible?
 - (a) Are you trying to get home for **dinner** or be home on the weekends as much as you can? Or if dinner is absolutely impossible, are you trying to have breakfast and a time of devotions with your children before school? And if no other time is possible, are you there at bedtime to point them to Christ in the Word and through prayer before they go to bed?

¹⁹ Voddie Baucham, Jr., *Family Shepherds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 45.

- (b) It is difficult to balance a successful career with successful parenthood, but guess which one you will stand before God to answer for when you meet Him.
- (c) Everyone's situation is different, but I appreciated what one father in our church said recently. He said that one day he was at work and was going to work past dinner, but then he thought, "I don't need to do this project at my desk today, and if I get out of here, I can get home in time for dinner." That is the kind of thought I want you to have. Sometimes you won't be able to get home and be with your family to help lead worship and play with them and help your wife, as she is feeling exhausted. But when you can, please do so because your family needs you to be present. The same applies to the working mother.
- (d) Husbands, for your part, seriously **consider** the concerns and suggestions of your wives because they are often more in tune with how the children are feeling about how family worship or anything else in the family is going, and she is God's gift to you, as a helper to you to respectfully give you feedback that you desperately need to hear.

B. Wives, **support** your husbands' attempts at being the spiritual leader of your home.

- 1. When you think family worship, interactions, or discipline in the home should be going differently, please speak to your husband out of earshot of the kids, so that they don't get wind of discontent and play one parent against the other, and vice versa with husbands to wives.
- 2. Be ready to lead family worship when your husband is not present or not a Christian.

DISCUSSION: Talk with your spouse, or someone else if your spouse is not here, about how you and your spouse can work together to disciple your children.

GIVE FIVE MINUTES

SPEAK OUT! Who has something brief you would like to share about today's lesson and/or all that this series has been covering so far, that God is impressing on you?

REVIEW:

- 1. Dt. 6, Ps. 78, and Eph. 6 all contain important passages that command parents to be active in the discipleship of their children. Easiest to remember: Dt. 6 and Eph. 6: **D6 and E6.**
- 2. Ps. 78 and Eph. 5-6 also especially focus on the role of men as the leaders of their house being ultimately responsible for the discipleship of their wives and children. Men ought to, therefore, take this responsibility especially seriously, **intentionally** planning family worship and nurturing his relationship with his wife as his partner in this important endeavor.

3. Wives, according to Eph. 5 and other passages, you are expected by God to submit to your husband's authority, support his role in leading his family in discipleship, including worship, but being ready to lead when he is not able.

PREVIEW:

During the next lesson, we will discuss the who, what, when, and where of family worship and discipleship.

HOMEWORK:

1. KEEP TRACK OF YOUR PROGRESS IN FAITHFULNESS OF A MEANINGFUL TIME EACH DAY IN PRAYER AND/OR BIBLE/DEVOTIONAL BOOK AND BE READY TO SHARE THAT NEXT WEEK WITH A PARTNER, KNOWING THAT FEEDING YOUR OWN SOUL HAS MUCH TO DO WITH HOW YOU CAN FEED YOUR CHILDREN.
2. SEEK TO HAVE FAMILY WORSHIP AS MANY TIMES AS YOU CAN THIS WEEK, BEING READY TO SHARE WITH A PARTNER NEXT LESSON. ALSO BE READY TO DISCUSS WHAT IS WORKING WELL, WHAT IS A STRUGGLE, AND WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING IN THE PROCESS.
3. ALSO, KEEP TRACK OF TIMES WHEN YOU WERE ABLE TO HAVE "GOD MOMENTS," POINTING YOUR CHILDREN TO GOD IN THE SPECIAL OR MUNDANE AREAS OF LIFE.
4. THIS TYPE OF HOMEWORK AND ACCOUNTABILITY CAN EASILY SEEM LIKE AN EXTERNAL CHECK OFF LIST, SO PLEASE KEEP THESE THINGS IN MIND AS WE CLOSE:
 - a. SEEK TO HAVE WARM TIMES WITH GOD IN WHICH YOU ENJOY HIS PRESENCE AND APPRECIATE HIS GRACE FOR YOU IN CHRIST.
 - b. KNOW THAT YOU CANNOT HAVE MEANINGFUL WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE WITHOUT HIS SPIRIT'S HELP, SO ASK FOR IT AND CONFESS THAT YOU ARE COLD AND FORMALISTIC UNLESS HE WARMS YOUR HEART AND HELPS YOU SEE GREAT VALUE IN HIMSELF.
 - c. BATHE YOUR CHILDREN IN PRAYER, AND FOCUS ON THE GOSPEL WITH THEM. WHEN CONFRONTING SIN, POINT THEM TO THE CROSS. WHEN TALKING ABOUT SCRIPTURE, SEEK TO POINT OUT CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL WHENEVER YOU CAN. IF YOUR KIDS LEARN A BUNCH OF BIBLE STORIES AND MORALS BUT DON'T SEE CHRIST IN THEM, THE MAIN FOCUS HAS BEEN MISSED.

Lesson 4: The Who, What, When, and Where of Discipleship, and Especially Family Worship

REVIEW:

1. Dt. 6, Ps. 78, and Eph. 6 all contain important passages that command parents to be active in the discipleship of their children. Easiest to remember: Dt. 6 and Eph. 6, **D6 and E6.**
2. Ps. 78 and Eph. 5-6 also especially focus on the role of men as the leaders of their house being ultimately responsible for the discipleship of their wives and children. Men ought to therefore take this responsibility especially seriously, intentionally planning family worship and nurturing his relationship with his wife as his partner in this important endeavor.
3. Wives, in Eph. 5 and other passages, are expected by God to submit to their husband's authority, support his role in leading his family in discipleship, including worship, but be ready to lead when he is not able.
4. Read Ephesians 5:22-33 and 6:1-4 to review.

DISCUSS WITH YOUR SPOUSE OR ANOTHER PARTNER IN CLASS ABOUT THE HOMEWORK FROM LAST WEEK. HOW HAS IT BEEN GOING WITH THE TWO ITEMS BELOW?

1. Keep track of your progress in faithfulness of having a meaningful time each day in prayer and/or Bible/devotional book and be ready to share that next week, as you continue to feed your own soul, knowing that that is a key component in discipleship of your children.
2. Keep track of how many times you were able to have family worship this week and what situations helped make it happen or tended to hamper its implementation.
3. Give glory to God for victories, knowing they only come by His Spirit and the blessing that come from the work of Christ on the cross.
4. Where you believe there have been failures in seeking God this last week, repentingly seek God's Spirit and help, knowing that you need His help in this important endeavor.

SPEAK OUT: Who has something to share about personal or family worship this week, whether it be positive, negative, or somewhere in between?

LESSON AIMS:

1. PARENTS WILL VALUE TIME TOGETHER AS A FAMILY BECAUSE OF ITS ABILITY TO FURNISH OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCIPLESHIP.
2. PARENTS WILL IDENTIFY AREAS OF THEIR FAMILIES' LIVES THAT HAVE SUPERCEDED THE PRIMACY OF THE FAMILY AND WILL DECIDE WHAT ACTIVITIES AND INFLUENCES, IF NEED BE, NEED TO BE CURTAILED.
3. PARENTS WILL IDENTIFY KEY ELEMENTS OF FAMILY WORSHIP AND WILL DECIDE WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW THEY MIGHT

SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCT IT FOR MAXIMUM EFFECT AND LEAST DISTRACTIONS.

PASS OUT NOTES TO BE FILLED IN, WHILE LISTENING

I. TIME TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

A. The Christian family often doesn't spend enough quantity nor quality **time** together.

1. Work schedules often find parents not having much time to interact with one another and with the children.
2. Extracurricular sports, music, academic enrichment, etc., can crowd out additional time.
3. What should be the priority?
 - a. Church should never get bumped unless there is an emergency or sickness: "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as is the manner of some..." (Heb. 10:24-25).
 - b. Family meals and worship.
 - c. Brian Haynes laid down a rule for his children that they would be allowed only one extracurricular activity a week (not one sport three or four times a week, but one sport, etc. once a week), helping to maintain a "sane" family schedule.²⁰
 - d. This is not set in stone as a commandment of God, but I encourage you to consider whether your schedule is sane or not—whether it allows for eating and worshipping together. There is room for prioritized family time, allowing for meaningful communication, physical touch, and creative togetherness,²¹ paving the way for teachable, "God moments."²²
 - e. **Disconnect** from electronics to have more family interaction, physical exercise, and other healthy choices.
 - f. **Togetherness** in Christian activities
 - i. Take your children to pray on Saturday morning once a month if old enough (and you go, too!).
 - ii. Have them participate in any service activities of the church, like Feed the Need.

²⁰ Haynes, *Legacy*, 40.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 40, 44-45.

²² Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 197.

- iii. Have an eye open to needs in and out of the church. If you are making a meal for a family, include the kids while preparing or dropping it off, if it is a special delivery.
 - iv. If it is time to clean up after a meal at church, have your kids be part of it.
 - v. Come up with your own family ministry, giving your kids a chance to help you decide what it is, if they have ideas.
 - vi. Adopt a family in your neighborhood who could use help with raking, snow, visiting because of loneliness/sickness.
 - vii. Visit nursing homes, etc.
 - viii. See a need in the church building and do it together, whether painting or cleaning or decorating.
4. The family must get beyond conversation in the home that has “degenerated into an indistinguishable series of monosyllabic grunts.”²³
- a. A good relationship with both spouse and children is a more effective door to ministry than the ministrations of the most skillful youth or children’s minister.²⁴
 - b. In the context of a close relationship, parents take advantage of spontaneous, happy, and sad events anywhere.²⁵
 - c. It should become an “intimate, personal relationship designed for growth and learning through imitation, dialogue, and observation.”²⁶
 - d. Fathers should seek to “teach, restrain, command, remind, and pray for” their children.²⁷
 - e. If parents “connect” with their children relationally first, they will often not have to “correct” second, and at least it will be in a loving context, when it is needed.²⁸
5. Special opportunities
- a. Major events such as baptisms, funerals, marriages, holidays, and church membership vows provide meaningful times for reflection

²³ Donald Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 11. Whitney quotes from a BBC report.

²⁴ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 82.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

²⁶ Timothy Smith, *The Danger of Raising Nice Kids* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 25, 31.

²⁷ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 125-32.

²⁸ Smith, *The Danger of Raising Nice Kids*, 76.

- and discussion with your children about the great realities of life and God's place in them.
- b. The same could be said for the beauty of creation; don't just enjoy, but glorify God out loud for what beauty He has made.
 - c. Or the ugliness of sibling rivalry and fights, which require shepherding instead of a "Shut up and be good."²⁹ Shepherding a child involves an "emphasis on issues of the heart. It enables parents to get underneath the behavior and address the thoughts, motives, and purposes of the heart."³⁰
 - d. Consider each time you drive calling out a two second prayer for safety, as well as when you pass an accident or see an emergency vehicle.
6. Who has your kids when you don't? Who is discipling them?
 - a. Should **mom** stay home at least for a while, such as at least till the kids are in school? If not, why not? If it is impossible for this to happen, who will have your children, and what influence will they exert?
 - b. What kinds of teachers and students will be having a discipling influence on your children; what kind of **schooling** are you choosing; is it good or bad for their spiritual lives?
 - c. What kind of neighbors and school friends do you let your children spend alone time with?
 - d. Remember that your discipleship efforts can be destroyed because of other people you let your children be with.
 7. *Everyday Talk*, by John A. Younts. Read p. 151.

II. FAMILY WORSHIP

"The family is the heart of society, and the home altar is the heart of the Christian family. Decay in the heart means decay in the life of society..."³¹

- A. Your family worship should be **scheduled** and deliberate, not so much finding opportunities in "life," but pulling back from life's events and entering a sacred time of seeking God.
- B. Elements of family worship
 1. Bible reading
 - a. Systematic reading through the entire Bible for older kids

²⁹ Anna Laura Gebhard and Edward W. Gebhard, *Guideposts to Creative Family* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), 21, 114-15.

³⁰ Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), 164.

³¹ J. S. Mills and J. H. Ruebush, *A Manual of Family Worship* (Dayton, OH: W. R. Funk, Publisher, 1900), v.

- (1) Joel Beeke recommends 10-20 verses each time, but it can be fewer if your children are small, or there are some very pregnant verses that call for meditation. Following Beeke's *Family Worship Bible Guide* is a good idea for middle schoolers and higher, as well as for adults. Also, kid's Bibles are very useful, such as Ken Taylor's *A Child's First Bible*, for preschoolers. For elementary kids, before they are able to read the Bible with you effectively, consider *Wondrous Works of God: A Family Bible Story Book*.
 - (2) All competent family members taking turns reading at least sometimes, with expression (which certainly is helpful in children learning to read skillfully, as well as allowing all listeners to benefit from meaningful reading of the Bible).
- b. Gebhard recommends line by line meditation on the most common and influential passages, as well as memorizing key passages; she also supports learning to use Bible study helps, such as commentaries when kids are older.
 - c. My recommendation: You may want to use a devotional book sometimes, too, but even then, make sure that a good chunk of Scripture is read in conjunction, if kids are old enough to follow along mentally or in their own Bible. This generation is biblically illiterate, and they won't be otherwise, unless they hear and read it.
 - d. Two reasons that contribute to Trinity Christian School performing best in the Bible Bee:
 - (1) Bible classes full of Bible, instead of workbooks and topics.
 - (2) Some families in each class that have family worship every night.

2. Prayer

- b. Prayers with spouse (I Pet. 3:7)
- e. Prayers as a family
 - (1) Teaching **ACTS** (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication formula)
 - (2) Many topics that are appropriate for prayer, including church, church leaders, teachers, government leaders, schools, neighbors, missionaries, extended family, and major problems, such as war, disaster, and serious sicknesses. Good time for children to be exposed to the wider world and develop a heart of compassion and appreciation for people and events near and far.
 - (3) Some families may want to employ pre-written blessings from the Scriptures or other sources, such as from the website: <https://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-2016/blessing-children>.

3. Other aspects of family worship that are useful
 - a. Singing: The most important one that is perhaps optional but could easily be added to prayer and Bible reading as non-negotiable.
 - (1) Alexander praises singing for inciting holy emotions.
 - (2) Beeke encourages songs that are easy to sing, esp. when children are younger.
 - (3) Teach the best renditions of Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
 - (4) What is sung often is memorized and keeps coming back to the mind
 - (5) Kids today need to learn how to sing well; problem of weak congregational singing and professional singing setting too high a standard and pitch. Teach your children to sing!
 - (6) Crouch calls for congregations to have “full-throated” praise that is not drowned out by instruments or microphones.
 - (7) Some families might want to compose their own words/melodies.
 - b. Children’s **catechism** for younger kids through perhaps elementary. <https://www.reformedmama.com/childrens-catechism/>
 - c. Then Westminster Shorter Catechism in upper elementary or middle school. <http://matt2819.com/wsc/>. Also, here is a great book for teaching the catechism: *Training Hearts, Teaching Minds: Family Devotions Based on the Shorter Catechism*
 - d. Christian biographies, modernized *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and other Christian allegories, such as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and materials that train children and teens in finances, leisure, use of gifts, callings, relationships, conflicts, and worldview.
- C. Place of family worship
 1. Most writers encourage a habit of worship, including having the same place each time.
 - a. The dining room table is often encouraged because the family is there to eat, and before they get up and get to homework, play, cleaning up, etc., they take time to worship together. Also, making dinner a place of conversation with open-ended questions, catching up from the day, etc., is also a much-needed aspect of family life that is lost in many houses.
 - b. Somewhere away from electronics. Unless there is a known emergency, put cell phones in another room and all other electronic devices should be turned off. In fact, seriously consider putting off giving your child a smartphone as long as possible. See the following article:
https://world.wng.org/content/dare_to_be_different
 - c. Living room or other even more comfortable place, if a transition is likely to be orderly and get right to business
 - d. Bedrooms for prayer and reading of a story just before bedtime
 - e. Sometimes other places, such as outside in good weather, if there is a desire to break up the monotony, perhaps on the Lord’s Day.

- D. Let me demonstrate an example of starting family worship at the dinner table:
- a. Time for family worship.
 - b. Immediately start singing something (and soon, the kids will know it by heart). Perhaps sing the same thing for many days until they know it by heart if they are young. Perhaps start with “God is So Good” or “Seek Ye First.”
 - c. Read a few verses from the Bible or a story Bible, depending on the ages of your children.
 - d. Review and explain, especially focusing on the Gospel if you can.
 - e. Ask a question or two.
 - f. Ask for prayer requests.
 - g. Pray
- E. Get with a partner and try to lead that partner in a short time of worship, following this outline, or freelancing where you desire to change it. Unless you have another Scripture, read Mt. 6:9-13 or Ps. 23, and make comments and/or ask questions, as they occur to you.
- F. Length:
1. **Brevity**, not going past children’s abilities to sit and focus. Start out very short. For younger kids, another children’s story Bible, such as: https://smile.amazon.com/365-Great-Bible-Stories-Revelation/dp/1845505409/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1544916168&sr=8-2&keywords=365+great+bible+stories+by+carine+mackenzie is very good.
 2. Kids, however, can get used to sitting and listening with practice, and so over time, you will be able to add some time.
 3. Have a time of prayer and blessing and perhaps one verse from the Bible—2 minutes—to start the day off with.
 4. Perhaps 5-15 minutes at night, depending on all kinds of factors; perhaps it needs to be reversed for some families.
 5. I am giving recommendations, but do what you can, and if you fail one day, pick yourself up and get back to it the next day!
 6. Extended time on the Lord’s Day; after all, this is God’s Day, one day in seven given for your growth in Him.
 - a. More time usually available to read a Christian biography or other interesting book that teaches spiritual truths.
<https://graceandtruthbooks.com/category/history/biographies/biographies-for-youth/>
 - b. Time to catechize. Perhaps you can teach one a week, while reviewing one from the previous week. It can be short, but in a year, your child will have learned a great deal!
 - c. Dramatize Bible stories using skits.
 - d. Crafts and holiday traditions which focus on Scripture and spiritual lessons

- e. Time to review what was taught in **Sunday school**.
- f. Time to have children complete any homework given out by the Sunday school teacher, esp. in 3rd -5th grades!

G. Frequency

- 1. Try to establish the same time each day, as much as possible because that is how a habit will be formed.
- 2. Best goal, by way of review:
 - a. A tiny time in the morning connected with breakfast or driving to school where you read one verse from the Bible, or an extremely brief devotional, give a few seconds explanation, and then pray—2 min. Start the day off right!
 - b. At dinner time preferably, or maybe at bed, if the other is not possible, have a fuller time, but that is still not longwinded.

H. Objections to Family Worship

- 1. Too busy
- 2. Too many extracurricular activities
- 3. I don't know how to lead family worship!
- 4. I need to focus on academic growth, or my child won't succeed in life.
- 5. My kids will not cooperate or will at least be fidgety.

I. Answers

- 1. God has **commanded** you to teach your family the Word of God.
- 2. You are busy with what you make a priority. Is the Word of God and meaningful family interaction a priority?
- 3. The family dining table can be a source of blessing in your home. Getting together once a day for meaningful interaction can save your family for time and eternity.
- 4. First of all, there is one test your children need to pass, and that is on the Day of Judgment. On that day, no other test will matter. However, there are interesting studies that show that these practices will not just help spiritually.
 - a. Brain researchers show significant stimulation in brains when parents read to their children.³²
 - b. Children grow significantly in grammar and vocabulary skills when you read to them.³³
- 5. My kids will be fidgety and won't behave.
 - a. You must lead your kids and not allow their whims to dictate.
 - b. They will get used to the time, as you all develop good habits.
 - c. Try to tailor your family worship to the ages of your children.
 - d. Concrete Bible stories with younger children and elementary ages.

³² Catherine Pearson, "Science Proves Reading to Kids Really Does Change Their Brains," August 6, 2015, accessed January 10, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/science-proves-reading-to-kids-changes-their-brains_n_55c26bf4e4b0f1cbf1e38740.

³³ Susan Frey, "Study Says Reading Aloud to Children, More than Talking, Builds Literacy," accessed January 10, 2019, <https://edsources.org/2015/study-says-reading-aloud-to-children-more-than-talking-builds-literacy/82045>.

- e. Dealing with more worldview and pointed topics in middle and high school, such as Summit Ministry materials.
 - f. Do some of each if you have children in both age groups, while especially having one-on-one times with your teenager sometimes to discuss what he/she is going through in belief and life.
6. You will learn how to lead family worship, and there are books to help with that. Your pastors also will be happy to help you.
- a. Bible passage; prayer; and maybe a song first.
 - b. Here is how I would do it...
 - i. Song
 - ii. Reading from Bible or devotional book
 - iii. Brief comments and questions; discussion when a good opening presents itself
 - iv. Prayer requests (quick; and if no takers, move on)
 - v. Prayer—Sometimes by parents; sometimes children, esp. after you have established a routine.
 - c. I would be happy to model family worship for you in your home. Please ask, if you think it might help you start off on the right foot and give you confidence.

Review:

1. You should be meeting with God on your own once a day alone to seek Him in prayer and the Word.
2. You should gather your children at least once a day for the same.
3. The dining room table connected with a meal and a short devotion can do great things for your family.
4. If you are so busy that there is no time to get together to eat and worship, what needs to be cut, if possible, from your schedule because it is not as important?
5. Starting is never easy for you or your children, but be committed, and habits will be established for their good.
6. Put good books in your hands or in your children's hands when they can read, especially on the Lord's Day, when they are better served reading something Christian than what they might read on other days.

HOMEWORK:

1. KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY DAYS YOU MEET WITH GOD FOR A MEANINGFUL TIME IN PRAYER AND/OR BIBLE READING/DEVOTIONAL TILL NEXT LESSON.
2. KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY DAYS THIS NEXT WEEK YOU CONDUCT FAMILY WORSHIP, BEING READY TO SHARE NOT ONLY NUMBERS, BUT TRIUMPHS AND FRUSTRATIONS.
3. KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY DAYS A WEEK YOU WERE ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF "GOD MOMENTS," BEING READY TO SHARE WHAT KIND OF OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED THEMSELVES.

4. THIS TYPE OF HOMEWORK AND ACCOUNTABILITY CAN EASILY SEEM LIKE AN EXTERNAL CHECK OFF LIST, SO PLEASE KEEP THREE THINGS IN MIND AS WE CLOSE:
 - a. SEEK TO HAVE WARM TIMES WITH GOD IN WHICH YOU ENJOY HIS PRESENCE AND APPRECIATE HIS GRACE FOR YOU IN CHRIST.
 - b. KNOW THAT YOU CANNOT HAVE MEANINGFUL WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE WITHOUT HIS SPIRIT'S HELP, SO ASK FOR IT AND CONFESS THAT YOU ARE COLD AND FORMALISTIC UNLESS HE WARMS YOUR HEART AND HELPS YOU SEE GREAT VALUE IN HIMSELF.
 - c. BATHE YOUR CHILDREN IN PRAYER, AND FOCUS ON THE GOSPEL WITH THEM. WHEN CONFRONTING SIN, POINT THEM TO THE CROSS. WHEN TALKING ABOUT SCRIPTURE, SEEK TO POINT OUT CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL WHENEVER YOU CAN. IF YOUR KIDS LEARN A BUNCH OF BIBLE STORIES AND MORALS BUT DON'T SEE CHRIST IN THEM, THE MAIN FOCUS HAS BEEN MISSED.

Lesson 5: Church History, Review, Debriefing, and Post-Survey

1. Read Dt. 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:1-4 for review.
2. Remind husbands that they are ultimately responsible for the spiritual focus of their homes.
3. Remind wives that their support and example are crucial, and that they need to be ready to lead when their husbands cannot.

LESSON AIM: SEE THAT FAMILY WORSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP HAVE BEEN A FOCUS OF MANY THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, AND WE WALK IN GOOD SHOES IF WE FOLLOW THEIR WELL-TRODDEN PATHS.

PASS OUT NOTES TO FILL OUT DURING THE LESSON

CHURCH HISTORY ATTESTS TO FAMILY WORSHIP

- I. Early church history finds Clement, Polycarp, Augustine, and Chrysostom urging families to prioritize family discipleship and worship. Chrysostom conceived of the family as a kind of church and the leader of the house as a shepherd, accountable to God.³⁴
- II. Medieval church
 - A. John Bromyard pressed parents to repent of their neglect of the spiritual growth of their children, even while parents educated them academically and prepared them for a life of material prosperity.
 - B. Jean Gerson warned that it was better to neglect their children's physical sustenance than to ignore their children's souls' "moral and spiritual formation."³⁵
- III. Reformation
 - A. Martin Luther warned the German people that if they did not prize the Gospel as it had been rediscovered in the Reformation and did not faithfully pass it on to their children, the flame of the Gospel in Germany would soon be extinguished.³⁶ As Martin Luther related, parents must be "apostles, bishops, and priests to their children."³⁷
 - B. Puritans: Most consistent practitioners of family worship. Any group can be caricatured negatively. Probably the only thing in public school textbooks that is said about Puritans in America is

³⁴ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 29.

³⁵ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God* 107, 113.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Karen E. Jones, "The Family in Formational Years," in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael J. Anthony and Michelle D Anthony (Nashville: B & H, 2011), chap. 2.

that they killed twenty witches in Salem, MA. They don't talk about how in Europe 100,000 supposed witches were burned in the 1600s, and that it was other Puritans who went to Salem and put a stop to what was going on in that place that had temporarily turned hysterical. However, Puritans as a whole were amazingly committed to God, and we should seek to read their best works, which are full of truth that most modern books cannot possibly compare to.

- (1) Richard Baxter asserted that the goal of every marriage should be to have a family built on faith, with a prayerful cry to God for holy children.³⁸
 - (2) Jonathan Edwards envisioned the Christian family as “a little church,” with the head of the household having a much more profound impact on the members of that family than pastors could.³⁹ He believed parents “bore a special responsibility for evangelizing their own children. He daily read Scripture to, and catechized, his children.⁴⁰
 - (3) Puritans were also busy in composing the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms, to give helps to parents and pastors to catechize.
 - (4) Puritans wrote out catechisms and used them to great profit. We would do well to use them, too.
4. Discuss with a partner how personal and family worship went this week.
 5. Have a time of group sharing about what they have learned, how their knowledge has improved, and how their actions have improved, so as to encourage the group in this holy endeavor.
 6. Lastly, discuss obstacles to family worship and/or “God moments,” and how they can be dealt with in wise and godly ways.
 7. TAKE POST SURVEY.

³⁸ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 120.

³⁹ Timothy Paul Jones, “The Faith at Home Movement: What Makes It Distinct and What Gaps Still Remain?,” in *Practical Family Ministry: A Collection of Ideas for Your Church*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones and John David Trentham (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 11.

⁴⁰ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 126.

APPENDIX 3

LESSON GUIDES FOR NOTE TAKING FOR PARTICIPANTS

Lesson 1: A Call to Personal Commitment to Growing in Christ

One of the key biblical texts concerning this important topic is

_____ :

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

There are three parts of this passage I want to focus on about: Personal growth and discipling your children.

- 1) You are to know God and love Him with _____ your being.
- 2) You are to strive to _____ on to your children by diligently teaching them in word and deed, whether by focused times of explicitly teaching from the Bible, or implicitly, by referring to God, His character, and commandments as they apply to the special or mundane events of life.
- 3) Your _____ of Christ-likeness, which can teach your children more than just your words.

What are family discipleship and family worship?

Family _____. Family discipleship involves “parents...engag(ing) actively in their children’s spiritual development,”¹ whether in _____

¹ Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2011), 26.

“planned discipleship processes,” such as “family devotional times,” or “spontaneous spiritual conversations,” to “shape the souls of children.”²

Family _____. That element of family discipleship which involves “formal training”³ through “a regular time of pulling the family together” (family devotions) for learning the Word of God, praying, and/or employing other means of grace for spiritual growth. This is also called “the family altar,” “family devotions,” or “faith talks.”⁴

3) We will deal with the first issue in our first lesson: Loving and knowing God with all our being.

LESSON AIM: YOU ARE COMMANDED TO _____ IN YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND LOVE HIM WITH ALL YOUR BEING. IF YOU ARE NOT ACTIVELY DOING THAT, YOUR ATTEMPTS AT DISCIPLESHIP OF YOUR CHILDREN WILL LIKELY BE SERIOUSLY LACKING.

- I. Are you a child of God?
 - A. Have you truly _____ of your sins?
 - B. Are you putting _____ in Christ as your only Savior and Lord?
- II. The discipleship of your family is doomed to failure if you are not first growing in Christ _____.
 - A. Importance of Parents’ Personal Discipleship Commitment
 1. Luke 6:40: “A disciple (a learner; in this case, your child) is not above his teacher (you, as the parent), but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”⁵
 2. Where you are godly, they have a powerful _____ to imitate.
 - B. “The greatest obstacle parents have to overcome in leading their children spiritually is their own _____ or morbidly religious relationship with God accompanied by a juvenile

² Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 25.

³ Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 195.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁵ The majority of verses cited in these lessons are taken from the English Standard Version, with some coming from the New King James Version.

understanding of His Word...Many of us have never been truly disciplined ourselves.”⁶

III. Are you currently and actively growing in Christ personally?

1. 2 Pet. 3:18: “But _____ in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...”
2. I Tim. 4:12b-16: “Be an _____ to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading (the Bible), to exhortation, to doctrine...Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

*Again, listen to these words as a parent: Meditate on the things of God; give yourself _____ to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the teachings from God’s Word. Continue in them, for in doing this you will _____ both yourself and those who hear you.”

QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE BASIC MEANS OF GRACE THAT WILL HELP YOU GROW IN CHRIST?

1. The basics: prayer, Bible study and meditation, faithful attendance at church, and striving after holiness
 - a. Prayer: What is your _____ life like?
 - (1) I Thess. 5:17: “Pray without ceasing”—an ongoing communion with God, lifting up praise, confession, thanks, and requests throughout the day.
 - (2) Phil. 4:6-7: “Do not be anxious about anything, (STOP YOUR WORRYING!) but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”
 - (3) Mt. 6:6: “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”
 - (a) While the other two verses focus on a heart attitude that prays to God throughout the day, here is a command that you get _____ with your Heavenly Father for special times of prayer.
 - (b) Recommendation: Prayer list

⁶ Brian Haynes, *The Legacy Path* (Nashville: Randall House, 2011), 17.

- b. The _____
- (1) Josh. 1:8: “This Book of the Law (THE BIBLE) shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”
 - (2) Job 23:12: “I have not departed from the commandment of (God’s) lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.”
- c. Faithful attendance at _____
- (a) Ps. 122:1: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’”
 - (b) Our attitude about going to church should be happiness and eagerness.
 - (c) Heb. 10:24-25: “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not _____ to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”
 - (d) Or moving to another thing that gets in the way: Are children’s (or adult’s) _____ and other activities more important than God’s appointment with you? Is work? Is apathy or drowsiness? Is entertainment? Are your children’s coaches and instructors’ schedules more important than God’s? Please, if there is anyone who tries to impose on your schedule a conflict with God’s appointment with you at church, just say _____!
 - (e) Your attitude toward church attendance on the Lord’s Day and other times will teach your children volumes about how important it really is.
- d. Striving after _____; fighting sin and seeking to grow in your devotion to God
- (1) I Pet. 1:14-16: “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”
 - (2) Phil. 4:8-9: Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things...”

- IV. BREAKOUT SESSION: Discuss with your spouse or a neighbor in this class about two topics:
- A. One area already mentioned in which you want to thank God He has helped you grow, and how that growth is exemplified in your lives.
 - B. One area already mentioned in which you desire to grow. Discuss specifically how you can make it happen, so that it is not just a nebulous concept, but becomes an action plan in your lives.

IN THE NEXT LESSON, YOU WILL GET A CHANCE TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR SPOUSE OR A NEIGHBOR IN THE CLASS YOUR PROGRESS IN GROWTH IN CHRIST

HOMEWORK:

1. SEEK TO ACTIVELY GROW YOUR OWN SPIRITUAL LIFE THIS WEEK BY COMMITMENT TO PRAYER, BIBLE READING AND MEDITATION, FAITHFUL CHURCH ATTENDANCE, AND HOLINESS IN PUTTING OFF SIN AND PUTTING ON GOOD WORKS; BE READY TO DISCUSS YOUR FAITH JOURNEY NEXT WEEK WITH A PARTNER.
2. ALSO, PLEASE HAVE A NUMBER WITH YOU NEXT CLASS TO TALK TO YOUR PARTNER ABOUT: HOW MANY DAYS YOU SPENT A MEANINGFUL TIME ALONE WITH GOD IN PRAYER AND/OR BIBLE/DEVOTIONAL READING.
3. BEGIN THINKING ABOUT WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE AT YOUR HOUSE WITH YOUR FAMILY HAVING REGULAR FAMILY WORSHIP (OR "FAITH TALKS") AND ALSO TAKING ADVANTAGE OF "GOD MOMENTS" WHEN YOU CAN POINT YOUR CHILDREN TO GOD OR HIS TRUTH IN THE SPECIAL AND/OR MUNDANE EVENTS OF LIFE.

Lesson 2: Family Discipleship, Especially the Responsibility of Fathers

REVIEW:

1. _____ teaches our duty to love God with our whole being.
2. We can grow in the grace and knowledge of God by faithfully employing the means of grace God has given us for this purpose, including:
 - a. Having a vibrant prayer life that includes solitary times devoted to prayer and also an attitude of prayer and communion that finds us speaking to God throughout the day.
 - b. Reading the Scriptures faithfully each day.
 - c. Prioritizing church and community group attendance, especially on the Lord's Day, but also being eager to join in other ministries of the church on other days of the week, as well as we can.
 - d. Seeking to grow in holiness, as we put off ungodly actions and thoughts and actively put on good works and meditate on what is praiseworthy.

BREAKOUT:

3. Get with a partner and discuss how your week in seeking to grow in holiness went. Discuss how many times this week you had a meaningful time with God in meaningful prayer and/or reading of the Bible. Also discuss any other issues concerning growth in grace that you feel comfortable talking about.
4. Also discuss with a partner if you had any thoughts about what family worship looks like, or can look like, if you prioritize it in the home.

LESSON AIMS:

1. YOU ARE TO STRIVE TO PASS YOUR LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD ON TO YOUR CHILDREN BY DILIGENTLY TEACHING IN WORD AND DEED, WHETHER BY FOCUSED TIMES OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION, OR BY VIGILANTLY REFERRING TO GOD, HIS CHARACTER, AND HIS COMMANDMENTS AS THEY APPLY TO THE SPECIAL AND/OR MUNDANE EVENTS OF LIFE.
2. THE WORK OF DISCIPLESHIP FINDS ITS ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE FATHER/HUSBAND OF THE FAMILY, ESPECIALLY IN FAMILY WORSHIP.
 - I. Deut. 6:6-9: "You shall teach them (the Scriptures) diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

- A. Parents are to tap into that fullness of knowledge and love they cultivate personally in their own lives and then diligently train their children in these ways.
 - B. This diligence will find you actively seeking to _____ the light of God’s Word in any situation you and your children find yourselves.
- II. Psalm 78:1-8: “Give ear, O my people, *to* my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide *them* from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know *them*, the children *who* would be born, *that* they may arise and declare *them* to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation *that* did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.
- 1. A deposit of God’s truth has been given to his generation from their fathers (or even ancestors),⁷ and now it is to be passed on to the next generation.
 - 2. Their fathers are to pass this information on, and this emphasizes the point that _____ are crucial in their children’s discipleship.
*Parents should _____ ungodliness and anti-biblical philosophies, so that children will understand there is right and wrong, and they might learn to evaluate what they see and hear according to the Word of God.

III. KEY PARENTAL DISCIPLESHIP PASSAGES TEACH THAT FATHERS ESPECIALLY ARE CHARGED WITH LEADING THE DISCIPLESHIP OF THEIR CHILDREN.

- A. Psalm 78:3-8: As we read this passage again, focus on the role of _____ in the discipleship of their children:

Our **fathers** have told us.

⁴We will not hide *them* from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

⁷ John Goldingay, *Psalms*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 719.

⁵ For He established a testimony in Jacob,
 And appointed a law in Israel,
 Which He commanded our **fathers**,
 That they should make them known to their children;
⁶ That the generation to come might know *them*,
 The children *who* would be born,
 That they may arise and declare *them* to their children...

B. Malachi

1. In Malachi 2, God decries the rampant divorce of Malachi's day and says that the goal of _____ is being put in jeopardy when men commit treachery against their wives by divorcing them (2:15-16).
2. Malachi 4:5-6: Repentance in the Christian era will involve fathers turning their _____ again to their children, and vice versa. Fathers, are your hearts turned toward your children, or are they turned toward workaholicism and retreating to your man cave?

- C. Joshua 24:15: Joshua says that as the father and husband of the home, he declares that while he cannot control others' homes, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
- D. Genesis 18:19: God says of Abraham that He has "chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice..."
- E. Job 1:5: Job, as the _____ of his family, would regularly conduct worship with his children present, consecrating them and offering sacrifices for them.
- F. Ephesians 6 teaches the role of fathers in the discipleship of their children:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: ³ "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

1. Our main focus will be on fathers, but it is important to start with the first command—for children to obey both father and mother.
 - a. Children must _____ both father and mother.
 - b. Parents must inculcate an ethos of obedience in children from the very earliest ages that is rendered immediately, sweetly, and _____. Parents do their children and themselves a great hurt when they indulge their children and allow backtalk, sullenness, and incomplete obedience.

* _____ your sins to your children when you do fail them, which will also provide a very meaningful

portrayal of an honest, Christian life which is ready to confess when called for.

2. Fathers
a. They are to bring children up in the _____ of the Lord.

b. However, fathers need to make sure not to _____ their children to wrath.

*Fathers must hoe a wise middle ground, neither lenient nor despotic.⁸

(a) Not _____: Don't be a pushover; say what you mean, and mean to _____ what you say. Children need boundaries and the assurance that what you command, you will check on and expect, or there will be consequences.

(b) However, not _____: Consider their age and immaturity and understand that your Heavenly Father is patient and _____ with you in your many sins.

HOMEWORK:

1. SEEK TO ACTIVELY GROW YOUR OWN SPIRITUAL LIFE THIS WEEK BY PRAYER, BIBLE, FAITHFUL CHURCH ATTENDANCE, AND HOLINESS IN PUTTING OFF SIN AND PUTTING ON GOOD WORKS.
2. PLEASE HAVE A NUMBER WITH YOU NEXT WEEK TO TALK TO YOUR PARTNER ABOUT: HOW MANY DAYS YOU SPENT A MEANINGFUL TIME ALONE WITH GOD IN PRAYER AND/OR BIBLE/DEVOTIONAL READING. BE READY TO DISCUSS WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING. ALSO DISCUSS THE BLESSING OF FOCUSING ON DAILY FAITHFULNESS TO READ THE WORD OF GOD. LASTLY, DISCUSS ANY STRUGGLES THAT COME WITH THIS COMMITMENT TO DAILY DEVOTIONS.
3. THOUGH YOU WILL GET MORE INSTRUCTION ON FAMILY WORSHIP IN FUTURE LESSONS, PLEASE START THINKING ABOUT HOW YOU MIGHT START CONDUCTING IT, IF IT IS NOT YOUR REGULAR PRACTICE NOW; ALSO, SEEK TO LOOK FOR "GOD MOMENTS" WHEN YOU CAN POINT YOUR CHILDREN TO GOD, HIS WORD, AND/OR HIS MINDSET, AS YOU LOOK FOR CHANCES TO DO SO IN SPECIAL OR MUNDANE EVENTS OF LIFE.

⁸ Richard Baxter, "Leading a Family for Christ," in *A Theology of the Family*, ed. Jeff Pollard and Scott T. Brown (Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2014), 362.

4. THIS TYPE OF HOMEWORK AND ACCOUNTABILITY CAN EASILY SEEM LIKE AN EXTERNAL CHECK OFF LIST, SO PLEASE KEEP TWO THINGS IN MIND AS WE CLOSE:
 - a. SEEK TO HAVE WARM TIMES WITH GOD IN WHICH YOU ENJOY HIS PRESENCE AND APPRECIATE HIS GRACE FOR YOU IN CHRIST.
 - b. KNOW THAT YOU CANNOT HAVE MEANINGFUL WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE WITHOUT HIS SPIRIT'S HELP, SO ASK FOR IT.

Lesson 3: Marriage—Crucial Component of Discipleship

REVIEW:

1. _____ contain key passages about the importance of family discipleship. They include a call for parents to pass on the faith to their children, both straight from the Bible and in conversations that present themselves in the special and mundane events of life.
2. Therefore, family discipleship, based on those two passages, has both a regular, hopefully daily, biblical teaching and worship aspect, and also an ongoing watchfulness for teaching opportunities that take advantage of the events of life to highlight truths about God and His Word.
3. Parents will not be effective at discipling their own children unless they are first growing through prayer, Bible, church participation, and pursuit of holiness in their own lives.

OVERVIEW:

1. Discuss with a partner how the week went as you sought to improve your personal commitment to God, including how many days you spent a meaningful time alone in prayer and/or the Bible or a devotional book.
2. Also, discuss what you believe God is calling you to do as the key agent of discipleship for your own children.
3. Review: Ephesians 6:1-4.
4. Examine the importance of a happy, healthy, and holy marriage relationship in the discipleship of your children from Ephesians 5:22-32, and other verses.

BREAKOUT SESSION:

Please take a short amount of time to discuss with your spouse or another partner how your devotional life went this week, including how many days you were able to devote to God a meaningful amount of time on your own in prayer and reading the Word or devotional books. Also discuss what you believe God is calling you to do as the key agent of discipleship for your own children.

LESSON AIMS:

1. HUSBANDS AND WIVES WILL VIEW THEIR MARRIAGES AS EVEN MORE VALUABLE BECAUSE OF HOW THEY REVEAL THE GOSPEL, IN THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.
2. HUSBANDS WILL APPRECIATE THEIR WIVES' PARTNERSHIP IN FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP.
3. WIVES WILL UNDERSTAND AND VALUE THEIR ROLE AS ASSISTANTS TO THEIR HUSBANDS' LEADERSHIP IN FAMILY WORSHIP AND

DISCIPLESHIP, WHILE BEING READY TO OVERTLY LEAD WHEN THEIR HUSBANDS ARE NOT ABLE TO.

- I. Key NT Scripture to review: _____
- A. Children are to obey, and parents must give them strictness, while not _____ their spirits by being unfeeling and harsh.
- B. Fathers are the focus of having the responsibility to lead their children in the ways of God.
- II. EPHESIANS 5:22-33 (AMONG OTHER PASSAGES) TEACHES THAT THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP IN THE HOME TEACHES A GREAT DEAL ABOUT WHAT THE RELATIONSHIP IS BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH, AND WHETHER THE GOSPEL IS WORTHY TO BE EMBRACED, OR NOT.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband.

- A. A husband and wife picture the relationship between Christ and the _____.
- B. A husband/father pictures Christ and will either _____ Christ well or paint Christ in a bad light.
1. The husband is the head of the family.
 2. He is not to use this leadership to serve himself, but to _____ his wife.
 3. Love, nourish, and cherish
 4. He is involved in the process of her sanctification.
- C. A wife is commanded to _____ to her husband.
1. “In everything”

2. "As to the Lord."
3. If children see their mother _____ ignoring the leadership of their father, they are being taught that a Christian doesn't need to obey Christ either.
4. A wife's submission should involve supporting a husband's attempts to lead his family in worship, with a good _____ and helpful demeanor.

D. Make sure your kids understand that your marital relationship means a lot.

1. Don't let your kids' demands force you to ignore one another.
2. Be _____ with your spouse in front of your kids, in appropriate ways, and show through your attitudes to each other how Christ and the church love one another.
3. Allow your children sometimes to see how you arrive at decisions and how sometimes the Mom submits to Dad, or how Dad desires to bless Mom and bless her instead of doing what will please himself.
4. If there is _____ between you two, and it has become ugly in front of the kids....

III. Fathers, you are most responsible for the discipleship of both your wife and children, as their vigilant and diligent "priest, prophet, provider, and protector."⁹

C. You should conduct family worship as much as possible.

1. Do you have to be gone so long at _____?
2. Are you trying to be home with your family as much as possible?
 - (e) Are you trying to get for _____ or be home on the weekends as much as you can?
 - (f) Husbands, for your part, seriously _____ the concerns and suggestions of your wives.

D. Wives, _____ your husbands' attempts at being the spiritual leader of your home.

1. When you think family worship or discipline (or anything) in the home should be going differently, please speak to your husband out of earshot of the kids.
2. Be ready to lead family worship when your husband is not present or not a Christian.

⁹ Voddie Baucham, Jr., *Family Shepherds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 45.

DISCUSSION: Talk with your spouse, or someone else if your spouse is not here, about how you and your spouse can work together to disciple your children.

GIVE FIVE MINUTES

SPEAK OUT! Who has something brief you would like to share about today's lesson and/or all that this series has been covering so far, that God is impressing on you?

REVIEW:

1. Dt. 6, Ps. 78, and Eph. 6 all contain important passages that command parents to be active in the discipleship of their children. Easiest to remember: Dt. 6 and Eph. 6: _____
2. Ps. 78 and Eph. 5-6 also especially focus on the role of men as the leaders of their house being ultimately responsible for the discipleship of their wives and children. Men ought to, therefore, take this responsibility especially seriously, _____ planning family worship and nurturing his relationship with his wife as his partner in this important endeavor.
3. Wives, according to Eph. 5 and other passages, you are expected by God to submit to your husband's authority, support his role in leading his family in discipleship, including worship, but being ready to lead when he is not able.

PREVIEW:

During the next lesson, we will discuss the who, what, when, and where of family worship and discipleship.

HOMEWORK:

1. KEEP TRACK OF YOUR PROGRESS IN FAITHFULNESS OF A MEANINGFUL TIME EACH DAY IN PRAYER AND/OR BIBLE/DEVOTIONAL BOOK AND BE READY TO SHARE THAT NEXT WEEK WITH A PARTNER, KNOWING THAT FEEDING YOUR OWN SOUL HAS MUCH TO DO WITH HOW YOU CAN FEED YOUR CHILDREN.
2. SEEK TO HAVE FAMILY WORSHIP AS MANY TIMES AS YOU CAN THIS WEEK, BEING READY TO SHARE WITH A PARTNER NEXT LESSON. ALSO, BE READY TO DISCUSS WHAT IS WORKING WELL, WHAT IS A STRUGGLE, AND WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING IN THE PROCESS.
3. ALSO, KEEP TRACK OF TIMES WHEN YOU WERE ABLE TO HAVE "GOD MOMENTS," POINTING YOUR CHILDREN TO GOD IN THE SPECIAL OR MUNDANE AREAS OF LIFE.

Lesson 4: The Who, What, When and Where of Discipleship, and Especially Family Worship

REVIEW:

1. Dt. 6, Ps. 78, and Eph. 6 all contain important passages that command parents to be active in the discipleship of their children. Easiest to remember: Dt. 6 and Eph. 6, _____.
2. Ps. 78 and Eph. 5-6 also especially focus on the role of men as the leaders of their house being ultimately responsible for the discipleship of their wives and children. Men ought to therefore take this responsibility especially seriously, intentionally planning family worship and nurturing his relationship with his wife as his partner in this important endeavor.
3. Wives, in Eph. 5 and other passages, are expected by God to support their husband's authority, support his role in leading his family in discipleship, including worship, but be ready to lead when he is not able.
4. Read Ephesians 5:22-33 and 6:1-4 to review.

DISCUSS WITH YOUR SPOUSE OR ANOTHER PARTNER IN CLASS ABOUT THE HOMEWORK FROM LAST WEEK. HOW HAS IT BEEN GOING WITH THE TWO ITEMS BELOW?

1. Keep track of your progress in faithfulness of having a meaningful time each day in prayer and/or Bible/devotional book and be ready to share that next week, as you continue to feed your own soul, knowing that that is a key component in discipleship of your children.
2. Keep track of how many times you were able to have family worship this week and what situations helped make it happen or tended to hamper its implementation.
3. Give glory to God for victories, knowing they only come by His Spirit and the blessing that come from the work of Christ on the cross.
4. Where you believe there have been failures in seeking God this last week, repentingly seek God's Spirit and help, knowing that you need His help in this important endeavor.

SPEAK OUT: Who has something to share about personal or family worship this week, whether it be positive, negative, or somewhere in between?

LESSON AIMS:

1. PARENTS WILL VALUE TIME TOGETHER AS A FAMILY BECAUSE OF ITS ABILITY TO FURNISH OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCIPLESHIP.
2. PARENTS WILL IDENTIFY AREAS OF THEIR FAMILIES' LIVES THAT HAVE SUPERSEDED THE PRIMACY OF THE FAMILY AND WILL DECIDE WHAT ACTIVITIES AND INFLUENCES, IF NEED BE, NEED TO BE CURTAILED.

3. PARENTS WILL IDENTIFY KEY ELEMENTS OF FAMILY WORSHIP AND WILL DECIDE WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW THEY MIGHT SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCT IT FOR MAXIMUM EFFECT AND LEAST DISTRACTIONS.

I. TIME TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

A. The Christian family often doesn't spend enough quantity nor quality _____ together.

1. What should be the priority?

- a. Church should never get bumped unless there is an emergency or sickness (Heb. 10:24-25).
- b. Family meals and worship.
- c. There is room for prioritized family time, allowing for meaningful communication, physical touch, and creative togetherness,¹⁰ paving the way for teachable, "God moments."¹¹
- d. _____ from electronics to have more family interaction, physical exercise, and other healthy choices.
- e. _____ in Christian activities
 - i. Take your children to pray on Saturday morning once a month if old enough (and you go, too!).
 - ii. Have them participate in any service activities of the church, like Feed the Need.
 - iii. Have an eye open to needs in and out of the church. If you are making a meal for a family, include the kids.
 - iv. If it is time to clean up after a meal at church, have your kids be part of it.
 - v. Come up with your own family ministry.
 - vi. Adopt a family in your neighborhood.
 - vii. Visit nursing homes, etc.
 - viii. See a need in the church building and do it together.

2. The family must get beyond conversation in the home that has "degenerated into an indistinguishable series of monosyllabic grunts."¹²

¹⁰ Haynes, *Legacy*, 40, 44-45.

¹¹ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 197.

¹² Whitney, *Family Worship*, 11. Whitney quotes from a BBC report.

*If parents “connect” with their children relationally first, they will often not have to “correct” second, and at least it will be in a loving context, when it is needed.¹³

3. Special opportunities
 - a. Major events such as baptisms, funerals, marriages, holidays, and church membership vows.
4. Or the ugliness of sibling rivalry and fights, which require shepherding instead of a “Shut up and be good.”¹⁴
5. Who has your kids when you don’t? Who is discipling them?
 - a. Should _____ stay home at least for a while, such as at least till the kids are in school?
 - b. What kinds of teachers and students will be having a discipling influence on your children; what kind of _____ are you choosing?
 - c. What kind of neighbors do you let your children spend alone time with?

II. FAMILY WORSHIP

- A. Your family worship should be _____ and deliberate.
- B. Elements of family worship
 1. Bible reading
 - a. Systematic reading through the entire Bible with older kids
 - b. Gebhard recommends line by line meditation on the most common and influential passages, as well as memorizing key passages.
 - c. My recommendation: You may want to use a devotional book sometimes, too, but even then, make sure that a good chunk of Scripture is read in conjunction, if kids are old enough to follow along mentally or in their own Bible.
 2. Prayer
 - a. Prayers with spouse (I Pet. 3:7)
 - b. Prayers as a family
 - i. Teaching _____ (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication formula)
 - ii. Many topics that are appropriate for prayer, including church, church leaders, teachers, government leaders, schools, neighbors, missionaries, extended family, and major problems, such as war, disaster, and serious sicknesses.
 - iii. Some families may want to employ pre-written blessings from the Scriptures or other sources, such as from the website:

¹³ Timothy Smith, *The Danger of Raising Nice Kids* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 76.

¹⁴ Anna Laura Gebhard and Edward W. Gebhard, *Guideposts to Creative Family* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), 21, 114-15.

<https://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-2016/blessing-children>.

3. Other aspects of family worship that are useful
 - a. Singing
 - b. Children's _____ for younger kids through perhaps elementary.
<https://www.reformedmama.com/childrens-catechism/>
 - c. Then Westminster Shorter Catechism in upper elementary or middle school. <http://matt2819.com/wsc/>
 - d. Christian biographies, modernized *Pilgrim's Progress*, and other Christian allegories, such as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and materials that train children and teens in finances, leisure, use of gifts, callings, relationships, conflicts, and worldview.
- C. Place of family worship
 - a. Most writers encourage a habit of worship, including having the same place each time.
 - b. Dining room table is often encouraged.
 - c. Somewhere away from electronics. See the following article:
https://world.wng.org/content/dare_to_be_different
- D. Let me demonstrate an example of starting family worship at the dinner table:
 - a. Time for family worship.
 - b. Immediately start singing something (and soon, the kids will know it by heart). Perhaps sing the same thing for many days until they know it by heart if they are young. Perhaps start with "God is So Good" or "Seek Ye First."
 - c. Read a few verses from the Bible or a story Bible, depending on the ages of your children.
 - d. Review and explain, especially focusing on the Gospel if you can.
 - e. Ask a question or two.
 - f. Ask for prayer requests.
 - g. Pray
- E. Get with a partner and try to lead that partner in a short time of worship.
- F. Length:
 1. _____, not going past children's abilities to sit and focus. Start out very short. For younger kids, a children's story bible, such as: https://smile.amazon.com/365-Great-Bible-Stories-Revelation/dp/1845505409/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1544916168&r=8-2&keywords=365+great+bible+stories+by+carine+mackenzie
 2. Have a time of prayer and blessing and perhaps one verse from the Bible—2 minutes—to start the day off with.
 3. Perhaps 5-15 minutes at night, depending on all kinds of factors; perhaps it needs to be reversed for some families.
 4. Extended time on the Lord's Day; after all, this is God's Day, one day in seven given for your growth in Him.

- a. More time usually available to read a Christian biography or other interesting book that teaches spiritual truths.
<https://graceandtruthbooks.com/category/history/biographies/biographies-for-youth/>
- b. Time to catechize.
- c. Dramatize Bible stories using skits.
- d. Crafts and holiday traditions which focus on Scripture and spiritual lessons
- e. Time to review what was taught in
- f. Time to have children complete any homework given out by the Sunday school teacher, esp. in 3rd -5th grades!

G. Frequency

1. Try to establish the same time each day.
2. Best goal, by way of review:
 - a. A tiny time in the morning connected with breakfast.
 - b. At dinner time preferably, or maybe at bed, if the other is not possible, have a fuller time.

H. Objections to Family Worship

1. Too busy
2. Too many extracurricular activities
3. I don't know how to lead family worship!
4. I need to focus on academic growth, or my child won't succeed in life.
5. My kids will not cooperate or will at least be fidgety.

I. Answers

1. God has _____ you to teach your family the Word of God.
2. You are busy with what you make a priority. Who said your kids must spend so many days a week doing extracurriculars?
3. The family dining table can be a source of blessing in your home. Getting together once a day for meaningful interaction can save your family for time and eternity.
4. There is one test your children need to pass, and that is on the Day of Judgment. On that day, no other test will matter.
5. My kids will be fidgety and won't behave.
 - a. You must lead your kids and not allow their whims to dictate.
 - b. They will get used to the time, as you all develop good habits.
 - c. Try to tailor your family worship to the ages of your children.
 - d. Concrete Bible stories with younger children and elementary ages.
 - e. Dealing with more worldview and pointed topics in middle and high school, such as Summit Ministry materials.
 - f. Do a little of each if you have children in both age groups, while especially having one-on-one times with your teenager sometimes to discuss what he/she is going through in belief and life.
6. You will learn how to lead family worship, and there are books to help with that. Your pastors also will be happy to help you.
 - a. Bible passage; prayer; and maybe a song first.
 - b. Here is another take on how to do it:

- i. Reading from Bible or devotional book
- ii. Brief comments and questions; discussion when a good opening presents itself
- iii. Prayer requests (quick; and if no takers, move on)
- iv. Prayer—Sometimes by parents; sometimes children, esp. after you have established a routine.

Review:

1. You should be meeting with God on your own once a day alone to seek Him in prayer and the Word.
2. You should gather your children at least once a day for the same.
3. The dining room table connected with a meal and a short devotion can do great things for your family.
4. If you are so busy that there is no time to get together to eat and worship, what needs to be cut from your schedule because it is not as important?
5. Starting is never easy for you or your children, but be committed, and habits will be established for your good!
6. Put good books in your hands or in your children's hands when they can read, especially on the Lord's Day, when they are better served reading something Christian than what they might read on other days.

HOMEWORK:

1. KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY DAYS YOU MEET WITH GOD FOR A MEANINGFUL TIME IN PRAYER AND/OR BIBLE READING/DEVOTIONAL TILL NEXT LESSON.
2. KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY DAYS THIS NEXT WEEK YOU CONDUCT FAMILY WORSHIP, BEING READY TO SHARE NOT ONLY NUMBERS, BUT TRIUMPHS AND FRUSTRATIONS.
3. KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY DAYS A WEEK YOU WERE ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF "GOD MOMENTS," BEING READY TO SHARE WHAT KIND OF OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED THEMSELVES.
4. BATHE YOUR CHILDREN IN PRAYER, AND FOCUS ON THE GOSPEL WITH THEM. WHEN CONFRONTING SIN, POINT THEM TO THE CROSS. WHEN TALKING ABOUT SCRIPTURE, SEEK TO POINT OUT CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL WHENEVER YOU CAN. IF YOUR KIDS LEARN A BUNCH OF BIBLE STORIES AND MORALS BUT DON'T SEE CHRIST IN THEM, THE MAIN FOCUS HAS BEEN MISSED.

Lesson 5: Church History, Review, Debriefing, and Post-Survey

1. Read Dt. 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:1-4 for review.
2. Husbands are ultimately responsible for the spiritual focus of their homes.
3. Wives' support and example are crucial.

LESSON AIM: SEE THAT FAMILY WORSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP HAVE BEEN A FOCUS OF MANY THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, AND WE WALK IN GOOD SHOES IF WE FOLLOW THEIR WELL-TRODDEN PATHS.

CHURCH HISTORY ATTESTS TO FAMILY WORSHIP

- I. Early church history finds Clement, Polycarp, Augustine, and Chrysostom urging families to prioritize family discipleship and worship.
- II. Medieval church
 - A. John Bromyard pressed parents to repent of their neglect of the spiritual growth of their children, even while parents educated them and prepared them for a life of material.
 - B. Jean Gerson warned that it was better to neglect their children's physical sustenance than to ignore their children's souls' "moral and spiritual formation."¹⁵
- III. Reformation
 - A. Martin Luther warned the German people that if they did not prize the Gospel as it had been rediscovered in the Reformation and did not faithfully pass it on to their children, the flame of the Gospel in Germany would soon be extinguished.¹⁶
 - (1) Puritans: Most consistent practitioners of family worship. Richard Baxter asserted that the goal of every marriage should be to have a family built on faith, with a prayerful cry to God for holy children.¹⁷
 - (2) Jonathan Edwards envisioned the Christian family as "a little church."
 - (3) Puritans wrote our catechisms and used them to great profit. We would do well to do the same.

¹⁵ Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 107, 113.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

1. Discuss with a partner how personal and family worship went this week.
2. Have a time of group sharing about what they have learned, how their knowledge has improved, and how their actions have improved, so as to encourage the group in this holy endeavor.
3. Lastly, discuss obstacles to family worship and/or “God moments,” and how they can be dealt with in wise and godly ways.
4. TAKE POST SURVEY.

APPENDIX 4

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Spiritual Leadership Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of spiritual leadership in the home.					
The material is biblical.					
The material is theologically sound.					
The main idea of the lesson is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the lesson aim.					
The lesson contains points of practical application.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
The teaching methodology meets the needs of various learning styles.					
Overall, the lesson is clear.					

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS WHO SELF-REPORT GROWTH IN BIBLICAL FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. How focused on intentional discipleship were you before taking the parent discipleship classes?
2. How have the classes and encouragement helped you be more intentional?
3. What Bible passage or passages really helped you understand your responsibility to disciple your children?
4. What practical suggestion(s) were given that better helped you understand how to disciple your children effectively?
5. What are the biggest obstacles to intentional parent discipleship that you have identified by means of the course or through recent reflection?
6. How are you planning to overcome these obstacles?
7. Are you and your spouse on the same page when it comes to commitment and application of parent discipleship principles in your home?
8. Have there been any obstacles to marital unity in the shared goal of parent discipleship?
9. How do you plan to address these obstacles to promote parent discipleship?
10. How can I as a shepherd best continue to remind and encourage you in your responsibility to faithfully disciple your children?

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING PARENTS OF COVENANT FELLOWSHIP CHURCH OF WEST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY, TO BE FAITHFUL IN THE DISCIPLESHIP OF THEIR CHILDREN

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The purpose of this thesis project was to equip Christian parents who entrust their children to the educational ministry of Covenant Fellowship Church (CFC) of West Orange, New Jersey, to be more faithful and intentional concerning the discipleship of their children.

The project included administering a pre- and post-series survey that measured parents' growth in understanding and practice of family discipleship. A five-week curriculum was developed to promote this understanding and practice. Chapter 1 introduces the ministry milieu of Covenant Fellowship Church, along with the rationale, purpose, goals, research methodologies, definitions, delimitations, and limitations of the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical basis for parents to disciple their children. Key Scriptures that were treated include Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:1-8; Ephesians 5:22-32; and Ephesians 6:1-4. Chapter 3 addresses the relationship of husband and wife and the necessity that both embrace their God-ordained roles so that the relationship of Christ and the church can be faithfully illustrated. It also discusses the particulars of a well-ordered family worship time. The chapter ends by probing the church's role and best practices for promoting family discipleship. Chapter 4 describes the preparation and delivery of lessons taught to parents, along with what surveys and interviews revealed about the efficacy of the lessons. Chapter 5 concludes with an evaluation of the purpose and goals of the project, along with interpretation of the results of surveys and interviews.

Strengths and weaknesses of the project are examined, along with suggestions for improvement.

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