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TRAINING PARENTS AT COVENANT PREPARATORY
SCHOOL IN SOUTHERN PINES, NORTH CAROLINA,
TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

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TRAINING PARENTS AT COVENANT PREPARATORY
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To my wife, Sunny,
who has made my life all the brighter.

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PREFACE

This project reflects the training, wisdom, and help I have received from so many others. Foremost, I must give praise to God for being the good shepherd of my life and ever drawing me to himself.

I would like to give special accolades to my wife, Sunny, for partnering with me in life. She imparts to me confidence and encouragement to complete the tasks God has set before me. She has protected this project from turning merely to work through the supplements of food, coffee, friendship, and the occasional reminder that there is still more to be done. I thank you, Sunny, for always keeping our goals before my eyes.

I thank my pastors, Kevin and Jacob Skogen, for being mentors, friends, and spiritual counselors. Under the preaching of the Word I have benefitted immeasurably from your ministry. Through your example I have learned to better love my wife, the church, and my Lord.

I want to thank Sandhills Presbyterian Church. Long have I searched for a church such as thee. Thank you for sharing together with Sunny and I your fellowship, your counsel, and your good cheer. It is good to worship with you, to serve you, and to eat together from our Lord's Table.

Lastly, I want to give special thanks to my faculty supervisor, Dr. Matthew H. Haste, for his priceless counsel and aid to help me navigate this challenging process. I am also grateful to Southern Seminary for the opportunity to study at such a fine institution.

Blake Charles Willard

Southern Pines, North Carolina

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train parents at Covenant Preparatory School in Southern Pines, North Carolina, to become disciple-makers of their children.

Goals

As Covenant Preparatory School (CPS) sought to train parents to disciple their children, the following goals were used to assess the progress of the project. This project utilized the university-model structure already in place to intentionally put discipleship-focused materials and activities into the homeschooling space where parents had already agreed to partner in their children's education. The desired goals are listed below:

1. Assess parents' attitudes and practices about the discipleship of their children at Covenant Preparatory School.
2. Develop a Bible curriculum that engages parents in the discipleship of their children.
3. Increase participation and modify attitudes in parent-based discipleship by implementing the Bible curriculum into the parental teaching portions of a university-model school.

The first step to integrate biblical content into CPS's overall curriculum was to use the Bible curriculum to integrate discipleship practices in the home. However, as this project was implemented, perceptions and practices were not changed in a statistically significant way.

Context

This project addressed the need for parents at Covenant Preparatory School in

Southern Pines, North Carolina, to be trained as the primary educators in the discipleship of their children. The discipleship of children is an integral component of Christian education. Parents and teachers must recognize that to be a disciple or follower of Jesus Christ means living a distinctive lifestyle that is rooted in the word of Christ. Jesus said, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).¹ That means Christian parents and teachers, as Christian educators, must thoughtfully consider how to make God’s Word the underpinning of their child/student’s education. Since the discipleship of children is charged to be primarily the responsibility of parents (as noted in chaps. 2 and 3 below), parents must feel comfortable discipling their children, and Christian schools should have the means to aid and support it.

CPS’s ministry context provided a unique opportunity to begin to shift the emphasis of discipleship primarily to the home. In past years the Bible curriculum involved passive attention to whatever biblical content was reviewed, and offered information to be memorized and regurgitated, but little space for dialogue and application from within the parent-child relationship. This meant each parent with children in the appropriate grades was identified as a possible beneficiary from a more interactive discipleship approach to the biblical components of their child’s education.

The shift to understand discipleship more holistically in the context of the Christian school took thoughtful understanding of what constitutes discipleship as well as a thoughtful approach to aid those parents who sought to do it. CPS’s university-model² has opportunities built into its structure to equip parents as disciple-makers of their children and the impetus to require them to be disciple-makers. In in the 2018-2019

¹Unless otherwise stated, all citations of Scripture are from the English Standard Version.

²“A University-Model School® combines a quality, private Christian education with the best attributes of homeschooling through a unique school schedule and encourages parents’ God-given role as the primary spiritual influence in their child’s life.” Covenant Preparatory School, accessed August 30, 2018, <http://covenantprep.com/>.

school year CPS ranged from pre-K through the sixth grade. For those parents who recognized their responsibility to disciple their children but who felt underequipped or unsure of how to do it, CPS's university-model served to aid parents in this process.

CPS experienced several organizational changes entering the 2018-2019 school year that set the school in a very different direction. The school as an organization was turned over to Sandhills Presbyterian Church which shares its campus. Thus, CPS's authority structure went from teachers to headmaster, to the newly formed school board, and then finally to the elder-led Session of Sandhills Presbyterian Church. With new leadership, a new school board, a nearly-new teaching staff, and its largest ever enrollment, the school was positioned for both change and growth. The school board and headmaster agreed that they desired both curricular changes and a more thoughtful approach to parent discipleship within the university-model.

Initially, CPS came about as an affordable, intermediary option for parents looking for quality Christian education who desired to be involved in the education of their children but were unable or unprepared to commit to full-time homeschooling. The school is ecumenical in nature and draws on students from a multiplicity of denominational backgrounds. There are several Christian education options in Moore County, North Carolina, but CPS's university-model enabled it to offer some of the most affordable private education around.

Moore County historically had a large retirement community due to its active golfing community, but its proximity to Fort Bragg Army Base, and the large military population that serve there combined with increasing job development, has drawn in an increasing number of young families in recent years. Between 2017 and 2018 NC Commerce reported 13,373 K-12th grade enrollments in Moore County.³ The increased

³The population facts were taken from NC Commerce, accessed October 30, 2018, <https://accessnc.nccommerce.com/DemoGraphicsReports/pdfs/countyProfile/NC/37125.pdf>.

population of students made room for the continued growth and development of strong educational alternatives to public education. For parents in Moore County looking for Christian education there are now numerous options besides simply homeschooling. CPS, therefore, fits a niche cliental that desires a Christian education combined with strong parental involvement.

That unique mix of Christian education plus homeschooling was what CPS sought to cater to. The hybrid model of education CPS espouses, the university-model school (UMS), has the potential to realize a very strong parent/school/community bond. However, because of inadequate leadership and poor parent-teacher interaction, in its early years CPS at times created space for conflict. This resulted from nominal teacher commitment, poor administrative oversight, and a desire to grow as an organization too quickly. The new school board and leadership noted these previous errors and sought, from the beginning, to focus on a healthy culture that promoted community well-being. One of the ways the board desired to do this was to focus on equipping parents to flourish in their role as educational partners with CPS. This plan was partly realized through its newly committed staff with vested interests in the school community, increased school-parent communication, and better-defined parent and teacher roles.

Rationale

A lack of parental involvement and leadership in the discipleship component of CPS led to a need to develop a plan to train families to be the primary disciple-makers of their children. The previous curriculum did not set discipleship as one of its goals and a family could proceed through assignments without giving any thought to discipleship at all. CPS had to reconsider what family ministry looks like in the context of the school. The definition Timothy Paul Jones presents for family ministry supports CPS's understanding of its responsibility to train and equip parents for the task of discipleship.⁴

⁴Timothy Paul Jones defines family ministry as “the process of intentionally and persistently

CPS desires to establish itself as a partner in the community to parents who seek to be involved in the education of their children in a significant way. In many respects the school provides leadership in the educational process and decisions for the families it works with. However, one of the areas CPS desires to be secondary to parents is in the discipleship of their children. For this to take place this project attempted to provide the necessary resources within an educational context. This project sought to equip parents to disciple their children using a Bible curriculum that gave confidence to parents and was conducive to family environments with children of all ages.

Research Methodology

Three goals demonstrated the successful completion of this project. The first goal was to assess parents' attitudes and practices towards the discipleship of their children at Covenant Preparatory School. This goal was measured using the Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey (FDPPS)⁵ made available by Timothy Paul Jones to assess the perceptions and practices toward family discipleship of parents with children attending Covenant Preparatory School.⁶ Parents were surveyed as a captive audience during Back-to-School Night assembly at CPS. The survey instrument made statements regarding perceptions or practices that were evaluated by parents using a 6-point Likert-type scale. The statements from the survey addressed 2 categories. Table 1 lists the 2 categories of perceptions and practices listed in the FDPPS.⁷ Items 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 are reverse-scored.

coordinating a ministry's proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives." Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Pub. House, 2011), 33.

⁵See appendices 1 and 2.

⁶All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁷See table A1 in appendix 1.

Table 1. 2 categories for survey items

2 Categories for Likert-Type Statements	Statements
Parent Perceptions	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Parent Practices	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

The first category addressed parents’ perceptions toward family discipleship. These statements sought to clarify whether parents had positive or negative perceptions toward family discipleship. The second category addressed parents’ practices toward family discipleship. These statements sought to show any discrepancy between parents’ perceptions and their practices regarding the discipleship of their children.

The survey was printed and administered during the Back-to-School night assembly and linked to a 5-digit personal identification number (PIN) that included number of children, birth month, and birth year of their youngest child. The results of this survey informed the content of the Co-Discipleship Guide (CDG) Bible curriculum implemented during the 2018-19 school year at CPS.

The second goal was to take the content of the pre-survey and use the results to inform the development of the CDG Bible curriculum used by parents throughout the school year. The curriculum engaged parental involvement by creating a liturgical structure within the homeschooling portion of the university-model. The structure was designed to be routine enough to build familiarity and confidence in the home, while dynamic enough to engage the major faculties of the heart and mind of students. Although the curriculum involved academic rigor, it also mimicked the structure of a family worship/devotional time. The take-home curriculum provided parents with tools to apply discipleship practices to multiple areas of life. This goal was successfully met when the quality of the curriculum was evaluated and yielded a 90 percent satisfaction rating on the evaluation rubric by an expert panel consisting of the headmaster of CPS Jacob

Skogen, Sandhills Presbyterian Church's senior pastor Kevin Skogen, and CPS's board member Bill Bivans.⁸ All three panel experts have numerous years of experience in pastoral ministry and Christian education. A 90 percent satisfaction rating was attained before moving on with the project.

The third goal was to increase participation and modify attitudes of parents in parent-based discipleship by implementing the CDG curriculum. After an entire semester of implementation, from August 2018 through early December 2018, parents participated in the post-test.⁹ The curriculum trained parents to guide their family's spiritual development through the implementation of discipleship practices and biblical affirmations in the context of the UMS.

A post-test assessment added additional demographic questions and 3 simple qualitative feedback questions about the curriculum and was administered before the start of the Christmas break. Parents were notified of the post-test one week before the survey was made available. A copy of the survey for each parent was given out by the teachers of students during student pick up. Attached to the survey was a section open for comments and critiques of the CDG for further evaluation. Additionally, 3 email messages were sent seeking parents' participation with a link to the post-test using Google Forms. An increase in participation and a change in the perceptions of parents towards parent-based discipleship would have been considered successfully met if a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post-survey results.

Population

The population included the parents of all students at Covenant Preparatory

⁸See appendix 4 for CDG curriculum evaluation.

⁹See appendix 2.

School, first through sixth grades. Due to the small population size, a census was sought for this study.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

CDG curriculum. The CDG curriculum contains all the materials, teacher instructions, procedures, and philosophy involved in implementing the Co-discipleship Guide (CDG) as an instructional resource that emphasizes the parent-teacher partnership for Bible instruction at Covenant Preparatory School.

Discipleship. For this paper, “discipleship” is the lifelong growth in Christlikeness that is rooted in pursuing holiness and only possible through self-denial.¹⁰ Discipleship entails a constant concern for church growth, not just in numbers, but within the members themselves. The discipleship that reflects growth is displayed in administration of and submission to discipline, a community that is increasingly knit together, and the glorification of God.

Parent-based discipleship. Parent-based discipleship is a commitment by parents to bring children up in the fear and discipline of the Lord (Eph 6:1-3). This includes taking responsibility for training children in the tenets of Christian faith and practice as essential parts of their Christian education. For family relationships to be redefined with a focus on discipleship reformation must take place primarily in the household. This discipleship starts in the family and works its way out, so parents who have recognized this vision for the discipleship of their children will not limit the responsibility to their own progeny but will see disciple making extends out to include children with unbelieving parents, taking in orphans, and aiding single mothers; helping in the responsibilities of family discipleship wherever necessary.

¹⁰Covenant Preparatory School, accessed August 30, 2018. <http://covenantprep.com/>.

University-model. For this paper the “university-model” will be defined as a hybrid-model of schooling that seeks to combine “a quality, private Christian education with the best attributes of homeschooling through a unique school schedule and encourages parents’ God-given role as the primary spiritual influence in their child’s life.”¹¹ This involves teaching at school by teachers on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, while teaching at home by parents on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The time spent learning with parents is designed, in part, for parents to exercise the primary spiritual influence they are to have over their children.

There were two limitations for this ministry project. The first was the approval of CPS’s board that the content and purpose of the Bible curriculum is in accord with the vision of CPS. To address this limitation there was continued communication with the school board, and their approval preceded moving forward with further stages of the project. The second limitation was that parents could choose not to participate in the survey study. To address this limitation, a brief forum was provided where parents were presented the goals and vision of the Bible curriculum and encouraged to participate in the survey study for the continued improvement of the education their children receive.

The project had three delimitations. First, the survey study was limited to the fall semester at Covenant Preparatory School. This was enough time to train the parents in the content and set the practices to habit, though the curriculum will continue throughout the 2018-2019 school year. Second, participants had to be parents of children attending CPS. Third, the curriculum would incorporate biblical content from the books of Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings.

Conclusion

CPS wishes to train parents to be disciple-makers of their children. To do this

¹¹Covenant Preparatory School, Accessed August 30, 2018. <http://covenantprep.com/>.

every aspect of a school's curriculum must be considered as it relates to integrating the Bible. Parents are to see the discipleship of their children as a significant portion of a child's education and this project has provided resources to begin to make this happen in the home. The following chapters address biblical, theological, historical, theoretical, and practical resources and how they relate to parents' responsibility to disciple their children.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR PARENTS BEING THE PRIMARY DISCIPLE MAKERS OF THEIR CHILDREN

The biblical witness provides clear evidence for the responsibility of parents to govern their families and disciple their children. This chapter addresses six key passages from both the Old and New Testaments that argue parent-based discipleship is God-ordained. The passages set forth provide commands and examples for raising children to be disciples of Christ. The theological insights drawn from these passages are intended to both encourage and commission parents to consider how to live in light of these truths and govern their children accordingly. The passages are addressed sequentially following the pattern of God's revelation to his people.

Fulfilling God's Promise through Parental Instruction (Gen 18:17–19, 22:6–7)

The Lord changed Abram's name to Abraham because he would be the father of a multitude. However, God's promise to Abraham was not to bring posterity for its own sake, but that Abraham would raise a nation who would be coheirs with him of the covenant and would serve Yahweh as their God (Gen 17:7). Genesis 18:17–19 presents a dialogue with the divine council that brings clarity to what raising a family in covenant with God would entail. Abraham was accepted into the divine council because of his role as the promise-bearer through whom the whole world would be blessed. The means of acquiring that blessing, though not seen in Abraham's lifetime, was to be realized through the faithful upbringing of "his children and his household after him" (18:19). God called Abraham to raise up faithful future generations. Like their father before them,

Abraham's seed would "keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice" (18:19), fulfilling God's promises.

Victor Hamilton points out that Genesis 18:17 raises an important question: Can God and Abraham trust each other? Hamilton affirms they can. It seems what God intended to reveal to Abraham was not so much about Sodom but about Abraham's future and that of his descendants.¹ Abraham's role as intercessor for Sodom fits the role he was to model for his posterity—observing righteousness and justice.

Gordon Wenham explains the purpose for God's election of Abraham was "to create a God-fearing community."² That God-fearing community was to bring about the worldwide blessing (18:18), and for that reason God chose to reveal to Abraham what he was about to do (18:17). How Abraham was to fulfill God's plans to bless the nations is laid out in verse 19, "For I have 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, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him." God's means of fulfilling his promise to bless all nations through Abraham was through parents raising children to walk in the way of the Lord. Abraham was to teach his children and household the way of the Lord so they would do righteousness and justice. Wenham describes the pattern modeled here and echoed throughout Scripture of promise-obedience-fulfillment—obedience was the precondition for the fulfillment of God's promise.³ The continued fulfillment of the promise always passes to the next generation, who are then called to be obedient.

Genesis 18:19 explains that Abraham could command his posterity toward

¹Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), 17.

²Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis: 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 2 (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 50.

³Wenham, *Genesis*, 50.

obedience because God had “chosen” him. Kenneth Mathews calls the creation of a righteous people the “intermediary step” to fulfill God’s promise to bless all nations.⁴ The problem with the pattern of fulfillment, as recorded throughout Israel’s history, is that the people of God never satisfy their responsibility to the covenant. This means parents should not be surprised when they find themselves falling short of the mark in raising their children. Israel’s inability to fulfill their covenant calling made them dependent on divine grace. (Deut 7:7, 9:4–6, 30:16).⁵ Likewise, parents will at times find themselves insufficient for the responsibility of raising God-fearing children; parents too will be dependent on divine grace. The fulfillment of God’s promise for international blessing comes through grace alone, yet obedience modeled through familial instruction remains the starting point. Abraham’s instruction continues to be passed on today through his descendants, the people of God, who continue to command the next generation to keep the way of the Lord. While God’s promise is fulfilled through Jesus Christ, the requirement for obedience does not go away, as Jesus made clear, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word” (John 14:23).

Mathews describes the verb *yada*, literally “to know,” as descriptive of divine election. Abraham would accomplish God’s promises through divine grace.⁶ Hamilton says this is covenant language between the suzerain⁷ (God) and the vassal⁸ (Abraham). God knew Abraham intimately and fully. As the vassal of his lord Abraham is able to teach righteousness and justice to his children only because he knew God.⁹ Being chosen

⁴K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 223.

⁵Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 223.

⁶Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 223.

⁷A suzerain is a feudal lord owed fealty from the vassal whom he supports.

⁸A vassal is a subordinate owing fealty to his/her feudal lord for the protection received from them.

⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 18.

by God results in raising up future generations, and eventually an entire nation, “characterized by righteousness and justice.”¹⁰ If being known by God was one-sided, then Abraham would have had no concept of how to train his children in righteousness and justice as God had commanded him. But God’s grace was poured out to Abraham by the very fact that he is enabled to set his children on the way of the Lord.

John Calvin explained that God foresaw choosing Abraham would ultimately lead to the desired result. Abraham was admitted to what amounts to the divine council (18:17) because in Abraham God perceived one through whom his promises would be fulfilled.¹¹ The benefits rendered from such a council were not to die with Abraham but, being foreseen to be a faithful instructor of his family, Abraham was to pass on that which he learned from God.¹² It is no less the responsibility of each descendant of Abraham, those who belong to Christ (Gal 3:29), to impart the truth of God they have learned to their children. Knowledge of God is neither to remain private nor die with the individual. It is to be used for the edification of others, particularly one’s own household. The holy living a parent models should continue through their children.

Hamilton brings attention to the contrast between Abraham and the Sodomites. Abraham, being known by God, was the first to pass on the way of the Lord. In Sodom, their desire to “know” (*yada*) Lot’s guests is used perhaps to contrast divine knowing with sinful knowing. Hamilton says of Sodom, “Here benign knowledge and diabolical knowledge are juxtaposed.”¹³ Clearly, what the Sodomites knew was not the way of the Lord, and traversing another way resulted in destruction. Abraham was given an immediate object lesson to teach his children the consequences of wandering from the

¹⁰Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 223.

¹¹John Calvin and Calvin Translation Society, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 48–49.

¹²Calvin and Calvin Translation Society, *Calvin’s Commentaries*.

¹³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 19.

way of the Lord. In contrast to Abraham’s family, any who walks in a Sodom-like way must reverse their direction (repent) or face destruction.¹⁴

Abraham’s Instruction Modeled in Isaac’s Knowledge (Gen 22:6–8)

It is easy to commit to something before the weight of the responsibility is realized. Abraham entered into covenant with God before he had born any children of that covenant. After fathering Isaac, Abraham’s faithfulness to teach his children the way of the Lord is exhibited in Genesis 22:6–8, where Isaac’s knowledge of worship is put on display. Although Isaac’s knowledge of the components of worship is not the point of emphasis, it nevertheless confirms that Abraham had been faithful to conduct worship with and instruct his family in worship. Isaac’s question, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering,” (22:7) makes obvious by its very nature that Isaac knew what was involved in the act of worship.¹⁵ Isaac raised a legitimate question to his father, for nowhere is anything but animal sacrifice ever prescribed or described from the Patriarchs.¹⁶ But, it is clear that Abraham still had something to teach his son of worship—unwavering devotion to God. Calvin suggests Isaac’s proceeding silence was the result of acceptance, meaning he trusted his father’s answer, and, “he acquiesces, and is silent.”¹⁷ Isaac accepting his father’s answer reveals he trusted this change in the format of worship in part because his father had thus far proven trustworthy as the worship leader.

Raising children who trust their parents to be the leaders of their spiritual wellbeing first requires parents who purpose to lead their families spiritually. Abraham’s

¹⁴Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 224.

¹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 109.

¹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 109.

¹⁷Calvin and Calvin Translation Society, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, 568.

own example was not only one who vowed to raise his children in the Lord, but also one who did it. Abraham serves as a biblical example of fatherhood because his life was consistent with his worship. Abraham taught his offspring by doing righteousness and justice, and he taught his offspring by leading them in worship in accordance with his covenant to God. Although Abraham was never to see the fruit of most of God's promises he nevertheless believed them, and it was counted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6). For Abraham it was enough to know that his children would one day enjoy the fruit of his faithful living.

The Shema and Parenting (Deut 6:4–9)

By the time God's law is given, Abraham's offspring have become a nation, and in his law the Lord outlines for Israel what raising children to do righteousness and justice entails. Deuteronomy 6:1–9 includes the Great Shema, the command for God's people to be a hearing people. It addresses how love for God means parents are responsible to teach the content of God's law to their children. This passage also provides a pedagogy for teaching God's law. Loving God with all one's heart, soul, and might is lived out through parental instruction that is generational (6:2), thorough (6:7), and translatable to every aspect of life (6:7–9). The central quality governing family-wide obedience is the love of God. Israel's responsibility to fulfill the covenant with Yahweh includes training the whole family to learn God's commandments so they will learn to fear the Lord.

Love for God Means Generational Obedience (Deut 6:4–6)

J. G. McConville explains that the text in Deuteronomy 6 shifts from speaking to the people as plural to singular; God's people are identified as a single unified body. Just as Yahweh commanded him, Moses commands the people to keep the commandments continuously. McConville clarifies the phrase "all the days of your life"

(6:2), saying it “convey[s] primarily the life of the whole people, continuing over generations.”¹⁸ Obedience is a communal affair for God’s people. Salvation is not a purely individualistic initiative, there is also the concept that salvation is for the *people* of God. The position of future generations before God will be governed, in part, by the pains with which parents in the present generation strive to obey God’s commandments and teach them diligently to their children (6:6–9).

J. A. Thompson connects love for God with glad obedience to his laws. God’s laws are written on the hearts of those who love him, and imparting this love to future generations is first done by teaching them obedience to God’s commands.¹⁹ Daniel Block confirms the same idea: “Verse 5 explains what Moses means by exclusive allegiance to Yahweh. . . . Hebrew *ahab* (“love”) refers to covenant commitment demonstrated in actions that seek the well-being and pleasure of one’s covenant partner.”²⁰ God’s law is the essential quality on display in lovers of God, so God-loving parents pass this quality naturally onto their children.

Duane Christensen says the love prescribed to the people of Israel was a command in response to the precedent love first displayed by Yahweh. Yahweh did not just say he loved Israel, but he showed it by redeeming them from Egypt.²¹ The covenant people therefore were called to follow the pattern established by God, declaring their love through a lifestyle of obedience. Yahweh is the only god to charge a people to love him in such a way, and he is the only god to display his love in such a way to any people.

¹⁸J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 140.

¹⁹J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 139.

²⁰Daniel Isaac Block, *Deuteronomy: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 182.

²¹Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy. 1-11*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 144.

Thus, Yahweh’s intervention in the lives of his people emphasizes the reason they should regard his words so highly. Christensen says, “The focus on teaching your children ‘these words’ diligently within the context of the family—at all conceivable times and places—illustrates once again the pedagogical purpose of the book of Deuteronomy.”²² When parents diligently teach their children God’s commandments they acknowledge Yahweh is the one god who saves his people, and his people respond in turn by teaching that Yahweh is the only god who saves. When parents teach the commandments to their children they acknowledge that Yahweh is the only God throughout the generations and to the world (Gen 12:1–3; 18:16–19).

The Word of God is for all of God’s people in every generation. John Currid says, “We need to recognize that true religion is not merely individualistic, but it is covenantal. It is for generations yet unborn.”²³ This requires parents to teach it to the coming generations. However, since instruction in God’s Word is a natural outflowing of love for God, parents who do not love God cannot teach their children what they have not learned themselves. Peter Craigie expands, “Obedience would be possible only when it was a response of love to the God who had brought the people out of Egypt and was leading them into the promised land.”²⁴ Thompson also affirms that imparting the words of the law to the next generation is implied of those who are predisposed to love God.²⁵

Block says it is the devotion to Yahweh that drives the faithful Israelite’s acts of obedience. True faith in God entails an “internal commitment” that looks for ways to display that commitment to Yahweh, just as a husband might act in such a way that

²²Christensen, *Deuteronomy*, 144.

²³John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Deuteronomy*, EP Study Commentary (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2006), 165.

²⁴Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 169–70.

²⁵Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 139.

confirms for his wife his deep commitment to her.²⁶ Block explains child training in the covenant community:

This covenant commitment is to be a family matter, demonstrated by indoctrination of children and spontaneous discussion of the issue with the members of one's household (v. 7). This is to be accomplished by "impressing" these words on children (vv. 4—5). This means repeating them constantly, when God's people sit in their homes and walk on the road; when they lie down and when they rise up. In this case, every adult Israelite is to be a teacher, seizing every opportunity for instruction.²⁷

Raising children in the fear and knowledge of Yahweh is a Shema-fulfilling love for God lived out. This commitment translates from the individual, to the family, and throughout the household. The family who learns to love God becomes a part of the greater whole of God's people, taking their place amongst the generations before them and the ones yet to come.

Parenting is Saturated in God's Word (Deut 6:6–9)

Deuteronomy 6:6–9 explains how comprehensive love for God is to be as it relates to every aspect of life. Craigie suggests that the placement of God's commandments "on your heart" (v. 6) means thinking and meditating on them, so that obedience is the result of understanding rather than "formal legalism."²⁸ That means "teach them diligently to your children" (6:7), requires teaching for understanding not merely compulsion. Understanding comes about by the consistent and comprehensive engagement with God's law: morning and evening, home and abroad, young and old, rising and sleeping. With regard to the household, the believing family is to leave no part of life unturned that is not imprinted with God's commandments.

²⁶Block, *Deuteronomy*, 184.

²⁷Block, *Deuteronomy*, 184.

²⁸Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

Currid explains the prescriptions in Deuteronomy 6:7 were not the only occasions for parents to share God’s Word with their children. The commands to speak God’s Word when sitting in houses, walking on roads, etc., signify that parents are to model God’s Word for their children in everything parents do.²⁹ Thus, when thinking of God’s Word children should naturally consider their parents own faithful example as a model for living. Currid suggests the directives from verses 8–9 are to be understood figuratively. God’s Word is to always be before the eyes of his people and should govern their actions. Although it was taken literally by later traditions, the point is to be constantly reminded of God’s Word which is to direct the life of his people.³⁰ It would be a radical shift in lifestyle for the modern family, with its many distractions, to ensure that every part of life is sufficiently permeated with God’s Word. What would it take to make even sports activities, entertainment, and homework constant reminders of God’s Word?

Currid clarifies that the word rendered “teach” is the Hebrew *shanan*, meaning to “sharpen” or “hone.” God’s Word is to be used by parents to constantly shape their children into the covenant people of which they are a part.³¹ Eugene Merrill says repetition is the emphasis in setting God’s commandments on the hearts of children. It is an intimidating task shaping children in such a permanent way. The repetition required of parents to educate their children in the law is to be aided not just through oral repetition but visual and symbolic stimuli (vv. 7–9).

Memory was of significant importance in the biblical faith. God’s people were to remember not merely for recitation, but to protect themselves from the consequences of forgetting. Thompson says, “In biblical faith the remembrance of God’s past mercies and delivering acts is fundamental. In the hour of prosperity, or at times when all goes

²⁹Currid, *A Study Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 165.

³⁰Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 139.

³¹Currid, *A Study Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 165.

well, men forget God and may even turn aside from allegiance to Yahweh.”³² Thus, surrounding one’s life with the content of God’s Word and works is a teaching device for children as well as a means of protecting them. Any parent or educator will quickly note the ease with which children often remember the bad and yet seem to have completely forgotten good instruction. God’s Word must therefore be ever before them.

Block suggests that a literal interpretation for “bind” is warranted, but even if taken figuratively, “The Shema provided Israelites with a necessary and constant reminder to commit themselves to Yahweh alone.”³³ Whether the intention was literal or figurative, the later tradition of wearing phylacteries would generate the kinds of questions from children that physical signs are intended to produce (Exod 12:26; Deut 6:20; Josh 4:6, 21). One may envision an Israelite child asking his father, “What is that thing on your head and why are you wearing it?”

Parents are to be competent enough in Scripture to teach God’s law to their children in every situation. In all Deuteronomy 6 makes clear to parents that their love for God is to govern their household. More than that, if parents truly do love the Lord, then that love will be made manifest not only in their own hearts but also in the lives of the children they raise.

Wise Parents Know the Consequences of Sin (Prov 1:8–19)

Should parents neglect the responsibility to make love and devotion to God a generational responsibility, then they must consider their actions bear great consequences. Proverbs 1:8–19 makes clear that the content parents teach their children is a matter of life and death. Proverbs 1:8 assumes that raising wise children is the responsibility of both parents. For offspring that heed their parents’ instruction, wisdom

³²Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 140.

³³Block, *Deuteronomy*, 188.

will be the adorning characteristic of their life. Those who heed the temptations of their rebellious peers will only reap an expediated end rather than a quick profit. Parents must realize the allure of sin and the temptation to follow the crowd. Therefore, parents must base their children's instruction on godly wisdom if they are to save them from sin's destruction.

A Wise Parent's Instruction (Prov 1:8–9)

Paul Koptak says that Proverbs 1:8 is both the summary of the prologue (1:1–7) and the emphasis of chapters 1–9. The passage assumes parents are teaching their children wisdom. As later chapters go on to expand what wisdom is, parents can see if the content of the Proverbs' positive outcomes applies to them and their household. Koptak summarizes, "The lesson is deceptively simple. Listen to your parents. Do not listen to greedy men. More importantly, listen to wisdom, for it is wisdom that your parents teach you. Lesson number one in developing discernment about how to live is learning how to listen and to whom."³⁴ Interestingly, the first lesson from parents is not to give direct instruction, but to warn their children about the content of the instruction sinners will offer (1:10–19). Listeners (children) are to consider the consequences, both positive and negative, of their way of life. Parents are to set before their children the end of wisdom as well as the end of folly so their children can rightly choose between life or death, implying that parents too know the difference.

Roland Murphy identifies the four figures laid out in verses 8–19: father, mother, son, and sinners. The expression "my son" represents parental instruction and is "probably stylized here to indicate the recipient of the instruction in the following chapters."³⁵ The term "my son" does not limit the instruction to sons or even a son, but

³⁴Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs: From Biblical Text—to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 73.

³⁵Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs* (Nashville: Nelson Publishers, 1998), 9.

rather any child of wise parents. Both parents are mentioned here and elsewhere (6:20; 10:1), emphasizing the role each parent plays in raising wise children. Parental instruction is not drudgery or cold obedience, but something beautiful enough to marvel at—“a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck” (1:9). According to Murphy, wisdom is more than beauty, it is “power” displayed in the son whose actions are oriented by wisdom.³⁶

Bruce Waltke says the souls of children are at stake when parents are instructing their children in wisdom. More broadly, the salvation of all Israel is the subject of this instruction: “the lectures are literary fictions put into the father’s mouth. They refer to every family in Israel. In the same way Moses put his law into the mouth of Israel’s parents (Deut 6:1–6). The New Testament interprets the lectures as addressed to all Christians.”³⁷ The son addressed is not just the natural offspring, but the spiritual heir who is to continue the identity of faith in God passed on through wisdom from his parents. More than an admonition to listen to wise teaching, parents can offer their children “symbols of honor and life.” The wreath and necklace might ordinarily be the prizes for a hero in battle. Likewise, obedience to godly parents should be thought of as nothing short of heroic. Waltke says, “Solomon’s teachings are democratized so that all children who obey their godly parents and embrace the teachings of this book wear the teachings as heroes wore ‘the great wreath.’”³⁸ These symbols, once earned, serve as symbols of defense against the wicked so that those wearing them cannot be easily had.

David Hubbard says that the parents of Proverbs were shaping the future leaders of Israel. Through the parents’ instruction children would practice the cardinal virtues of Israel—righteousness and justice (Gen 18:19). Mentioning both parents in the

³⁶Murphy, *Proverbs*.

³⁷Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004), 186.

³⁸Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 187–88.

training of children emphasizes the important role mothers played in raising children. This emphasis is unique to the nation of Israel among Ancient Near-Eastern wisdom traditions.³⁹ Later teachers can only add if parents have laid the proper foundation. When that foundation is lacking then pupils begin with a great deficit in directing their steps toward the path of life.

Raymond Van Leeuwen explains the wisdom of the proverbial parents who are neither ignorant nor in denial about the allure of evil. Van Leeuwen reflects that modern readers coming from the security of their middle-class lifestyle may think violence is far removed from them. Van Leeuwen says, “The parent who speaks in 1:10-19 is from the upper stratum of Israelite society. But the problem of evil the parent addresses is universal.”⁴⁰ These parents recognize that evil is a reality not far off from even a lofty position in life. The image from Proverbs 1:8–19 is of a budding adolescent on the threshold of adulthood who must decide on his own at the fundamental crossroad of life. This son is old enough to have competing voices vying for his loyalty. But the wisdom of parents is to recognize the end of things and present them to their child before he takes a path from which there is no return. Van Leeuwen says, “The parent subverts the sinner’s invitation (vv. 11–14) by encapsulating it within her own better invitation to wisdom and reality. She sees through wicked arguments, because she has a more comprehensive vision of right and wrong, of acts and consequences, of the way the world works.”⁴¹ It is precisely because the parent does not assume virtue is passed on naturally that he/she constantly teaches their child the wisdom of salvation.⁴²

³⁹David Allan. Hubbard, *Mastering the Old Testament: Proverbs* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1989), 49.

⁴⁰Raymond C. Van Leeuwen et al., *Wisdom Literature, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, Sirach*, in vol. 5 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 38.

⁴¹Van Leeuwen et al., *Wisdom Literature*, 37.

⁴² Van Leeuwen et al., *Wisdom Literature*, 38.

The Sinner's Competing Instruction (Prov 1:10–19)

In Proverbs 1:10–19 the proposition of “sinners” is to draw the son away from the established worldview of his family. Waltke says that the father presents the case of the sinners—the son’s peers in age but not in value—because “to be forewarned is to be forearmed.”⁴³ The sinful youth condemn themselves “let us ambush the innocent without reason” (1:11). While such self-condemning statements show the conversation is clearly fictitious, it nevertheless equips the son to realize the underlying intention of such people. These rebels make promises which reason and experience would prove untrue. They promote themselves as an alternative community (“come with us” v. 11; “let us” v. 11, 12; “throw in your lot among us; we will have one purse” v. 13). But they are a community formed outside the law rather than formed by it. They offer a generous reward of “one purse,” but one cannot expect fair compensation from those who “ambush the innocent without reason” (1:11). While appealing to genuine incentives from such a community, “The father brilliantly puts words into the sinners’ mouths that both condemn them and expose their enticement.”⁴⁴ The father simultaneously presents the aspects of such an appeal that might capture his son’s attention, while tarnishing the attractiveness of each aspect for what it really is—evil.

Van Leeuwen calls the band of sinners “a community of death,” which is their end according to the father (1:19). Parental wisdom is required because there is a legitimate appeal from the offers of such “anti-societies” (Prov 24:23–24). The parent warns against a legitimate temptation because, “evil is a real option for the son.”⁴⁵ The wise parent understands no one is safe from sin’s allure. Thus, the son is given eyes to see the snare being laid, unlike the sinners who only set the trap for themselves (1:17).

⁴³Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 188.

⁴⁴Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 190.

⁴⁵Van Leeuwen et al., *Wisdom Literature*, 38.

Duane Garrett makes clear the book of Proverbs is not shrouded with abstraction. Garrett says, Proverbs “is grounded in the lives and problems of real people,” and “the lesson for the modern church, that it should clearly and directly address real life and real temptations, is evident.”⁴⁶ Parents should, therefore, present to their children the real snares that life will set before them, whether from peers or otherwise, that they might attain the blessings which wisdom promises (1:9).

Murphy explains the father in Proverbs 1:10–19, being aware of the “smooth words” (e.g., 2:16; 5:3) of sinners, is not describing the situation as sinners would themselves. Instead, the father “is attempting here to paint evil in its true colors, and to make evident its poisonous speech.”⁴⁷ While the language of sinners may be seductive, their purposes are crass. Hubbard says the proverbial parents approach the situation with realism, “The young are often enticed by the ways of wicked people,” and for that reason these parents sought, “to help their pupils scratch beneath the surface and eye the deeper consequences of their behavior.”⁴⁸ The wise parents can do what the foolish sinners cannot—see the end result of the ways of wisdom and folly. Thus, they can describe sin as it is, without its attractive façade. The wise parents direct their son to see the trap which they are approaching (1:17–18). And, perhaps most importantly of all, the wise parent realizes that no matter the quality of one’s upbringing sin can charm anyone. If parents are to save their children, then they must not think they can stop fighting for them.

⁴⁶Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 69.

⁴⁷Murphy, *Proverbs*, 9.

⁴⁸Hubbard, *Mastering the Old Testament*, 51.

The Role of Children and Parents (Eph 6:1–4)

In the New Testament all the duties of the people of God are applied to Christians. The proper upbringing of Christian children involves the mutual responsibility of children to parents and parents to children. Within the context of household laws (5:22–6:9), Ephesians 6:1–4 charges children and parents with proper conduct and submission as it relates to each member’s relationship to Jesus Christ. A child’s obedience and a parent’s instruction are to be governed by their position “in the Lord” (6:1). That means each member is to fulfill their designated role as parent or child both for the benefit of the respective member of their household and because it marks their Christian identity. Therefore, parents can see in Ephesians 6:1–4 a description of the types of children they should be raising and instruction in how to raise children.

Children Are Given Value and Responsibility (Eph 6:1–3)

The previous texts have allotted children of the believing community certain entitlements. Because they are the next generation of recipients of God’s promises they can expect godly examples, godly instruction, and godly wisdom from their parents. But, in Ephesians 6:1-3, Paul makes clear that children of believers also bear certain responsibilities to their parents and the Lord.

Ephesians 5:22-23 first addresses wives, and then husbands. Ephesians 6:5–9 first addresses slaves, and then masters. Likewise, Ephesians 6:1–4 first addresses the subordinate role of children, and then their parents as the authority. In this case children are addressed with their individual responsibilities (6:1–3), then parents are addressed with theirs. Since the Apostle Paul distinguishes roles as they relate to the Lord (e.g. 6:1; 6:4), obedience is an act of faith that reveals the Holy Spirit at work. This means the conduct Paul commands of children, though right for children in general, is specific to believing children. Children too have responsibilities as Christians. They will experience

the promise, “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land” (6:3), to the extent that they fulfill those responsibilities

Paul’s instruction to children suggests they are old enough to understand their relationship and commitment to Christ as Lord. According to A. T. Lincoln, by addressing the subordinate party directly, Paul’s teaching was distinctive from the Greco-Roman world. Secular society often took for granted children’s obedience. However, as valued members of the Christian community with inherent value, children were not only worthy of addressing individually, but were also accountable for any disobedience which is compared to Gentile depravity (Rom 1:30).⁴⁹

Although Paul’s imperative to obey most obviously applies to children still in the home, the instruction to honor one’s father and mother was not limited to any age. Frank Thielman explains that Greco-Roman culture mirrored the Hellenistic Jewish culture with its expectation for honor and obedience to parents throughout their life, “providing for them in old age” because “obedience to parents was the norm, and any exceptions to it needed thoughtful discussion.”⁵⁰ A parent’s station of authority means they are always worthy of showing honor, even when total obedience is no longer obligatory.

Thielman confirms that Ancient Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian cultures all affirmed first children’s obedience to, then support of their parents, even into old age. While there may be exceptions to this rule, they are assumed to be rare enough that they are not worth mentioning. Since Paul was writing to Christian households, it may well be that he did not deem it worth noting any exceptions where children would not be expected to submit to their parents.⁵¹

⁴⁹Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 402.

⁵⁰Frank Thielman, Robert Yarbrough, and Robert Stein, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 396.

⁵¹Thielman, Yarbrough, and Stein, *Ephesians*, 396–97.

F. F. Bruce points out that even though Christian households are imagined, the directive for children to obey their parents may even extend to non-Christian parents.⁵² Such obedience not only marks their place “in the Lord” (v. 1), but also shows obedience to God’s law (v. 2–3). Paul draws from both Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16, extending the promise beyond just the land of Israel. Bruce says, “such a limitation would be inappropriate in a Gentile-Christian context, so the final adjective clause is omitted and “in the land” understood as “on the earth.”⁵³ God has placed each child with the parents they have. Honoring those parents both prepares and enables them to honor the Lord, and in turn experience the blessings that go along with such obedience.

Thielman explains the very tangible appeal to “live long in the land” (v. 3) considering the context children were raised in. Paul spoke directly to the children who were expected to be present to hear his charge in worship. Children who by the nature of being old enough to hear and understand would have already been acquainted with tragedy and death. Thielman says, “Ephesians was written in a world where between 39 and 50 percent of children died before their tenth birthday.”⁵⁴ Though there are exceptions where well-behaved children nevertheless die untimely deaths, the incentive of finding favor with God to live the fullest life possible should be regarded as a very tangible motivation.

John MacArthur says that parents “stand in the gap” between God and their children while their children are still too immature to have a full relationship with Christ themselves. Children are to “obey” and “honor” their parents as if they were submitting to God himself. Though children “in the Lord” belong to God, they are lent to parents

⁵²F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 397.

⁵³Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians*, 398.

⁵⁴Thielman, Yarbrough, and Stein, *Ephesians*, 400.

who are made stewards for a time.⁵⁵ This sentiment is paralleled in Colossians 3:20: “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” MacArthur clarifies that while children are no longer under parents’ authority after marriage (Eph 5:31), their “special respect and concern” should be for life.⁵⁶ Obedience and honor to parents is “right” (6:1), not as a cultural standard, but because God has judged them to be so and has affirmed it in his law (Exod 20:12).

William Hendriksen notes the Apostle Paul’s assumption that children would be a part of the worship services in which his letter would be read. As a part of the family of believers, children not only have a place in worship but have Christian responsibilities unique to their station.⁵⁷ Paul, therefore, addresses children directly. Those responsibilities of obedience and honor to which Paul speaks demands both proper action and attitude of a child. Thus, Christian children whose obedience is tainted with selfishness and unwillingness have neglected the honor due their parents and have likewise displeased the Lord. R. C. H. Lenski’s definition of honor is helpful, “Honor is the form love assumes toward those who are placed above us by God.”⁵⁸ Love is the governing principle that affects how children obey their parents, and it will, in time, affect how they obey their Lord.

For Parents: Right and Wrong Ways to Raise Children (Eph 6:4)

In Ephesians 6:4 parents, and specifically fathers, are prescribed their share of the responsibility in household relationships. It is likely that Paul deemed it unnecessary

⁵⁵John MacArthur, *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 311–312.

⁵⁶MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 311.

⁵⁷William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians, New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), 258.

⁵⁸R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*, Interpretation of the New Testament (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946), 647.

to provide exceptions when obedience was not required of children because the kinds of parents he had in mind were also governed by their relationship to the Lord. Thielman says it is because Paul has the ideal in mind that he does not list “unusual circumstances” when obedience was not compulsory.⁵⁹ Rather, the usual circumstances would be parents and their children would hear Paul’s exhortation and submit to his instruction as authoritative for Christians.

In the eyes of their children, fathers and mothers are raised to equal authority over their children (6:2). According to Lincoln, Paul’s reminder to fathers is not of their authority but of their responsibility to their children whose personal dignity should prevent excesses in discipline.⁶⁰ MacArthur explains in the contemporary Roman society the *patria potestas* gave fathers virtually unlimited power over their children.⁶¹ However, a Christian parent’s position “in the Lord” does not permit them to do with their children anything they deem fit. Although fathers and mothers carry authority over their children, they also have responsibilities to them. In God’s structure of authority abuse is not permitted. That means fathers are held to account for the anger they incite from their children. Paul earlier addressed how anger is to be dealt with within the Christian community, and the foothold it can give the devil to wreak havoc (4:26–27; 31).

Children are contributing members to the community of faith. They have inherent value in the Lord which fathers are to recognize. Provocation to anger is no more acceptable from fathers to children than it would be to any other household role Paul mentions. However, because of Paul’s experience in his contemporary context, he deemed it need be said. MacArthur says fathers were the dominant authority of the day

⁵⁹Thielman, Yarbrough, and Stein, *Ephesians*, 397.

⁶⁰Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 409.

⁶¹MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 316.

and they were more likely to provoke their children to anger, but mothers too are capable of provocation and are no more permitted to do it.⁶²

John Eadie says fathers are singled out because the training of children is primarily their responsibility and because they are more inclined toward harsh treatment. If a father indeed tends to irritate as *παροργίζω* suggests, then a child's respect and affection for his father may be chipped away.⁶³ In Eadie's words, "If they be uniformly confronted with paternal frown and menace, then their spirit is broken, and the most powerful motive to obedience—the desire to please—is taken from them."⁶⁴ The idea of provocation is not a one-time incident, but a constant wearing down that leads to the explosion of anger. Helpfully, MacArthur clarifies, "Such treatment is usually not intended to provoke anger. Often it is thought to be for the child's good."⁶⁵ Good motives do not excuse bad parenting, making Paul's shift toward positive instruction (6:4b) particularly helpful for parents.

Rather than provocation to anger, Paul requires Christian parents to raise children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (6:4b). The direction turns parents' attention to Christ and following his example. For Bruce this includes both modeling the "meekness and gentleness" (2 Cor 10:1) Christ displayed and practicing his precepts. Because children learn best by example, they will more willingly obey if parents show them the way rather than just explain it.⁶⁶ This model echoes Christ's example to his disciples in the upper room when he washed their feet, and then explained to them why they must also do the same (John 13:12–15).

⁶²MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 316.

⁶³John Eadie and William Young, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883), 444.

⁶⁴Eadie and Young, *A Commentary on the Greek Text*.

⁶⁵MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 317.

⁶⁶Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 399.

The educational terms “discipline” and “instruction” are often lumped together as a reiteration of the same idea, but each word has a distinctive nuance. The word translated “discipline” (ESV), “training” (NIV), or “nurture” (KJV) refers to the comprehensive education of a child (Acts 7:22; 22:3; 2 Tim 3:16; Titus 2:12). While “instruction” (ESV) or “admonition” (KJV) refers to instances in the training process requiring some kind of stated correction. The twofold sense of biblical parenting suggest having both a pedagogy governing how you teach and capitalizing on individual opportunities to teach and correct as they come about.

The primary motive shaping a parent’s pedagogy is that it is “of the Lord” (v. 4).⁶⁷ It is unclear whether this means parents teach their children to learn Christ by way of putting off the old self and putting on the new as was earlier directed to the Christian community (4:20–24), or to instruct their children as if Christ himself stands before them. Each explanation certainly makes sense, even if the originally intended meaning is unclear. Lenski also describes the difficulty commentators have had in describing the type of genitive “of the Lord” is. Some have termed it “an objective, a subjective, a characterizing, a source, and a relation genitive.”⁶⁸ Clearly “of the Lord” cannot mean all of these. What can be said conclusively is the instruction should not be merely “human or humanistic or moralistic discipline.”⁶⁹ If the source of parents’ instruction does not find its end in the divine, then it will inevitably be found insufficient. The general principle is that the type of instruction parents provide should lead their children to obedience to and knowledge of the Lord himself. In fact, the instruction children receive through parents is

⁶⁷Thielman, Yarbrough, and Stein, *Ephesians*, 402.

⁶⁸Lenski, *Ephesians*, 651.

⁶⁹Lenski, *Ephesians*, 651–52.

supplied by the Lord Jesus.⁷⁰ Thus, the reason for children's obedience and the impetus for parents teaching is their devotion to the same Lord.

Timothy: The Byproduct of Biblical Parenting (2 Tim 3:14–15)

Second Timothy 3:14–15 builds on what has been said in the previous passages. Timothy is an example of one who has been raised in biblical knowledge which God used to bring about faith in Christ. As an adult Christian Timothy was called to continue in what he had learned, first from his believing mother and grandmother (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim 1:5), then from Paul as his father in the faith (Acts 16:3; 1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2). The Christian faith began in Timothy's childhood and continued throughout his life. Thus, Timothy's faith was not his own, but learned from those who were charged to bring him up in the Lord (2 Tim 1:5). Each believing parent should take seriously God's promises as they raise their children. God has given the responsibility to parents of raising children from infancy in the knowledge of God and his Word.

The Impact of Godly Teachers (1 Tim 3:14–15a)

Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin explain that Paul shifts from the subject of persecution of believers in 2 Timothy 3:1–13 to promote endurance in Timothy in 3:14–17 by drawing to remembrance two important factors in his life: his godly teachers and his knowledge in Scripture.⁷¹ Therefore, Paul's purpose in drawing Timothy's attention to his formation (presumably from Paul, Lois, Eunice, and others) is to emphasize a faith prepared to endure both present and future trials. In short, if Timothy has had any doubts

⁷⁰Thielman, Yarbrough, and Stein, *Ephesians*, 402.

⁷¹Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992).

how he would endure what was before him, he need not turn to something novel, for what he had learned already contained everything that was required.⁷²

Timothy could trust what he had learned because of the trust he had in those from whom he had learned it (3:14). Donald Guthrie says,

The character of teachers closely reflects the character of what is taught; and since Timothy knew well the integrity not only of the apostle Paul, but also of his own mother and grandmother and others who had helped him arrive at an understanding of the Christian truth, he may rest assured that he was not himself deceived.⁷³

From his earliest years Timothy could trust the instruction he received in holy Scripture because of the trust he was able to place in his teachers. Further, as he grew in his ability to understand and believe in Scripture for himself, he was able to then reverse the same test; taking his belief in holy Scripture and using it to measure the lifestyle of his teachers in whom he had trusted. Timothy also had experienced those false teachers who had been so active against Timothy and Paul's work in the gospel to the point of persecution (2 Tim 3:1–9). Unlike Timothy, who Paul said was to “continue in what you have learned” (3:14), these false teachers were always trying to advance something new, “always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth” (3:7).⁷⁴

Philip Towner explains that equating a teaching's reliability with the character of the teacher themselves was a standard mode of measuring truth claims in Paul's context.⁷⁵ At a point in history where much of the Gospels and New Testament had not been written let alone canonized, passing on its content from one faithful witness to another was the standard practice. Towner says, “To veer from what had been passed on by trustworthy predecessors, without some good reason, was the exception and not the

⁷²Lea, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*.

⁷³Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009).

⁷⁴Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*.

⁷⁵Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006).

rule.”⁷⁶ One example of this exception to the rule was Paul’s confrontation of Peter on issues of circumcision (Gal 2:11–14). It is Timothy’s past formation and upbringing that prepared him for faith and enabled him not only to enter the line of witnesses who pass on the gospel, but to stand strong through both the new teaching and persecution that Paul indicated.

Ben Witherington indicates the “sacred writings” to which Paul refers are none other than the Old Testament Scriptures. Acts 16:1 identifies Timothy’s father as a Gentile, making his Jewish mother Eunice and grandmother Lois responsible for his education in the Torah. Witherington suggests Timothy’s upbringing in the Torah may have been the reason for Paul’s earlier example from the life of Moses. If Timothy received a standard Jewish education, then he would have been educated in the Torah from the age of five.⁷⁷

The previous instruction Timothy had received should not be underemphasized; it was of life-altering importance. R. C. H. Lenski shows that the two aorist verbs in 2 Timothy 3:14 “learned” (ἐμαθεῖς) and “believed” (ἐπιστώθης) are statements of past facts.⁷⁸ They are not in debate but have happened and are assumed to be true. Many people can learn things that they do not truly believe, but Timothy has both learned them and knows them to be true. Lenski says, “These points are made clear by the context which extends back to Timothy’s earliest childhood and reaches to the present moment in which he is asked ever to remain in these things since he knows even at this

⁷⁶Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.

⁷⁷Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 359.

⁷⁸R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946), 836.

moment from whom he received these things.”⁷⁹ Even though Paul considers Timothy his child in the faith, he does not assume responsibility for his conversion.

Paul directs Timothy’s attention both to who and what formed his faith from early childhood. It was Eunice and Lois that were first responsible for raising Timothy in their faith, but they were not the means of bringing about his assurance. Lenski says it was because they brought him up in the “sacred writings” that made Timothy certain of what he believed.⁸⁰ Thus, parents, grandparents, or whoever may be charged with raising a child must realize merely moral teaching is insufficient. The Word of God was the instrument of change that brought Timothy to certainty of faith, while Eunice and Lois were the agents put in Timothy’s life to shape him by God’s Word.

John Calvin is not confident that everything Timothy may have been taught was authoritative. Calvin emphasizes that which Timothy knew to be true (3:14). Only Scripture can be fully trusted. Therefore, any child raised early with the reading of Scripture is far better equipped for defense against any “deception” to their faith.⁸¹ It is a credit to Timothy’s mother and grandmother that they put Scripture before him and not their own doctrine. And to any who receives so generous an upbringing Calvin wrote, “it ought to be reckoned a remarkable instance of the kindness of God, if any person from his earliest years, has thus acquired a knowledge of the Scriptures.”⁸² The example of Eunice and Lois is a worthy model for raising children to both learn the faith and be protected from the wayward attacks that will come against it. That is perhaps why Paul directs Timothy to his earliest knowledge of Scripture.

⁷⁹Lenski, *Timothy*, 836.

⁸⁰Lenski, *Timothy*, 837.

⁸¹Calvin and Calvin Translation Society, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, 247–48.

⁸²Calvin and Calvin Translation Society, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, 248.

God's Use of the Knowledge of Scripture (1 Tim 3:15b)

Timothy's instruction stands in contrast to all other teaching, particularly that of false teachers, because it can make him "wise for salvation," which comes "through faith in Christ Jesus" (3:15b). Towner says the Old Testament Scriptures do not lead to salvation themselves but have the "power to lead to salvation" when a gospel lens is applied to the holy writings then a saving faith can come about.⁸³ Likewise, the potential of any biblical knowledge that may have been stored during someone's upbringing is released when met with faith in Christ. Whether faith or knowledge comes first, both work together when one believes in Christ. If, however, parents wait for faith before teaching with biblical knowledge, then faith may never come, since Scripture itself is a primary means by which God brings people to salvation (Rom 10:17).

Guthrie draws out the obvious stumbling block to any who might advocate for the reading of Scripture as sufficient for salvation, namely, the reality of unbelieving Jews. Without an operational faith that finds its locus in Christ, Scripture is incapable of doing what it is purposed to do. Guthrie explains, "The power of the Scriptures is directed to a particular end, to make you wise for salvation."⁸⁴ Any who tries to attain such wisdom apart from faith in Christ will ultimately fail. Believing parents then are reminded that they are to teach the Scriptures with the goal of imparting an operational faith in Christ.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present chapter does not permit an exhaustive discussion of every passage pertaining to Christian parents' responsibility to raise their children to be disciples of Jesus Christ.⁸⁵ The six passages discussed here in chapter 2—Genesis 18:17–

⁸³Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.

⁸⁴Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*.

⁸⁵There are numerous other passages about parenting not addressed in this chapter, but worthy

19, 22:6–8, Deuteronomy 6:4–9, Proverbs 1:8–19, Ephesians 6:1–4, and 2 Timothy 3:14–15—reveal the plan and instruction of God for his people to raise up succeeding generations to be faithful to the Lord. The diversity of genres covered (narrative, law, wisdom literature, epistle, and pastoral epistle) shows the prominence of the theme of raising children in the Lord across Scripture. In these texts, parents are provided with a God-ordained impetus to take their responsibility to raise their children in the Lord seriously. They are given practical instruction in how to do it, and a model of what it might look like.

of noting to develop a fuller biblical understanding of the subject. In the Old Testament the Pentateuch speaks to the subject as well as Josh 4:20–24, 24:15, Judg 2:10, numerous Psalms, and the book of Proverbs in particular. There are also numerous New Testament passages worth consulting—Acts 2:38–39, Col 3:20–21, Titus 2:2–8, Heb 12:5–11, and 1 Pet 5:2–3.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL SUPPORT FOR PARENTS BEING THE PRIMARY DISCIPLE-MAKERS OF THEIR CHILDREN

Many Christians today and throughout church history have recognized the responsibility of parents to disciple their children. In the context of Christian schools, the discipleship of children must serve to aid, support, and complement the ministry of discipleship that takes place in Christian homes. Parents and the Christian schools should work in partnership for the good of the child. Each party must see the child's Christian formation as the highest goal, with the parents taking the lead in the child's discipleship. There are a number of contemporary models for Christian education and each must address how to partner with parents in the discipleship of their children.

Church Tradition: Parental Duties in Raising and Educating Children

The conviction of Christian parents that they are to disciple their children is not new to church history. However, the context out of which parents act out that conviction is always changing. Throughout the history of the church, its leaders have responded to society's changing contexts and sought to answer for parents the "how to" of raising children to be disciples of Christ. It is worth considering how the church and her leaders have understood this responsibility in the past. Though their model is not a perfect fit for today's context, the way they faced different problems may inform parents today.

Jesus and Children

To gain a Christian understanding of child rearing, Jesus' own interactions with children must set the foundation for approaching the issue. Jesus sets an example for his disciples through his every word and deed (particularly with children for the sake of

this discussion). Jesus at times elevated children before others because children exist naturally in the humble state that others should emulate. Jesus called a child to himself saying, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 18:3). Jesus also rebuked his disciples for censuring people who brought children forward to be blessed by him (Mark 10:13–16). Elsewhere Jesus accepted the praise offered him from the mouths of children, saying of them, “Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise” (Matt 21:16). Jesus put children forward as examples on several occasions precisely because they are lowly. Judith Gundry-Volf connects this understanding of children with the Beatitudes because children share the low place in society with those Jesus calls “blessed” (Matt 5:3–12).¹ When others would have kept them in the background, Jesus’ ethic is that the first will be last and the last will be first (Matt 20:16).

As often as Jesus spoke about children, elevated them, and showed concern for them as objects of care, he never actually spoke to them. W. A. Strange reports that except for two words to Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:41), Jesus never spoke directly to children.² Instead the primary way Jesus related to children was through their parents. Strange notes, “Jesus did not isolate children from their family settings. Children appear in the gospel narratives mainly as a focus of parental concern.”³ In the numerous examples of Jesus healing children, it is always on behalf of the parents who intercede for them.⁴ While Jesus spoke directly to other marginalized groups such as women, the sick,

¹Judith M. Gundry-Volf, “The Least and the Greatest: Children in the New Testament,” in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 38.

²W. A. Strange, *Children in the Early Church: Children in the Ancient World, the New Testament and the Early Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 62.

³Strange, *Children in the Early Church*, 62.

⁴Here is a list of several parents interceding on behalf of their children: Mark 7:24–30; Matt 15:21–28; Mark 9:14–29; Matt 17:14–21; Luke 9:37–43; Matt 8:5–13; Luke 7:11–17.

and the poor—and even called them to follow him—he never did this with children.. Strange explains, “He did not speak to them; he did not call them to discipleship. The coming of the kingdom of God did not make children into adults, but affirmed their childhood.”⁵ In Jesus’ interactions, a child’s identity was found in their family. It is parents who are responsible for their children and for all the things Jesus calls parents to, such as discipleship. That same call to children is to be understood through their parents.

In Matthew 18:1–5 Jesus equates service to children as service to Christ himself. To receive children becomes a mark of discipleship. No disciple is better poised to fulfill this service than the parents of the children themselves. Gundry-Volf says, “Thus, to be great in the reign of God, disciples have to love and serve children.”⁶ In the context of the home this means parents are to care for their children’s spiritual and physical wellbeing. And, with just as much force, parents must bear the responsibility for causing their young disciples to stumble. When Jesus said, “but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt 18:6), parents became the “whoever” most at risk should their child’s wellbeing be neglected. The first years of a child’s life have a formative effect on how they live. Therefore, the neglect of discipleship from parents to children may well be one of the primary stumbling blocks to a child’s eternal well-being. If Jesus warns that the terrible death by drowning in the depths of the sea is better than causing a child to stumble, then parents should at least count the cost of the spiritual neglect of their children. While all disciples of Christ are accountable for their treatment of children, parents are the ones most likely to incur either the blessings or the curses for how they lead children.

⁵Strange, *Children in the Early Church*, 64.

⁶Gundry-Volf, “The Least and the Greatest,” 43.

The Early Church and Children

The impression of children's place within the Christian community in the New Testament is one of belonging. In his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians Paul even addresses children directly (Eph 6:1–3; Col 3:20). The presence of children, however, did not seem to alter the content and form of worship as it does in some modern worship services. Strange suggests that during Paul's farewell sermon at Troas, Paul did not lighten his content or length out of any consideration for the younger people that may have been there.⁷ This may well be the reason why the young man Eutychus found himself dozing off in the window (Acts 20:7–12). Thus, the question arises: Where then did children within the community of faith receive an education appropriate to their younger faculties and social position?

The New Testament witness presents the home and family as the proper place for children's spiritual education. The direct acknowledgement of children by Paul in Ephesians and Colossians would have been socially radical for the time.⁸ The *patria potestas* of Roman society gave fathers virtually unlimited power over their children, but in the Christian community fathers and children have mutual responsibilities and limits toward one another.⁹ This shows it was appropriate for children to receive part of their instruction from within the church, since the New Testament Epistles were not for private study but to be read in worship as is mentioned in Colossians 4:16. But even the content of those addresses addressed relationships in the home! It was an affirmation of social norms for Paul to instruct children to respect and honor their parents, but more radical is the mutual responsibility that parents have in bringing up their children. Raising children to be disciples of Christ set limitations on how far a parent's authority can go (Eph 6:4).

⁷Strange, *Children in the Early Church*, 70.

⁸Frank Thielman, Robert Yarbrough, and Robert Stein, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 367–68.

⁹Peter Thomas. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 445.

Strange explains how this instruction affirms Jesus' vision for the family, "Here in Colossians and Ephesians, we see a practical expression of Jesus' vision for the family and the kingdom of God. Here the family is no longer an autocratic institution, but a place for all members to grow together in their common life in Christ."¹⁰ Children's spiritual wellbeing cannot be ignored or forfeited; children and parents have rights and responsibilities toward building up one another.

While the letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians uniquely address children, in the rest of the New Testament letters the instruction of children is relegated to the household by mothers and fathers. The Pastoral Epistles follow conventional social roles, maintaining higher positions of authority over the lower. These social roles are set in the context of qualifications for church leadership. They do not suggest an oppressive regime, but fathers demonstrated their qualification to lead the church by their ability to lead their family.

The church's hierarchy of authority starts in the home. Those who cannot pastor their children and families are ill fit to pastor God's larger flock (1 Tim 3:4, 12). Similarly, mothers' status in the church, whether they be widowed or married, are also linked to their ability to raise children and manage their households (1 Tim 5:4, 5:10, 5:14; Titus 1:3–4). In Titus 2:4, young women are instructed to "love their children." According to O. M. Bakke, mothers were most directly involved in the children's upbringing.¹¹ The well-ordered household was one with well-raised children. The highest offices and most respectable roles within the church are often judged based on what takes place in the home. This is likely because families cannot hide their flaws from one another. Therefore, readiness to take responsibility for the church is often proved by the

¹⁰Strange, *Children in the Early Church*, 75.

¹¹O. M. Bakke, "Upbringing of Children in the Early Church: The Responsibility of Parents, Goal and Methods," *Studia Theologica* 60, no. 2 (2006): 154.

fruit of well-governed families.

Following the New Testament period, much of church life was a household affair and church leaders delegated responsibilities that reflected the hierarchical structure by which the household was governed. Fathers and husbands were to govern their family's upbringing and wellbeing. Mothers and wives were to respect their husband's authority and reputation while tending to the education of their children. Children were to honor their parents and obey them.¹² In the First Letter of Clement, written in AD 96, Clement addressed the twofold role of husband-fathers within the church, "Let us instruct the young in the discipline of the fear of God. Let us direct our wives to that which is good. . . Let your children be partakers of the discipline of Christ" (*1 Clem.* 21.6 and 8).¹³ The family, both wife and children, is to receive their instruction from the husband and father. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna addressed the wife and mother's responsibility "to train their children in the training of the fear of God (Polycarp, *To the Philippians* 4.2).¹⁴ What is clear is that raising, educating, and guiding the family, specifically children, was to take place primarily within the home.

Christians of the first few centuries did not follow the pattern of the Jewish synagogue to form their own distinctive school. O. M. Bakke points out that the question of whether or not to send their children to public schools and make them pupils would have been rare in Christian communities since so few Christians could afford to contemplate such a decision.¹⁵ Christians who could afford to formerly educate their children chose to do so within the context of the pagan schooling environment. Thus, the

¹²Strange, *Children in the Early Church*, 77.

¹³"First Clement: Clement of Rome," accessed September 25, 2018, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-hoole.html>.

¹⁴Polycarp, *To the Philippians* (Lightfoot Translation), accessed September 25, 2018, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/polycarp-lightfoot.html>.

¹⁵Bakke, "Upbringing of Children in the Early Church," 153.

Christian faith that children of believers were to learn was relegated entirely to the home.¹⁶ The reasons that Christians did not find the need to pursue a distinctly Christian education may vary, but what is sure is the understanding that raising children in the faith was a family affair.¹⁷

Church father Jerome wrote of the responsibility of parents for the actions of their children. Jerome recalled that the priest Eli was condemned by God for his too-gentle treatment of his adult sons despite their grievous sins (1 Sam 2). Jerome likewise called to mind that men are disqualified from being elders because of the disorderly living of their children. Thus, he questioned, if parents are responsible for the decisions of their adult children, “how much more must they be responsible for them when, still unweaned and weak” (*Ep.* 107.6).¹⁸ Bakke points out that while Jerome does not make raising children in the Lord a matter of salvation, parents should nevertheless take seriously their children’s upbringing and the potential consequences for their failures.¹⁹ Jerome’s contemporary John Chrysostom went on to take an even firmer view on parental responsibility.

For Chrysostom the ascetic life was ideal but not attainable for everyone and, being a minority lifestyle, insufficient to Christianize the world. Therefore, Chrysostom emphasized parents’ responsibility to raise their children in the Christian faith.²⁰ In one of

¹⁶Strange, *Children in the Early Church*, 81

¹⁷Strange posits that since Christians did not need to learn the biblical languages they did not deem it necessary to form their own schools like the synagogues. The biblical languages were part of the synagogue’s curriculum, but for early Christians the New Testament and the Greek translation of the Old Testament were written in their native tongue. Additionally, many Christians shared with their pagan neighbors a cultural identity which they did not desire to throw off. Though they had rejected paganism, they allowed their children pagan educations, not withdrawal from society. Strange summarizes, “Their attitude to their children’s education was an expression of this open yet critical attitude.” Strange, *Children in the Early Church*, 81.

¹⁸“Church Fathers: Letter 107 (Jerome),” accessed October 23, 2018, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001107.htm>.

¹⁹Odd Magne Bakke, *When Children Became People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 162,

²⁰Bakke, *When Children Became People*, 162–63.

his homilies on Ephesians, Chrysostom exhorted, “Let everything be secondary with us to the provident care we should take of our children, and our *bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*”²¹

Unlike Jerome, Chrysostom brought salvation to the forefront of parents’ minds regarding their duties to their children. For Chrysostom the weight of parents’ responsibility is that their child’s soul is at stake, and that reality should not depart from their minds. He went further by asking, can one unworthy of being a bishop (for not controlling his children) be counted worthy to enter the kingdom of heaven?²² Chrysostom’s language is severe, but Bakke points out that “Chrysostom says nothing explicit about the fate of those parents who had attempted to provide a fit upbringing, but whose children later abandoned the norms of a respectable Christian life.”²³ What is certain is that, for Chrysostom, to neglect the Christian education of one’s children was to neglect one’s own soul. The weight of responsibility put on parents cannot be more severe. Other early Christian writings such as the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions* also made parents’ duty to raise children in Christian ideals a necessity. Parents would have to answer before the judgement seat of God for the rebellion of their children, and the neglect of this Christian duty would bring a parent’s own salvation into question.²⁴ These other writings, however, do not address the state of parents who, though being faithful in the upbringing of their children, nevertheless have children who have gone after sin. Early church leaders had better opportunity to self-reflect as Christianity surpassed the Roman Empire and experienced more freedom to develop its doctrine and consider its educational approach.

²¹John Chrysostom and William John Copeland, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians: And Homilies on the Epistle to the Ephesians, of S. John Chrysostom* (London: J.H. Parker, 1840), 340.

²²Bakke, *When Children Became People*, 166,

²³Bakke, *When Children Became People*, 166.

²⁴Bakke, *When Children Became People*, 215.

Medieval Education

The early church fathers placed emphasis on catechesis for instructing young children in the home, but no attempt had been made by them to replace the Roman school system out of which many of them had been educated. Kenneth Gangel and Warren Benson explain that as the Roman Empire drew to a close and Christian influence expanded, no attempt was made by Christian leaders to develop their own primary educational system.²⁵ Christian education came to incorporate the same pillars of Greco/Roman education, the trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music), only stripped of its pagan influences.²⁶ The church father Augustine famously coined that all truth is God's truth. In education this shift helped early Christian leaders reclaim any truth from pagan philosophy and education as gifts from God made available to the world by divine grace. Although the pagan philosophers were credited for mining the truth from God's providence they used it perversely for the worship of other things.²⁷ Thus, Christian education has ever since been encouraged to reclaim any truth uncovered in philosophy for its proper Christian end.

The turbulent times following the Roman Empire's decline and fall included barbarian invasions, shifts of power, ecclesiastical infighting, and a growing Muslim threat that left Christianity "essentially stagnating because it was fighting for its very life during this five-hundred-year period (500-1000)."²⁸ This tumultuous time made way for little educational advancement and permitted only a few shining lights to make way for a brighter future in Christian education. These shining lights included monasteries that

²⁵Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 95–96.

²⁶Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 96.

²⁷Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 103.

²⁸Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 106.

formed across Europe providing an education that contributed to the field primarily through the preservation of knowledge and copying manuscripts.²⁹ Monastic schools were largely replaced by cathedral schools that became urban centers, and Cathedral schools made way for the university. Universities were made possible in part because a middle class grew out of an increase in commerce brought about largely by the Crusades and the intellectual inflow they brought in from the Arab world.³⁰

Education in the home was minimized due to several factors. The primary factor was a mostly illiterate population. Young people might receive informal educations through guilds or chivalric training becoming apprentices of trades or pages to knights, but these apprenticeships were done for long periods outside the home and were not religious in function.³¹ Formal education was religious, but held outside of the home, in monasteries and church schools, and in Latin—a language many parents did not speak. Thus, education and discipleship were taken outside of the home during the Middle Ages.

The Reformation and Children

A great shift in education came about as the result of the Reformation. Starting with Martin Luther, the Reformers sought to recapture education and return it to the home. Gangel and Benson explain that for Martin Luther, “Family government was to be the root of all other government, and where the root is bad, he argued, the trunk cannot be good. . . .He argued that bringing up children in the fear and knowledge of God was more efficacious than pilgrimages, masses, or the building of churches.”³² For Luther, the state was to intervene with children’s education only when parents were neglecting their duty,

²⁹Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 108.

³⁰Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 108–9.

³¹Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 106–7.

³²Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 139–40.

as so many were in his day.³³

The Reformation was an inherently educational process since no reformation of faith can happen without some attention to education. Gangel and Benson conclude, “Insofar as it is impossible to further the Christian faith without educational processes of some kind, all the Reformers were educators.”³⁴ Since the tenets of faith had escaped the of knowledge so many during the Middle Ages, the Reformers advocated for catechisms to instruct children in the faith; Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox all created catechisms of their own. The Reformation restored the Bible as the only infallible source with direct access to divine truth, rather than the church. For that reason, efforts were made to translate the Bible into the vernacular, to teach people to read, and to put the Bible in people’s hands so they could seek truth for themselves and discern error when it was presented.³⁵

One of the ways the Reformers sought to make education universal was the emphasis that Bible teaching should take place within the family. C. B. Eavey describes that, “Both Luther and Calvin, as well as other Protestant leaders, urged upon parents the solemn duty of instructing their children in Bible truth. Among the Dutch and the Scotch, family teaching was much practiced.”³⁶ Because of the impetus for biblical literacy the Reformation presented a context out of which universal education could begin to be tried and actualized in various states. And, although education from the state was supported by many Reformers, it was to be built on a Christian foundation and subservient to the spiritual education children were to receive in the home from their parents. The example of Martin Luther and his emphasis on the home connects with the spirit of education that

³³Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 139.

³⁴Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 147.

³⁵C. B. Eavey, *History of Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 154–55.

³⁶Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 156.

was present across the Reformation.

Luther on Raising Children

By the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic church had diverged so far from biblical teaching as a point of emphasis that Reformers made a noticeable shift in emphasis from the monastery to the home. In the context of the home, Christian formation regained its footing as a family matter. The difference from earlier Christian writings, however, is that many parents being raised within the foibles of the Roman Catholic church required help in understanding how to rightly raise their children in the Lord. The works of Martin Luther therefore display more of a practical, “how-to” model as well as a theological one for understanding child rearing. Luther advocated catechism as a means of instructing children as well as the intervention of Christian authorities when parental obligations were being neglected.

Luther exalted marriage as the estate God most richly blessed, being God’s primary design for humanity.³⁷ One of marriage’s primary functions is the propagation of children brought up in faith. Jane Strohl points out that parenting as a vocation, “exemplifies Luther’s theology of the cross.”³⁸ Parenting requires a life of sacrifice. Luther understood that monastic orders sought holiness through self-denial, but this was feigned since fewer sacrifices were made when compared with submitting to the ordinary, self-denying work of raising children. Strohl lists the four essential duties that Luther encapsulated within parental responsibility: “to provide the sacrament of baptism for infants, to form children in the true faith as they mature, to attend to their education

³⁷Michael A. Mullett, *Martin Luther*, 2nd ed., Routledge Historical Biographies (New York: Routledge, 2015), 264.

³⁸Jane E. Strohl, “The Child in Luther’s Theology: ‘For What Purpose Do We Older Folks Exist, Other Than to Care for . . . the Young?’,” in Bunge, *The Child in Christian Thought*, 140.

for vocation, and to provide them with a suitable spouse in a timely fashion.”³⁹ This study focuses on the formation of children and attending to their education.

Luther understood God to be the only one who could bring about any real growth, yet parents are most significantly used by God as the means of bringing about that growth. Parents are to cultivate faith and virtue in their children. Luther thought parents should cultivate this faith with early attention because children are most receptive in their early years. Children must be adequately prepared if they are to make it through the trials of puberty and reach full adulthood.⁴⁰ One of Luther’s primary strategies for the formation of children was catechism. Luther put catechetical responsibilities in the hands of pastors for churches and parents for families.⁴¹ The family was the natural center of education for a child where, in addition to catechizing their children, parents would, “join them in prayers, teach them their proper duties, and administer discipline.”⁴² For those who neglected this duty, Luther believed that the fourth commandment also applied to the paternal roles of prince and pastor to step in to enforce the proper education of children.⁴³

While Luther understood children’s spiritual education to come primarily from the home, this did not negate parents’ responsibility to provide their children a liberal and vocational education as well. In Luther’s program education would be universal and cover the liberal arts.⁴⁴ For those parents who neglected their children’s education to confine them to work, “Luther soundly chastises [them] for putting their own economic

³⁹Strohl, “The Child in Luther's Theology,” 140–41.

⁴⁰Strohl, “The Child in Luther's Theology,” 145.

⁴¹John H. Westerhoff and O. C. Edwards, *A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow Co., 1981), 123.

⁴²Strohl, “The Child in Luther's Theology,” 146.

⁴³Strohl, “The Child in Luther's Theology,” 147.

⁴⁴Strohl, “The Child in Luther's Theology,” 150.

interests before their offspring's vocational opportunities."⁴⁵ An educated child is to the benefit of themselves and society at large. The neglect of a child's education puts off the future best of society for present convenience. For this reason, Germany and other Reformation hubs began to see the implementation of state education.

Post-Reformation Education

In Holland a unique model was devised in the early seventeenth century that involved all levels of society: family, church, and state. Schools were under civil authority, but education was to take place in the home and church as well. The education of the home, church, and civil authorities were each to be primarily concerned with religious education. The end result was intended to produce a pious society.⁴⁶ Parents were responsible to train their entire household in Christian truth, and the church was to admonish those who neglected these duties.⁴⁷

Although emphasis was put on education in the home during the Reformation, there was a continued need from parents in how to do it. The need of parents for help from ministers and theologians seemed to abound in the post-Reformation era as well. One genre that emerged during this time was that of the family handbook. Several Puritan authors and Evangelicals after them took on the responsibility to charge and instruct parents how to go about raising a godly home. In his family handbook, *Christian Directory*, Puritan Richard Baxter described the worship of God in the home of families as by "divine appointment" and "men's duty to perform."⁴⁸ These handbooks were made to serve families, not only to understand their duties, but to grasp how to perform them.

⁴⁵Strohl, "The Child in Luther's Theology," 151.

⁴⁶Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 168.

⁴⁷Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 168.

⁴⁸Baxter's original title was called *Christian Directory*, but the above reference is being cited from a modernized version. Richard Baxter and Randall J. Pederson, *The Godly Home* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 60.

In his handbook, Puritan William Gouge chastised fathers who neglect their duty to lead both their wives and children in religious duties. To those neglectful fathers Gouge wrote, “Oh, men of low value, unworthy to be husbands of wives. . . . Surely as the man carries away the greatest reputation and honor when a family is well governed (though it be by the joint care and wisdom of his wife) so he lies most open to the judgement of God if the government of it is neglected.”⁴⁹ These guides were a part of the effort to put worship, discipleship, and religious education back into the home. Although there was a concentrated effort to restore education to its rightful place after the Reformation, with the advent of rationalism, the proper aim and place of education were never fully realized. The 17th century educational revolutionary John Comenius is often traced to be the source of the modern system of education, yet he too believed the aim of education, “was a means of bringing individuals to accept Christ as Savior, of teaching them how to live the Christian life, and of training them for service to God.”⁵⁰ Although Comenius is a father of the modern educational system, his emphasis on personal salvation and Christian living were not adopted by later predecessors of his model.

The clearest understanding of children in Christian tradition is that they are both valuable and the responsibility of their parents. The church’s witness provides no model where parents are not primarily responsible for bringing their children up in the Lord. At the same time, parents are not excluded from seeking help where they can to provide their offspring an education. Therefore, whether a child’s education is primarily public or private, parents can choose as they deem most appropriate, but to ensure that a child’s education is also thoroughly Christian, parents must be actively involved. The weight of each child’s upbringing falls first on parents, not the schools to which they send

⁴⁹William Gouge, Scott. Brown, and Joel R. Beeke, *Building a Godly Home* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013), 91.

⁵⁰Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 170.

their children. Although many Christian programs and institutions have developed, and Christian schools and resources abound, parents should consider how the church tradition and the biblical witness regard the Christian formation of children as a parental responsibility. Christian education, in its many manifestations today, comes from a rich tradition that has laid the weight of the responsibility at the feet of Christian parents. The section below shifts attention from the church's view of children to how Christian schools must acknowledge the biblical and church tradition that calls on parents to educate their children in the Lord and come alongside them as partners in the responsibility. However, a short explanation is first necessary to see how both public and private education have manifested themselves today, and why Christian education must take place in the sphere of private education.

Public and Private Education in America

Although the Reformation had profound effects on education across Europe, the religious conflicts that proceeded placed a seed of doubt on religious ideas that had otherwise been unquestioned for centuries and began the thought that there might be a better way elsewhere.⁵¹ Philosophers such as Francis Bacon and John Locke began exploring and purporting the non-religious ideas of materialism and rationalism; ideas which would one day command dominance in the educational arena. Eavey comments about these shifts from Christian education, "The consequence was the exaltation in general education of intellect above all else."⁵² The emphasis of reason over revelation began to make shifts in the purpose of education. Although Luther's Germany, Calvin's Geneva, and the state schools of Holland were all public forms of education, they each were unequivocally Christian. Public education today, specifically in America, does not

⁵¹Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 165.

⁵²Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 167.

share the Christian foundation of these earlier models.

Education in early America was uniformly Christian. Though it took on different forms in New England, the Middle Colonies, and the South, God was the center of education in America and the Bible was the primary book. Likewise, “the church had been prevailingly the originator and sponsor of education.”⁵³ Before the invention of Sunday schools, reading Scripture and catechesis were the primary tools of education and schoolmasters were responsible both to pray for and train their students in Christian living.⁵⁴

With time the Enlightenment had a sweeping effect on America, and in education the Christian emphasis soon gave way to the elevation of human reason. Although the Christian faith was accepted by most, Enlightenment thought made possible the divorce of Christian life from intellectual life.⁵⁵ This divorce took place in education as well with the separation of church and state, a principle upon which the United States was founded since its independence.⁵⁶ The church could no longer be the “originator and sponsor of education,” it was given over to the state to be secularized. Faith was deemphasized in education while the senses and reason were exalted.⁵⁷ The United States’ founding principal of separating church and state was not presented to eliminate religion, but to prevent the sectarianism which had plagued the past. Eavey writes that the nation’s founders, “were not asking that public-supported education be wholly secular, having no religious content, but that no governmental authority should give preference to any religion or any denomination. Yet the unforeseen result of this amendment was the

⁵³Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 203.

⁵⁴Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 203.

⁵⁵Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 204.

⁵⁶Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 205–9.

⁵⁷Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 205.

complete secularization of public education.”⁵⁸

While this discussion cannot sufficiently cover all the educational shifts that have taken place in America, it will suffice to point out a few key shifts that have led to the present state of education and the need for quality Christian education. As was pointed out above, the separation of church and state ultimately led to the complete secularization of public education. One of the consequences of this shift was the production of multiple generations of students raised without the religious and moral underpinning which the United States’ founding fathers enjoyed. This multi-generational exposure to a wholly secularized education has had the additional effect of secularizing a large part of the society and flattening the morality of its youth. With a secular morality, or lack thereof, predominating the culture, many Christians seeking to raise their children in the faith have turned to Christian education. Modern Christian education has largely sought to return to older systems, that provide Christian morality consistent with parents’ and put God back at the center of every educational experience. However, one of the unforeseen consequences of the secularization of education—where church and state are separate—was the secularization of the home—where church and home are separate too. This false bifurcation has confused some parents about the responsibility of Christian schools. They do not and cannot replace the Christian formation to take place in the home, but, when properly functioning, serve to support it. The discussion that follows concerns itself with those parents who have turned to Christian education and seeks to put proper emphasis on the partnership between parents and schools, and the responsibility of parents as disciple-makers of their children.

⁵⁸Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 209.

Partnering with Parents in the Discipleship of Their Children

Christian schools offer an alternative model and morality to parents seeking to raise children in Christ-centered environments. However, Christian schools must be prepared for varying levels of biblical commitment and faithfulness of parents with whom they partner in the education of children. There are some likely to have never attempted to actively disciple their children, or even some who have never considered that the discipleship of their children should be of concern. For that reason, Christian schools should be prepared to address what kind of home conditions they are willing and/or qualified to work with. A family applying for admission to a Christian school whose Christian practice goes no further than a profession of faith may be difficult to work with, if not harmful to the culture of the school. If expectations of parents are not set in the beginning with regards to their children's discipleship, then it is entirely possible that parents will push all the expectations onto others—schools, teachers, and churches.

Parents, Churches, and Schools: Partners in Discipleship

No Christian school can assume full responsibility for the education of children. The home is a place of learning and parents too must recognize their role in educating children. Schools that desire the development of well-formed students that reach their human potential can only attain this goal by partnering with well-formed homes. This will often require schools equipping parents with the tools to make their homes the epicenter of physical, mental, and spiritual development. Because parents entering their children into Christian education will have varied understandings of the parental role in children's discipleship, these schools must be prepared to provide models and tools that equip parents from an introductory level all the way to those who take their children's discipleship very seriously.

From the earliest age, the minds of children are incredibly receptive and unquestioning to learn from those whom they trust. This receptivity of children diminishes with age. If it is not properly fostered children will grow into adults whose minds are not easily shaped or changed. J. C. Ryle says that after nature and grace, “There is nothing more powerful than education. Early habits (if I may so speak) are everything with us, under God. We are made what we are by training. Our character takes the form of that mold into which our first years are cast.”⁵⁹ If a child’s upbringing is not properly formed and informed, then he or she will be living with the lifelong consequences of the failed efforts by parents and teachers.

The Christian school and parents are not to work against each other or replace each other but are to work in partnership for the discipleship of their children.⁶⁰ Many parents have wrongly handed over their responsibility to disciple their children to the church, and in many cases the church has wrongly accepted it.⁶¹ Puritan author Richard Baxter calls the Christian education from parents to children the appointed means by which children first come to know grace, while those who come to know grace in the church are only those who have missed this first blessing of grace in the home.⁶² It is the family that is to be the starting place for religious instruction, while the church is continually responsible for equipping and guiding the family’s overall spiritual growth. Christian schools must be prepared to engage parents who have sought to outsource the

⁵⁹John Charles Ryle, *The Upper Room: Being a Few Truths for the Times* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977) 287–88.

⁶⁰Chris Shirley, “It Takes a Church to Make a Disciple: An Integrative Model of Discipleship for the Local Church,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 50, no. 2 (2008): 221.

⁶¹Michael J. Anthony and Michelle D. Anthony, eds., *A Theology for Family Ministries* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011), 182.

⁶²Richard Baxter and Randall J. Pederson, *The Godly Home* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 119.

discipleship of their children. Contemporary author George Knight rightly addresses how the school, home, and the church are to work together with the same goal in mind:

There is a great need for parent, church workers, and school teachers to gain greater insight into the interdependent nature of their educative functions and to develop effective channels of appreciation and communication. A cooperative stance is important between the Christian teacher in the school and Christian teachers in the home and church, because Christian education is more than Christian schooling. The home, church, and school are working with the most valuable objects on earth, God's children, and each is ideally founded upon the same principles.⁶³

Families must realize that their children's discipleship is a part of their education, a part to which families contribute a great deal. Unlike families, schools and churches lack access to the spiritual development of children as it relates to everything they know. It is in the home that children see most clearly if the content of their parents' worship is worth living outside of church gatherings.

The Roles of Local Churches

While it is true that parents not schools or churches are primarily responsible for the discipleship of their children, it is an error for Christian parents to think they can effectively disciple their children apart from commitment to the local church. Many parents have found Christian radio, television, books, and spirituality to be personally beneficial, yet no consumption of these resources will ever suffice to replace the local church or offer the same means of grace. Horace Bushnell points to the general denial or discouragement of pious children from partaking of the Lord's table as a means of discouraging piety within them, for although they are called Christian they are denied the benefits of the title.⁶⁴ How much more could this be said of those families who, claiming to be Christian, deny themselves and their children both the company of the Lord's people and the benefits of the Lord's table in his church?

⁶³George R. Knight, *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 204.

⁶⁴Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1871), 308–9.

Any aid provided by Christian schools to equip parents in the formation of their children cannot replace the formation provided through worship in the church. Thus, Christian schools must partner with parents and hold them accountable, to the extent they are able, to submit to the authority of local churches, just as children are learning to submit to the authority of parents and teachers. Likewise, schools must partner with churches to provide a program that directs its families to the local church, and schools need the endorsement of churches to show its members that the school conforms to sound Christian instruction.

The church is not a commodity to be consumed as it fits one's desires, but many have attempted nevertheless to "raise Christian families without accountability, without discipline, without responsibility, living apart from the regular benefit of the ordinances."⁶⁵ Part of the discipleship children receive from their parents is watching them display a robust commitment to the church, its leadership, its worship, and its resources. Christian schools must also display that commitment, with each of its staff understanding themselves to be submissive to the Church's authority. Out of that commitment the church aids parents in the spiritual nurture of their children through worship, education, friendship, discipleship, and mission.⁶⁶ Children need to learn from their parents and all their supporting parachurch organizations that an essential part of being a disciple of Christ is being committed to his Church, expressed through a local body. It is unrealistic to expect children to have a higher commitment to the church than their parents do.

While schools can aid parents with discipleship tools for Christian living, schools nevertheless fall short of being able to aid parents in discipleship through

⁶⁵R. Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, eds., *Disciplines of a Godly Family*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 67.

⁶⁶Hughes and Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family*, 68.

Christian worship. Except when schools provide models that can be incorporated into family worship, parents, as members of the church, should not neglect meeting together (Heb 10:25). Therefore, a child's conception of and commitment to the church will be molded primarily by the example of their parents, and parents who are non-committal when it comes to the local church may do so to the devastation of their child's soul.⁶⁷ While the discipleship of children is multifaceted, and churches need to speak into its many component parts, if parents do not commit themselves to a church, then they deny themselves the help the church is otherwise responsible to provide.

One of the formative stages the church provides in equipping parents to disciple their children is developing biblical worldview, especially through biblical worship. Through biblical teaching the church enlightens its congregation to understand what right and wrong are. Parenting is difficult and moral ambiguity makes the task incomprehensibly broad and vague. By establishing right and wrong from God's Word, parents are enabled to draw hard lines from which they can train their children with clarity and begin to mold in them a biblical conscience.⁶⁸ Rightness can govern motive rather than personal gain—children learn to be honest because it pleases God—thus they learn to govern their decisions by the question: Will it please God? Christian schools are best equipped to affirm the right answer to this question, rather than to teach the answer itself. Students do not come to Christian schools in order to learn to ask, “Will it please God,” but rather to practice doing it, since understanding their faith is to come primarily from parents. Likewise, parents' own understanding and practice of pleasing God is connected to the biblical teaching and community they receive from within the church.

An oft missed point is that the discipleship of children will require the discipline of parents. Those qualities a parent desires to see in their children they must

⁶⁷Hughes and Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family*, 68.

⁶⁸Hughes and Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family*, 69.

first model themselves.⁶⁹ The decisions they make, words they choose, and the schedule they keep must all be scrupulously monitored for the benefit of their child's soul. To this point Horace Bushnell writes,

But when we have reached this point, that family government is to govern, we shall find that multitudes of parents who assume the Christian name, have yet no practical sense of the intensely religious character of the house, or the domestic and family state. They go into their office loosely, and without any conception, for the most part, of what their authority means.⁷⁰

The parent's office includes the maintenance of personal spiritual discipline as well as family spiritual discipline; being a student of God's Word and paying attention to right doctrine; seeking the glory of God in all. The parent makes ready their child's heart for faith by being God-like to them in every way, "personating God in the child's feeling and conscience."⁷¹ All this is required of those who would take seriously the discipleship of their children. With so much at stake and so much required the reality that parents cannot do it all without their faith community coming around them is clear.

Family Government

Proper discipleship will take place when the disciplinary part of discipleship is rightly ordered, neither neglected nor abused. God ordained to create everyone through reproduction rather than *ex nihilo*. Parents are placed naturally as the governing authority that is to guide and rule their households. To rule in a way that is distinctly Christian and entirely godly does not permit parents to be slack in how their children are to be raised. Bushnell described parental government as genuine, "only as it bears rule for the same ends that God Himself pursues, in the religious order of the world. True family government will be just as religious as His, neither more nor less."⁷² Families err when

⁶⁹Hughes and Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family*, 70.

⁷⁰Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1871), 316.

⁷¹Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 317.

⁷²Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 318.

their rule does not have “strictly Christian ends.”⁷³ As the Puritan Richard Baxter argued centuries earlier, parents should be motivated to teach their children the “greatest and most necessary things,” because their soul is bound for either eternal salvation or damnation.⁷⁴ The parent who neglects these matters neglects everything. When a parent’s own pride, vanity, personal desires, or fondness interfere with the Christian end that ought to direct their governance, then their poor motives corrupt their own system of government. Things will be religious only in name and this has the cruel effect of making their own government and God’s seem bothersome to their children. Bushnell said the proper family government will be ruled by God because God has set the rules for it.⁷⁵

Like any body of government, the family government will at times be held in order because of the possibility and exercise of discipline. Children are to learn obedience to their parents just as they are to learn obedience to God, and although true piety will not come about from discipline alone, true piety does require obedience. Thus, whether by rod (the instrument of discipline referenced throughout the Proverbs: 13:24, 22:15, 23:13–14, 29:15) or word, discipline is a means a of directing children to take seriously their responsibility to obey. Schools admitting children who have not yet seen a pattern of discipline and obedience evident in the home will have to work doubly with parents to establish structures under which a child can begin to learn submission. True submission however ought to come about through desire, not fear. Bushnell clarifies, “Let the child be brought to do right because it is right, and not because it is unsafe, or appears badly, to do wrong.”⁷⁶ Neither levity nor heavy-handedness are the appropriate means of discipline

⁷³Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 318.

⁷⁴Baxter and Pederson, *The Godly Home*, 116.

⁷⁵Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 319.

⁷⁶Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 320.

because neither have what is right in the eyes of God in mind—to love God through obedience.

A biblical example of parental duplicity is that of Gideon’s father. After hearing from the angel of the Lord that the Lord was with him (Judg 6:12), Gideon measured this statement considering what he had learned from his own father. Gideon questioned, “And where are all his [Yahweh’s] wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’” (Judg 6:13). Though claiming Yahweh as his God and the God of Israel, Gideon’s father nevertheless maintained an alter to Baal for worship (Judg 6:25). Gideon’s father raised a child to doubt the faithfulness of God (Judg 6:13) because his father did not enforce the faith he claimed through action—rather counter-action.

Heavy-handedness is just as harmful and incorrect a mode of governing children as levity and disingenuity. The home is not to be a dictatorship, and those who exact obedience for its own sake sack the home of any freedom it should maintain for a child. Bushnell affirms, “No parent has a right to put oppression on a child, in the name of authority. And if he uses authority in that way, to annoy the child’s peace, and even to forbid his possession of himself, he should not complain, if the impatience he creates grows into a bitter animosity, and finally a stiff rebellion.”⁷⁷ Such parenting lacks the love which is on display for us from our heavenly Father and that parents are to model for their own children. Jesus’ own example was one of humility and sacrifice for the sake of those whom the Lord had given him. Like Jesus washing his disciples’ feet (John 13:1–17), parents should model for their children the behavior they would see from them, rather than demanding it by force. Heavy-handedness only fosters the disciplinary issues schools and parents would prefer to avoid.

⁷⁷Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 328.

The Father disciplines the one he loves (Prov 3:11–12; Heb 12:5–6), and a parent’s discipline is to be acted out of the same love. Douglas Wilson affirms that the child raised in the biblical home, disciplined with love, will look back on their own upbringing as one of love. Stories of spankings will be things to laugh about rather than send the tremor of trauma. The child will understand both the reason for the discipline and the necessity of it in bringing them out of sinful behavior.⁷⁸ Because children too are sinful, the discipline received from parents should work as a stumbling block between their child and hell (Prov 23:13–14). The most difficult part has passed after a child has been disciplined. The child will typically be most receptive to sound wisdom and amiable to true repentance when that storm of dread has been overcome. Parents must then beware of maintaining their disapproval even after a time of discipline has taken place.⁷⁹

For the adult seeking to grow in faith there are many models which contribute to varying degrees to their discipleship. For the child under the authority and observance of their parents, the home is the primary and most effective place for their discipleship training.⁸⁰

The Role of the Christian School

The Christian school can be a part of a family’s faith community, but not the whole of it. A Christian school can provide Word-centered lessons and assignments that require parents’ engagement in their child’s spiritual well-being. While working on faculties that broaden a child’s intellectual capacities, such as memorization, schools can fill spaces with biblical content. Parents, while helping their children complete a Bible

⁷⁸Douglas Wilson, *Standing on the Promises: A Handbook of Biblical Childrearing*, rev. ed. (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1997), 122.

⁷⁹Bushnell warns parents against the danger of maintaining their displeasure even after disciplining their child. The time immediately following discipline, if not spent aiding the “transition to forgiveness” will only breed resentment in the child who cannot see past the present state and sees no fruit born in their penitence. Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 301.

⁸⁰Shirley, “It Takes a Church to Make a Disciple,” 220–24.

assignment, can simultaneously engage them in spiritual disciplines by memorizing Scripture or contemplating a biblical passage. Biblically-centered assignments will be able to relate parents and children back to God's Word, whether the subject be reading, arithmetic, science, or anything else. Christian schools can afford parents educational opportunities to bring every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:5).

The Christian school must recognize its influence on the development of children and the larger culture. Many Christian schools have been established because Christian parents realized that secularized schools often have far reaching effects on a child's faith formation. C. B. Eavey describes the situation well:

A non-religious state school may not be atheistic in its purpose, but it is so in its effect. The true Christian school instills the Christian faith. It is not just a school with an added class in religion but one in which the Bible is the center and core of every subject taught and learned, though the Bible itself may not always be used in class. . . the dominant reason for the existence of day schools is the religious motive.⁸¹

If parents lose sight of the religious motive for which Christian schools exist, then they will confuse their own responsibilities as well as the school's as primarily academic, rather than discipleship-centered. Eavey records the departure from the public school is not to depart with the responsibility of being good citizens, or even to depart from lower academic standards, rather it is the recognition of a higher citizenship to heaven which must come first.⁸² The partnership parents form with Christian schools is an expression of their right and responsibility to educate their children as they deem fit. This includes the right to shield them from anything they deem would be dishonoring to God, and, should anything dishonoring come about, the responsibility remains with parents to correct it and respond appropriately.⁸³

Part of a Christian school's partnership with parents is to understand and help

⁸¹Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 320.

⁸²Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 320.

⁸³Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 326.

parents understand their role in socializing their child. Children learn to be who they are primarily from the examples before them (i.e. the parents). That means schools are unable to compete with or replace the lived example children learn in the home. Much of learning according to Lawrence Richards is informal rather than formal.⁸⁴ The Jewish understanding of childrearing was not an academic program, but one of God-centered living—foreheads, wrists, doorposts, conversations, festivals, laws, and worship were all oriented to revere the Savior of Israel (see Deut 6). Thus, Richards surmises, “Scripture must be communicated as a lived and livable reality!”⁸⁵ If parents do not offer a lived example, a programmatic or curriculum-based solution for raising their children will be insufficient.

The preferred alternative to an intellectual understanding of the Bible is a biblical lifestyle, where children are socialized by what God’s Word looks like. This is the informal turning over of the soil of a child’s heart that makes up much of life. When more formal biblical and practical seeds of education are later planted, they are germinated and sustained by the biblical lifestyle which parents maintain. For parents who feel inadequate to model such a lifestyle, a school can offer Bible-centered aids to help set such practices in place, but parents must recognize that for success, godly living will ultimately be required of them. Richards warns, “The danger in communicating faith’s belief-content, however, lies in communicating it as something which can be accepted intellectually without commitment or response.”⁸⁶ In summary, the Bible’s lessons cannot just be taught but must also be practiced, by parents and the teachers to whom they entrust their children.

⁸⁴Larry Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 194–95.

⁸⁵Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education*, 193.

⁸⁶Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education*, 208.

The School's Approach to Equipping Disciple-Making Parents

It may well be that a parent sees the importance of discipling their children and hears the biblical call to do it but feels ill-equipped about how to put the conviction to practice. Christian schools who advocate for parent-based discipleship will inevitably find parents who fit into this category. These schools will also find parents who are trying to disciple their children, but believe they are ill-prepared to do an adequate job. Christian schools that believe the discipleship of children should come first from parents, must partner with them alongside local churches to provide tools, resources, and models within their educational structures that prepare their parents to better disciple their children.

While the biblical call is clear that Christian parents should train their children in the faith, Scripture does not prescribe one right way to do it. The openness of Scripture regarding how the discipleship of children is to take place allows parents to craft worship and discipleship in their home according to their biblical convictions. With such openness, it would be fitting for the Christian schools to offer models that aid in discipleship and a curriculum that supports rather than hinders parent's efforts to disciple their children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord. At its foundation, that means schools need a mission statement and philosophical underpinning that governs every educational decision in the school/home partnership and a curriculum which thoughtfully reflects the implementation of that philosophy in practice. Suggestions for how to do that are listed below.

A Mission Statement

Toward the close of Joshua's ministry, he gathered Israel together and ordered them to decide at last if Yahweh would be their God. Joshua made that decision at a personal and familial level when he said, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15). Joshua's statement resounds as the underpinning by which he ordered his life. This is akin to how a school's mission statement is to govern its decision

making and its actions. The philosophy of a school should be stated most clearly in its mission statement. Derek Keenan says, “The mission statement of a school is a concise philosophy statement.”⁸⁷ If a school’s philosophy is not clearly stated and pursued, then that school’s direction will be as varied as the minds of the teachers, administrators, and parents that make up the school. A school’s mission statement gives a direction to which each of its members have agreed to travel together. A mission statement makes it easier to see when a school’s program has gotten off course.

This chapter has sought to suggest that Christian schools need to understand their relationship with parents primarily as a partnership. The mission statement ensures that each partner—both parent and teacher as well as parent and school—is moving in the same direction. The mission statement is important because a school’s identity is ultimately decided by its philosophy. George Knight affirms that each aspect of Christian education must be understood “in the light of its philosophic undergirding.”⁸⁸ It is at this base philosophical foundation that the issue of discipleship must be addressed. If making students who are devoted, active followers of Christ is desired, then it must be addressed at this most basic level. In this way, parents can see that discipling their children is not only foundational to their children’s education, but, also, that they are expected to do it. Likewise, in partnership with their child’s teachers, parents can expect that their child’s Christian formation is a responsibility that teachers also take seriously with the time they are allotted.

Setting up structures, models, and curriculum to aid parents in the discipleship of their children will all be less effective, if not ineffectual, if the issue is not first taken up at the philosophical level. Keenan explains, “If the school’s spiritual and academic

⁸⁷Derek J. Keenan, *Curriculum Development for Christian Schools* (Colorado Springs: Association of Christian Schools International, 1998), 2.

⁸⁸Knight, *Philosophy & Education*, 203.

direction is to be consistent with its mission, the philosophy must control the decisions made in the school, especially curriculum decisions.”⁸⁹ The mission statement is the clearest and most foundational underpinning of a school, in part, so that every decision can be weighed by it. A school cannot afford to be unclear at this level. Schools cannot affirm that parents are the primary disciple-makers of their children while functionally ignoring the issue at the curricular and academic levels. Instead, if parents are to be active disciple-makers, then the school’s mission statement must affirm it, and curricular decisions must confirm it.

An Integrated Curriculum

One of the ways to form a distinctly Christian education that pays proper attention to discipleship in all areas of life is to develop an integrated curriculum. That is a curriculum avoiding the false bifurcation of subjects. Instead, an integrated curriculum that is truly Christian displays the lordship of Christ in an interdisciplinary way, across subjects. This means that theology and Bible permeate subjects, rather than being sectioned off as a singular part of the day. Students are taught to be imitators of Christ, following Paul’s example (1 Cor 11:1), by holding everything in light of Scripture and the life and death of Christ.

Stephen Turley describes how the integrated curriculum was the standard of Greco-Roman education. The term *paideia*—the text-based educational model of the Greco-Roman world—was appropriated by Paul into a distinctly Christian form. The Greco-Roman education was birthed out of its understanding of the Greco-Roman sacred texts, such as Homer and Hesiod.⁹⁰ Those sacred texts were studied within the *polis*, which was the cultural context out of which *paideia* could grow. Turley describes how

⁸⁹Keenan, *Curriculum Development for Christian Schools*, 2.

⁹⁰Stephen Richard Turley, “Paideia Kyriou: Biblical and Patristic Models for an Integrated Christian Curriculum,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 18, no. 2 (May 2009): 130.

the *polis* aided the *paideia*, “Since *paideia* was more a process of slow vegetable-like growth, it required a climate and nutrients by which it might be nurtured and cultivated.”⁹¹ Paul grabbed onto these ideas already existing within the cultural contexts to which he ministered and reoriented them through the lens of his eschatological hope. For Paul, the *ekklesia* became the new hub of cultural ideals out of which a Christian *paideia* was forged.⁹²

Holy Scripture became the sacred text that oriented the Christian *paideia*, the church became the culture out of which that *paideia* could flourish, and Christ is the true Lord (*kyrios*) to which it all pointed. Stephen Turley says, “Thus, all narratives read in the Christian classrooms should be read in terms of the student thinking through how they shed light on, imitate, or are critiqued by the Scriptures, thus stimulating his or her moral imagination as the means of Christian character formation”⁹³ When the text of Scripture has permeated every part of the student’s education, then they have an appropriate framework out of which to embody (*mimesis*) the ideals of a truly Christian education. Part of the student’s education is learning to take every subject (thought) captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:5).

This Christian *paideia* applied to primary and secondary schooling is not how Christian children become educated but rather how they learn to be educated. Mortimer Adler’s words are appropriate here, “Education is a lifelong process of which schooling is only a small but necessary part.”⁹⁴ The education integrated with God’s Word teaches students the applicability of Scripture to all of life, both in and out of the schoolhouse. Education also happens in the home; education also happens in adulthood. Young

⁹¹Turley, “Paideia Kyriou,” 131.

⁹²Turley, “Paideia Kyriou,” 131.

⁹³Turley, “Paideia Kyriou,” 132–33.

⁹⁴Mortimer Jerome Adler and Paideia Group, *The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1982), 10.

learners must be prepared as Adler suggests “for the continuation of learning,” but more specifically for the continuation of learning from a biblical framework.⁹⁵

The integrated curriculum is the most natural way to transition education and discipleship to the home. Just as Bible cannot be a subject limited to a single period of the school day, likewise discipleship in the home cannot be limited to family devotions. While both Bible class and family devotions are good, if the spirit that drives them is to be maintained beyond the period at hand, then the content and purpose of Bible class and family devotions must be integrated into the day. The Bible must be the underpinning of any Christian learning. Barry Holtz describes how many students in Jewish day schools see their secular and Jewish lives as “distinct unconnectable parts.”⁹⁶ This accurately describes the situation for the students of many Christian schools as well. Therefore, the Christian school that partners with parents best equips them to make disciples when God’s Word is already integrated into every part of the curriculum. Because Christian education is a partnership with parents, it must consider integrating its curriculum if discipleship is to be one of its values.

Robert Pazmiño’s view of an integrated curriculum pictures the tasks of education as a baseball diamond where education for/of community, service, proclamation, and advocacy make up the corners, and all four intersect in the center which is education for/of worship. For Pazmiño each part should be considered while educating a child. This is education for discipleship. When considering education for service Pazmiño proposes that, “Christian educators are called to equip Christians for the task of service within the local church and the task of incarnating their faith in life through efforts and actions.”⁹⁷ Christian education should distinguish itself from secular

⁹⁵Adler and Paideia Group, *The Paideia Proposal*, 11.

⁹⁶Barry W. Holtz, “Towards an Integrated Curriculum for the Jewish School,” *Religious Education* 75, no. 5 (September 1, 1980): 548.

⁹⁷Robert W. Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in*

forms of education because the role of the educator is an ongoing partnership between the parent and teacher in the child's total development. Both parents and teachers share instructional responsibilities. That means, both in the home and the classroom, teachers and parents are to put flesh on students' faith—make them imitators of Christ—by helping them to make it tangible and experiential. The school can set expectations for parents, as partners in education, for Christian discipleship to be integrated into every aspect of their educational responsibilities. This will then require a thoughtful, disciple-making curriculum as noted in the section below. In this way parents can be both expected to disciple their children as a significant part of their education and have a pattern for how to do it.

Hidden and Null Curriculum

Two important factors a school must consider as it integrates its curriculum are its hidden and null curriculum. Pazmiño defines the hidden curriculum as essentially what is taught without ever being said, or as “systematic side effects of education.”⁹⁸ The hidden curriculum encompasses the teacher's preferences, dogmas, and prejudices. The hidden curriculum is not always bad, when a Christian *paideia* is formed, it may reflect Christian values. However, the hidden curriculum often is what students infer from their teacher's non-academic and non-biblical additions to the classroom. As the school and home attempt to integrate God's Word faithfully these hidden curricula may be revealed. Pazmiño lists several examples of what the hidden curriculum might look like:

1. Each person in the community should have had a personal experience with Jesus as Lord and Savior.
2. Scholarship, service, discipline, or piety is the highest ideal in Christian ministry.
3. Liberals are to be viewed as enemies of the evangelical faith.

Evangelical Perspective, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 48.

⁹⁸Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 244.

4. Graduates of specific evangelical colleges or institutions are to be revered.⁹⁹

The hidden curriculum may be a more powerful force forming and informing students than any other part of the academic schedule.¹⁰⁰ If that is the case, teachers and parents must be aware that students are not only learning from instruction, but especially from observation. Thus, the imitation of Christ must remain on the forefront of the mind and heart. An educator who is not seeking to integrate God’s Word into their own living, will struggle to convey its applicability to their students.

According to Pazmiño, the null curriculum is “that which is not taught by choice or oversight.”¹⁰¹ No school can encompass everything there is to learn and must therefore make educational choices. Those choices have the consequence of shaping students, often by keeping them ignorant of certain material. But schools must remember that no ignorance is neutral.¹⁰² Because every school must make curricular decisions, it should at least be thoughtful in what is being neglected and purposeful in presenting material for further study that would be beneficial but is inaccessible due to time constraints. A school seeking to integrate God’s Word will find some material simply cannot be relegated to the category of null. Those labeled as “Christian” schools cannot afford to neglect a Christian mission—articulated in its mission statement—because Scripture was not taught by “choice or oversight.”

Disciple-Making Curriculum

This chapter has sought to briefly outline parents’ role in the discipleship of their children, the school and the church’s partnership with parents, and the UMS’s

⁹⁹Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 245.

¹⁰⁰Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 246.

¹⁰¹Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 247.

¹⁰²Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 247.

responsibility to offer a curriculum where parents can catch a vision for its biblical underpinnings. However, all of these well-affirmed ideals might fall on deaf ears if some example is not given to parents how they might go about discipling their children as a significant part of their education. Listed below are just a few short examples and patterns that parents might seek to implement as they work alongside the tools and resources offered by Christian schools.

Read, Pray, Sing

Many parents will find when integrating God's Word into every aspect of their children's education that worship cannot remain a peripheral practice, isolated to a single day of the week. God's people are a worshipping people and learning to love him and glorify him cannot be limited to the sanctuary. Part of learning who God is means learning he is worthy of worship. At this point many Christian parents may squirm or feel desperately uncomfortable taking on such a serious responsibility, but Donald Whitney affirms that worship by families in the home need not be a difficult thing. Whitney reduces family worship to three simple components: read, pray, and sing.¹⁰³ A Christian school may assist families at this point by assigning Scripture readings, Bible memory, Psalm-singing for recitations, or biblical prayers that correspond with the subject matter. Whatever aid the school may provide with its curriculum, families should not forsake gathering to read, pray, and sing together before God.

By opening God's Word together as a family, each member is given a biblical framework from which they can discuss events from the day, and a lens through which to view those events. This simple addition to the family life can be further integrated through the organic situations life presents. A father might ask over dinner, "How did the passage we read stand out to you today?" Or, a mother might ask during a drive, "How

¹⁰³Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 44.

does our reading better prepare you for today's challenges?" Many parents will find family worship/devotional time is an essential starting point for discipleship.

Community Modeling

A significant factor in the discipleship of one's children is taking into consideration those with whom they are surrounded. The partnership that parents form with their school and church has already established that their child's upbringing is a community affair. One way for parents to take seriously the discipleship of their children, is to take seriously their Christian community. Every prayer meeting, morning and evening worship service, and fellowship meal is an opportunity for parents to expose their children to Christian character and community lived out. Algera and Sink say, "It is a modeling community where students have multiple Christ-like examples to emulate."¹⁰⁴ Taking community seriously is not a passive submission of parental duties to disciple. It is a way parents can take seriously putting Christ-likeness always before their children and tangibly remind them that their faith is not merely a personal affair.

Algera and Sink remind parents that keeping a modeling community from which their children can learn is not limited to the present.¹⁰⁵ Parents, likewise, can glean models and encouragement from those who have come before them in the faith. One example is the eighteenth century Pietist and educational reformer August Francke who sought to reform education in Prussia through the accessibility of education and the integration of God's Word. In her discussion of Francke's educational thought, Marcia Bunge explains, "The central means to this goal is exposure to the Word."¹⁰⁶ According to Francke, man's natural sinfulness that resulted from the Fall means there is a radical

¹⁰⁴Henry F. Algera and Christopher A. Sink, "Another Look at Character Education in Christian Schools," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 11, no. 2 (September 1, 2002): 173.

¹⁰⁵Algera and Sink, "Another Look at Character Education," 174.

¹⁰⁶Marcia J. Bunge, "Education and the Child in Eighteenth-Century German Pietism: Perspectives from the Work of A. H. Francke," in Bunge, *The Child in Christian Thought*, 140.

need for grace. The primary means of encountering this grace is exposure to the Word of God, and so Scripture took the preeminent role in Francke's understanding of education. A curriculum aimed at making disciples ought rightly to set the Word of God before them in every place. Francke's Word-centered education was fostered through church practices such as reading Scripture, singing hymns, catechesis, prayer, and worship. Francke's model is just one example how parents can look to the community from the past for encouragement and guidance. Francke's lesson to parents is to always be looking to how every event can be reoriented toward God's Word and worship.

A Curriculum with Discipline

Much of what has been said of Christian education, discipleship, and family worship within the home can seem idealized and unrealistic if one essential factor is missing: Discipline. There can be no true discipleship without discipline. Douglas Wilson explains the reason: "Discipline is *corrective*; it seeks to accomplish a change in the one being disciplined. Punishment is meted out in the simple interest of justice."¹⁰⁷ Jesus himself corrected his disciples at times, he never punished them (Luke 9:46–48, 10:41–42; Matt 8:23–27). The corrective nature of discipline is to change behavior. If a parent's discipline results in no change of behavior, then they can be sure they are not applying discipline correctly.¹⁰⁸ For any real change to take place, parents will have to be consistent to discipline sin in their children whenever it arises.

Accomplishing discipline for shaping children to be more like Christ requires the proper spiritual disposition. The parent who disciplines in anger is not qualified to discipline, since God disciplines in love (Heb 12:5–6) and parents are to discipline for the same reason (Prov 3:11–12). Wilson says, therefore, "A parent cannot bring man's anger

¹⁰⁷Wilson, *Standing on the Promises*, 105.

¹⁰⁸Wilson, *Standing on the Promises*, 106.

toward his children in the act of discipline, and then expect to appropriate the blessings God promised for godly discipline. . . . God does not bless the unrighteous anger of parents.”¹⁰⁹ The parent must keep in mind what they expect from their children, make sure their children know it, and when their children disobey, parents must ensure they are not guilty of the same offense.

When it comes to educating their children, rather than tolerating prolonged resistance and disobedience, parents must have a corrective hand. Discipline does not prolong the desired end from being accomplished but ensures that it will come about. While time must be set aside for correcting, if it is not done, then much more time will be required to deal with children’s sinfulness. And if not done, then the struggle will be prolonged for all of life.

Ted Tripp addresses that some parents try their hand at discipline but find it ineffective, especially in today’s climate where authority is being cast off at every level so that children no longer fear the consequences for disregarding their authority.¹¹⁰ Many parents have found discipline ineffective, not because discipline does not work but because they have a worldly understanding of how to accomplish it. Tripp’s understanding of authority means more than commanding children what to do and not do. It means shepherding your children, which includes not just discussion, but also a faithful display of wise living. This Tripp calls shepherding a child’s heart.¹¹¹ A child’s actions, good and bad, do not come about in a vacuum but are the overflow of their heart.¹¹² Therefore, godly discipline is attentive to forming a child’s heart to overflow in actions that are obedient not only to parents, but to God.

¹⁰⁹Wilson, *Standing on the Promises*, 108.

¹¹⁰Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), xvi.

¹¹¹Tripp, *Shepherding*, xix.

¹¹²Tripp, *Shepherding*, 3.

If parental discipline focuses on the formation of a child's heart toward God, then the discipline parents provide their children will serve as one of the most significant aids to the schools with which they partner. While disciplinary structures must exist within a school that address how misbehavior will be corrected, the strongest disciplinary tool a Christian school must have is a word with parents. The involvement of parents is vital if students are to receive an education not only of content but of character.¹¹³ Within a proper understanding of discipleship, the school will lean on the parents to administer proper discipline, allowing the school to remain a friendly place of learning, and allowing the parents to protect the child from any public consequence that may lead to undo shame. The parents' hands can be both firmer and more tender with their children, enabling teachers not to waste unnecessary time disciplining misbehavior in a less effective way. Algera and Sink suggest, "Classroom management policies should not focus on punitive reactions, but rather promote character development, moral reasoning and the understanding of consequences."¹¹⁴ The school is a safe place not void of consequences, but instead focused on building a positive, Christ-like environment for its students to flourish.

This short list of discipleship aids is not exhaustive, but each component contributes to parents' toolbox to aid them in the discipleship of their children. While much more could be said, parents will be well on their way to making disciples of Christ out of their children if they begin to apply biblical worship, community, and discipline to their family practice. Parents must consider that their children's Christian education will likely require changes from parents.

¹¹³Algera and Sink, "Another Look at Character Education," 175

¹¹⁴Algera and Sink, "Another Look at Character Education," 174.

Conclusion

The above discussion hopes to shed light on parents' responsibility to make disciples of their children. The parental responsibility has been well noted within the church tradition. However, just because parents are responsible does not mean they are to be alone in the effort to raise their children as followers of Jesus Christ. Both the Christian schools and local churches of which parents are a part are to come alongside them in their efforts to raise their children in the Lord. The church provides spiritual instruction and community for families, while the school can help to show the Bible's place in all of life learning. The school likewise must recognize that many parents, while accepting their calling to be the primary disciple-makers of their children, will feel underequipped in how to do it. For that reason, Christian schools should consider an integrated curriculum that is both approachable for families new to discipleship and engaging for those experienced in it. The school can help fulfill its duty to parents and students by offering materials and assignments that are conducive to discipleship practices and in line with the church's tradition. Parents who choose to partner in their children's education with Christian schools can lean on the school for support and resources but will also have to understand the responsibility to raise them in the Lord as primarily theirs. By working together, schools, churches, and households can model for children a view of the Christian life that encompasses all aspects of their life and seeks God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter describes the project preparation, implementation, and a detailed discussion of the three project goals with their correlating results. This took place upon the completion of the primary research found in chapters 2 and 3. The project was conducted at Covenant Preparatory School in Southern Pines, North Carolina, during the fall semester of 2018.

Target Group

The target group in this project was parents of students in grades 1 to 6 at CPS. Participating parents ranged in age from twenties to forties with diverse family sizes often encompassing multiple grades within the school. Since this project's Bible curriculum was implemented in grades 1 to 6 and CPS uses a university-model structure, all 51 parents and 31 students from those grades participated in the implementation of the Co-Discipleship Guide curriculum.¹ Even though each family unit generally has one primary educator, this project sought the engagement of each parent. While each parent used the CDG Curriculum, all research and pre- and post-testing was conducted on a voluntary basis only.

Questionnaire

Research into the family discipleship perceptions and practices was conducted at the beginning and conclusion of this project by utilizing the Family Discipleship

¹See appendices 4 to 7 for an overview of the structure and components of the CDG curriculum

Perceptions and Practices Survey (FDPPS) made available in Timothy Paul Jones' *Family Ministry Field Guide*.² Surveys were distributed to parents during CPS's Back-to-School night on Thursday, August 16, 2018, before the first full week of school started. Parents were instructed how to create a 5-digit personal identification number (PIN) that would link mothers and fathers as family units.³

In addition to the FDPPS, demographic questions and post-project qualitative questions were developed which were added to the pre- and post-test surveys.⁴ The additional questions were designed to help the school board and staff understand differences in family discipleship perceptions and practices between varying genders and family sizes as well as parents' responses to the curriculum as a whole. The FDPPS contained 16 questions with eight questions evaluating parent perceptions toward parent-based discipleship and eight questions evaluating parent practices toward parent-based discipleship.

Project Introduction

The project and its design and purpose were introduced to parents on Thursday, August 16, 2018, during CPS's Back-to-School night. This date was selected by the CPS school board as an optimal time because it would be coupled with teacher introductions and vision casting for where the school desired to go over the course of the year. This positive environment was viewed as an ideal time to make the purpose and design of this ministry project known to parents and secure their participation in the survey study.

²Timothy Paul Jones, "The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey," *The Journal of Family Ministry* 1, no. 2 (2011): 50–52.

³See appendix 1 for instruction to create the PIN.

⁴See appendix 1 for FDPPS with additional demographic questions and see appendix 2 for FDPPS with additional demographic and qualitative questions.

Project Implementation Process

The implementation of this project was a 19-week period ranging from August 16, 2018 to December 22, 2018 (excluding Thanksgiving break) and divided into three primary sections: preparation and course development, project implementation, and follow-up. The preparation and course development will be dealt with in full, as will the course follow-up. The implementation, once established, took on a rhythm that does not require each week to be covered in detail. However, there were significant trainings, conversations, and curriculum updates which are noteworthy and addressed in greater detail chronologically below.

Preparation and Course Development: Week 1

The first week of the project included a meeting with the school board and headmaster of CPS where the ministry project was discussed in the context of the school's direction and philosophy. Previous conversations with CPS's headmaster had given direction for the need to improve the school's Bible curriculum. This combined with CPS's university-model which encourages parents to be the primary spiritual influence in their child's life, helped solidify a plan to develop a curriculum specifically formatted with the structure of the UMS in mind for the purpose of better equipping parents to disciple their children. This proposal was presented during the school board meeting and received gladly with the charge to begin development. Because the school board was only recently developed many of the curricular issues had not been addressed at an earlier time. However, I was presented with the challenge to develop a curriculum which would better incorporate Scripture into the school environment and better aid parents in discipling their children.

The initial process of development considered four primary faculties of learning: attentiveness, memorization, contemplation, and creativity, and outlined a Bible curriculum which would engage all four learning faculties of students and parents as they

used the curriculum to aid in the discipleship of their children. Utilizing these four learning faculties would link the Bible curriculum to the classical model in which it would be implemented and would center each learning experience around the great work of Scripture, consistent with the Word-centered focus of Deuteronomy 6:6–8.

To fit the new Bible curriculum in with materials parents had already purchased for the 2018-2019 school year the content of the curriculum would come primarily from the books of Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. With these texts and learning faculties in mind a scope-and-sequence was designed as well as a general course outline that could be presented to CPS's school board.⁵

Preparation and Course Development: Week 2

The second week of the project was centered around the presentation of the new curriculum both to the school board and CPS parents. First, the initial presentation was made to the school leadership, who confirmed and supported the direction of the new curriculum and suggested changing the name from Family Liturgy Guide to the Co-Discipleship Guide as a way of being ecumenically sensitive and more purposeful about the goal of partnering with parents in the discipleship of their children using the UMS format. In preparation for the second major presentation of the CDG curriculum to parents during Back-to-School night, the pre-test survey was piloted by 3 individuals who did not participate in the study. To fulfill goal 1, perceptions and practices were logged using a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6) for the first 8 items, and ranging from never (1) to seven or more times (6) for the second 8 items. Upon approval for clarity from the pilot group, the survey instrument was prepared as well as a brief presentation for parents.

The presentation of the CDG curriculum was given to parents on the evening

⁵See appendix 5 for CDG scope-and-sequence.

of August 16, 2018. I provided a cursory explanation of the Bible curriculum and explained the context and emphasis of my doctoral work and requested an opportunity to survey parents in an anonymous way for the good of the school and to aid me in my doctoral studies. After receiving 100 percent parent participation from those attending, I then presented the content and purpose of the CDG curriculum. It was explained that the program was new and would therefore rely heavily on the input and feedback parents provided. Contact information was made available along with the request that parents bring forward questions or concerns at any time for the benefit of the curriculum and all those who would be using it.

The first goal of this project was to assess parents' attitudes and practices about the discipleship of their children at CPS. This goal was accomplished when CPS parents completed the FDPPS during Back-to-School night.⁶ Back-to-School night is one of only two days throughout the school year where near 100 percent parent attendance could be expected. Therefore, before the introduction to the CDG curriculum a moment was taken to give all attending parents the pre-test survey as a captive audience. The results of the survey from the 38 participants gave insight into CPS's parental perceptions and practices toward family-based discipleship. Because CPS does not endorse a single denomination, it was not surprising to discover a wide range of perceptions and practices toward family discipleship.

Perceptions were evaluated to inform the curriculum development. Overall perceptions were high that the discipleship of children is primarily a parental responsibility. The average mean score for survey items about perception was 4.91 out of a possible 6. This meant less work was required in the curriculum preparation to argue the case biblically. The second goal of this project was to develop a Bible curriculum that engaged parents in the discipleship of their children. This goal began in anticipation of

⁶See appendix 8 for pre- and post-test responses.

perceived needs from CPS parents and was fully developed after the assessment of the pre-test. The overall high scores from the initial survey gave me confidence that parents were prepared to immediately begin, through the CDG curriculum, engaging in discipleship practices, even without much time needed to be spent developing a framework for the need and responsibility of Christian parents to disciple their children. The CDG curriculum was modified to include, from the beginning, discipleship practices between parents and their children such as prayer, Scripture reading and memorization, singing, confessional components, as well as dialogue with and about the weekly passages of Scripture.⁷

Practices needed to be evaluated to help inform how the curriculum might effectively increase and encourage parents to disciple their children within the context of CPS's university-model. Though slightly lower than perceptions with an average mean score of 4.23 out of 6, parent practices toward parent-based discipleship also scored high. This implied that parents generally understood themselves to be the disciple-makers of their children and reported they were doing it. These high scores could have been due to any combination of three reasons: first, the temptation to answer survey questions according to perceived desires of what the right answer would be. Second, because parents considered their actions to reflect discipleship, even if they did not. Or, third, because parents were in fact perceiving that discipleship is important and they were doing it. My suspicion from having had personal experiences with many of the school families was that many believed in the importance of discipleship, some families understood the importance strongly, but many families feigned the importance of the responsibility to disciple their children while neglecting the duty itself.

In the past, CPS had emphasized the partnership it seeks with parents and the responsibility they have to disciple their children, but it had taken no steps to see if

⁷See appendix 6 for teacher portion and appendix 7 for parent portion.

discipleship was happening or to improve the process. I was interested to know whether parents also thought discipling their children was important and to see if this project could aid them in the process by partnering with the school.

Demographic differences. When evaluating the pre-test there were several demographics that were helpful to consider in interpreting the results. Differences of gender and family size revealed interesting findings.

The approach of CPS's university-model is one of partnership with parents, including both mothers and fathers. Pre-test participation, however, showed greater involvement on the part of mothers when compared to fathers. Of the 38 total participants in the pre-test, 23 were mothers and 15 were fathers. It is possible that some fathers were working and unable to attend the Back-to-School night event. At least 1 father serving in the Army was on deployment overseas. But, for the majority, the Back-to-School night was scheduled in the evening to prevent work conflicts as much as possible. Further, multiple fathers later divulged that they did not attend because their wives were.

Despite differences in the participation of the study between mothers and fathers, the survey results were very similar between genders. Of the possible 96 points on the survey mothers' mean score was 71.52 while fathers' mean score was 72.87, showing only a marginal difference of 1.35 points. Mothers and fathers were also consistent between individual questions. After evaluating the mean scores of each survey question, there proved to be no significant difference between the responses of mothers and fathers at the first stage of this project. Question 11 showed the greatest discrepancy between mothers and fathers, yet still only yielded an average mean difference of 0.4 points. The results proved that mothers' and fathers' perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship started at almost the same place.

Family size. Family size at CPS ranges from parents with 2 children to parents with 5 children. The pre-test results showed that larger families at CPS generally scored

higher on perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship than smaller families. The 3-child families scored lower than 2-child families, but both 4-child and 5-child families scored notably higher than 2-child and 3-child families. Table 2 displays the differences in mean scores of parents with 2 to 5 children.⁸

Table 2. Pre-test mean scores of parents with 2 to 5 child families

Pre-test mean scores	Family size
68.81	2-child families
66.12	3-child families
75.38	4-child families
84.17	5-child families

A surprising discovery was that there was a statistically significant difference ($t_{(20)} = 2.34, p = .0149$) in parent perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship in 2-child homes compared to 5-child homes. This suggested that the larger families at CPS were better equipped, not less equipped, to disciple their children. This difference between 2- to 5-child families in discipleship scores does not seem to reflect differences in age either. In each family size ages range relatively close to each other, with only a slight upward trend as family sizes grow. While age can no doubt be a factor in maturity, for the test group at CPS, it did not seem to be a factor in parent-based discipleship perceptions or practices. The comparison in age between large and small families is displayed below:⁹

⁸See table A2 appendix 3.

⁹See table A3 appendix 3.

Table 3. Pre-test results showing age differences in 2- to 5-child families

Number of children	Age range	Mean age
2	28-43	35.81
3	29-47	36
4	32-48	36.38
5	33-47	38.5

Evaluating survey items. Mean scores for individual questions ranked high for both parent perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship, with scores ranging between 4.32 to 5.5 for 13 out of 16 of the questions. The remaining three questions had much lower mean scores and pertained primarily to pastoral/church involvement and evangelism, which, were not the thrust of the school-based curriculum. Table 4 reflects the survey questions and mean scores that scored lowest on the pre-test.¹⁰

Table 4. Pre-test results of mean scores for lowest scoring survey items

Survey items	Mean score
8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth	3.95
15. How many times in the past <i>YEAR</i> have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	2.19
16. How many times in the past <i>YEAR</i> has any church leader made contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	2.63

¹⁰See table A4 in appendix 3.

The results displayed on table 4 showed two things. First, the perceptions and practices of CPS parents toward parent-based discipleship were not strongly understood to come from church involvement. Second, discipleship as it was perceived and practiced rarely translated to parent-child evangelism. Survey items 8 and 16 confirmed my suspicion that the subject of parents discipling their children is generally understood but not regularly discussed or aided by church leadership on a family-by-family basis. Survey item 15 confirmed that parents do not usually consider evangelism to be a part of their child's discipleship.

Implementation: Week 3

With the first full week of the 2018-2019 school year the CDG curriculum was implemented in grades 1 to 6 at CPS. Before the first full week of school began, teachers met for a walkthrough and training of the CDG curriculum. Teachers were given an outlined lesson plan that provided the structure, assignments, readings, and assessment questions for the first semester. The general structure in the classroom was presented as dialogical while the emphasis in the homes was to be devotional. Teachers were given opportunity to look through the materials in their entirety and present questions as they arose.

With the teachers' confidence using the CDG curriculum raised, they were encouraged to direct any questions or concerns that arose from parents to me which they did not feel confident answering themselves. The first week of the curriculum's implementation experienced the normal growing pains of learning to use something new. The only questions that arose involved format with which to turn in assignments.

Implementation: Weeks 4 to 11

A significant portion of time passed with smooth operation of the CDG curriculum. Teachers reported over the course of this time ever-increasing comfort with

the use of the content and structure of the materials. I had several personal conversations with parents that reported a gratefulness for the increased intentionality with engaging their children with the Bible. There was also more than one concern and complaint that the CDG curriculum was notably more work-intensive than the previous curriculum.

Several strategies were employed to ease the time constraints of the material without reducing the content. Children, with the help of their parents, were responsible for creating their own questions from the assigned Bible reading and answering those questions with their families over the course of the week. This part of the curriculum was particularly difficult for younger children, who were newer to writing. More so, assignments were being completed in a number of differing ways which made grading work more of a challenge for teachers. So, at week 7 a single-sheet template was made on which students would complete their Bible assignments every week. This both eased grading and the trepidation of parents about how long the writing portions could potentially be.

The new templates were well-received by parents and reported to be aiding students in completing the written portions of the curriculum.¹¹ After addressing that issue, however, another issue arose during week eleven of the project. CPS's first grade teacher came to me to inform me that she had directed a parent with complaints about the curriculum to come to me. The teacher informed me that the parent was uncomfortable coming to me, the source of the curriculum, for fear of conflict, but had been venting her complaint to other parents. With the mediation of that teacher, a meeting was set up to discuss concerns about the curriculum for the following Monday.

Implementation: Week 12

On Monday, October 21, 2018, I met with the concerned parent seeking to

¹¹See bottom of appendix 7 for CDG homework template design.

understand and address her issues with the CDG curriculum. I explained to her the purpose and goal of the curriculum is to fulfill the mission of the school and serve as an aid to parents in discipleship, not a burden. Therefore, I asked her to feel comfortable being candid with her concerns and needs.

The parent expressed that her concerns represented the voice of multiple parents who were also uncomfortable with the idea of bringing the potential issue to its source. She explained that she did not understand why we were reading large sections from the Old Testament rather than the New Testament. She suggested changing the content and asked, “Can’t we just talk about Jesus, or do something application-based?” After some questioning, I was able to understand and restate the basis of her concern. The issue was primarily one of application. Because she did not have a good understanding of the sections of Scripture we were reading, she did not think they applied. I presented a few simple applications from Ruth, which was that week’s reading, and she became excited and requested some additional aid just like that. Together we thought of three additional resources that would be provided as a supplement to the curriculum to aid parents in their ability to present the texts to their children. First, we added a portion called “So What?” meaning, “So what is the passage about?” This would provide a brief commentary to parents about the context and insight about the book and passage being studied that week. The second addition included potential starter questions parents could ask their children to generate conversation about the text. Lastly, was the addition of significant applications that could be drawn from the text.¹²

These additional portions were immediately created and sent as a supplement to parents and teachers with a description of how they might be used. The addition presented an excellent opportunity to check in with parents and encourage them to direct questions and concerns about the CDG curriculum to me. I asked parents to provide

¹²See appendix 9 for an example of these additional curriculum supplements.

feedback about the additional resources and reminded them that our partnership in the process would render the best results. Because the introduction to the curriculum was so far removed, I provided an email that restated the purpose and values of the curriculum.

**Implementation:
Weeks 13 to 17**

Beginning in week 13 through the end of week 18 I received at least one comment per week from parents about the help the new supplements (simply titled: So-What?) had added to their confidence with the CDG curriculum. Many who were uncomfortable having to generate questions about Scripture commented that both their dialogues with their children were richer and the assignments were easier. Teachers likewise reported being grateful for the addition as an aid for their instructional time in the classroom.

After evaluating the high scores of parents' perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship, these late additions helped me realize the need parents still had for being led through Scripture. The emphasis of the curriculum was initially parents discipling their children. What these later additions revealed is that parents still needed and desired equipping to handle God's Word with their children.

Before the final week of the semester I thanked parents for their ongoing participation in the development of the CDG. Further, I reminded them that their feedback was essential for completion this project and the continued improvement of the CDG curriculum. With that reminder, I asked all parents in grades 1 to 6 to consider participating in the follow-up survey the following week.

Follow-up: Week 18 to 19

The final part of this project was the follow-up. In this final section parents were reminded of the study and entreated to offer their participation in the post-test study one week before the surveys were made available. Then, 3 separate emails were sent

linking parents to the survey using Google Forms. Emails were sent on Monday, December 10; Monday, December 17; and Friday, December 21, 2018. Hardcopies were also made available to each parent and distributed by teachers, but no hardcopies were returned. The first 2 emails were sent through CPS's ClassReach account. After the first 2 messages for participation received low response, an individualized message was crafted and sent directly to everyone's private email. After this final effort a total of 27 participants completed the post-test. This was out of the 51 possible parents with students in grades 1 to 6.

The third goal of this project was to increase participation and modify attitudes in parent-based discipleship by implementing the Bible curriculum into the parental teaching portions of an UMS. However, errors occurred in creating post-test PINs that matched pre-test PINs. This resulted in pre- and post-tests which were unable to be paired and accurately assessed for growth. During the pre-test there were 38 participants, after running the post-test there were 27 participants. A large portion of the participants did not follow the instructions with the creation of their PIN. While almost everyone followed the instructions for creating their PIN during the pre-test, the same instructions were not followed to create PINs the second time. All the post-test participants used the online survey format through Google Forms, but many simply made up new PINs without following the written instructions. This may have been due to a lack of clarity in the instructions that I provided. But, because of this, only 8 surveys could be paired from which to compare the overall data of this project.

The third goal would have been met if the results from the pre- and post-test rendered a statistically significant difference. This may have happened if more tests could have been paired. However, there were two primary errors that prevented participants' pre- and post-tests from being paired. First, several participants did not follow the instructions, written on the post-test, in the creation of their PIN in conformity to the 5-digit instructions listed on the survey. Post-test results were then unable to be paired with

pre-test results. Second, there was the addition of several participants who did not participate in the initial study, and a reduction in the number of original participants.

Of the 27 total responses from the post-test, only 8 could be paired to the original 38 participants. For those 8, there was no statistically significant difference ($t_{(7)} = 1.94, p = .0934$) in parent perceptions and practices toward family-based discipleship in the 8 paired surveys. Table 5 displays the t -test results for the 8 paired surveys.¹³

Table 5. 8 paired surveys for 2 sample means t -test

	<i>PRE-TEST TOTAL</i>	<i>POST-TEST TOTAL</i>
Mean	73.125	79.875
Variance	140.4107143	83.83928571
Observations	8	8
Pearson Correlation	0.587400906	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	7	
t Stat	1.940631768	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.046724015	
t Critical one-tail	1.894578605	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.09344803	

Without the ability to pair the data sets from pre- and post-tests it was necessary to evaluate the scores from several different perspectives to understand if there were any significant changes to a particular group, even with unpaired tests. Evaluating the pre- and post-test results as an unpaired t -test appeared to accomplish little. There was no statistically significant difference ($t_{(64)} = 1.15, p = .1263$) in parents' perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship.

¹³See table A5 in appendix 3.

Gender differences. The most significant discrepancy that relates to mother-father roles was highlighted on survey item 6: “Parents—and particularly fathers—have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.” This survey item ranked higher than any other item on the pre-test with a mean score of 5.5 points. Of the 38 pre-test participants 26 answered that they strongly agreed (6) with the survey item—that was 68.4 percent answering with the highest possible score.

Similarly, on the post-test 18 of the 27 participants strongly agreed (6) with survey item 6—that was 66.7 percent. This shows that parents felt very strongly that they—and particularly fathers—were responsible for discipling their children. However, parent perceptions about the importance of the involvement of fathers did not match with the practice listed on demographic question 8: “Who is the primary educator in the home?”

In most family situations one parent served the role of primary educator. Mothers were overwhelmingly the primary educator. Of the 25 participants who answered demographic question 8, 88 percent (22 participants) affirmed mothers were the primary educator, 8 percent (2 participants) shared the responsibility of primary educator, and 4 percent (1 participant) affirmed that the father acted as the primary educator. The results are displayed in table 6:¹⁴

Table 6. Post-test results regarding primary educator in the home

Demographic question	Male	Female	We share the responsibility
8. Who is the primary educator?	1	22	2

¹⁴See table A6 in appendix 3.

This contrast reveals that for CPS parents, the homeschooling portion of the university-model was predominantly mother-led. The lack of father involvement could be the result of more fathers working out of the home during formal education times. However, the lack of father involvement in the pre- and post-test may suggest that education in general is not considered a responsibility of fathers. With parents making this kind of distinction it reveals why parent participation in this project as well as parent participation with the CDG curriculum was predominantly female. Both the pre- and post-test results reveal that mothers and fathers were participating in discipleship practices with their children. However, the results suggest that the formal education of their children was not an easily shared responsibility.

This project sought the active participation of both mothers and fathers, but it seems the structure of the curriculum, even while encouraging paternal engagement, was not conducive with the schedule of fathers. Although it was disappointing to see mothers were more heavily involved than fathers at every stage, the curriculum did not adequately consider the needs of fathers to maximize opportunities for participation. The pre- and - post test results show more participation from mothers than fathers despite there only being 1 divorced parent and every other family unit having a mother and father present. Table 7 below shows the differences of mother/father participation over the course of the study:¹⁵

Table 7. Pre- and post-test results regarding total mother and father participation

Survey	Mother participation	Father participation	Total
Pre-test	23	15	38
Post-test	19	8	27

¹⁵See table A7 in appendix 3.

Even with mean scores rising for participating mothers and fathers, the increased participation of mothers did not render enough statistical change. There was no statistically significant difference ($t_{(40)} = 1.39, p = .0861$) in mothers' perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship. However, in comparison to the results from fathers, the participation levels of fathers showed significant contrast to that of mothers. There was no statistically significant difference ($t_{(22)} = 0.08, p = .4676$) in fathers' perceptions and practices toward family-based discipleship. It was nearly half as likely that any change which occurred to fathers was due to chance.

These findings implied that if more participants were able to be paired to their original survey results, then the results for mothers may have revealed a statistically significant difference. These findings also implied that no statistically significant change would have been expected from fathers who participated in the study even if every post-test was paired to the pre-test. This is because father participation in the CDG curriculum was extremely low compared to that of mothers.

Evaluating individual items. Although the implementation of the CDG curriculum did not verify any statistically significant change for the whole FDPPS, there were several individual items which experienced verifiable change. Items 4, 7, and 11 all revealed a statistically significant difference in either perception or practice of parents toward parent-based discipleship.

Item 7 revealed a statistically significant difference ($t_{(64)} = 1.79, p = .0387$) in parents' perception that church leaders are primarily responsible to disciple their children. Item 4 revealed there was a statistically significant difference ($t_{(64)} = 2.03, p = .0234$) in parents' perception of readiness to answer biblical and theological questions from the Bible. Item 11 revealed there was a statistically significant difference ($t_{(63)} = 2.40, p = .0097$) in parents' practice of reading and discussing the Bible with their children. Table 8

represents each of these changes that took place.¹⁶

Table 8. Means and *t*-test results of statistically significant items

Survey Item	Pre-test mean	Post-test mean	Result of <i>t</i> -test
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	5.26	5.71	($t_{(64)} = 2.03, p = .0234$)
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.	5.34	5.64	($t_{(64)} = 1.79, p = .0387$)
11. How many times in the past <i>MONTH</i> have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	4.84	5.68	($t_{(63)} = 2.40, p = .0097$)

These encouraging results showed that the CDG curriculum was effective at initiating change in specific areas. The change reported in items 4 and 7 showed an increase in the confidence of parents in addressing biblical and theological issues with their children and well as a shift in mindset that church leaders were the ones primarily responsible to do it. These shifts helped to partially accomplish the third goal of this project to modify the attitudes of parents toward parent-based discipleship. Although there were several perceptions that did not show the same statistical significance, these positive changes showed that the project implementation was working and may have been more effective if specific areas addressed in chapter 5 below were implemented from the beginning.

The change reported in item 11 showed that the use of the CDG curriculum

¹⁶See table A8 in appendix 3.

effected change in one very important area—parents were reading and discussing the Bible more with their children. The Word of God is foundational in the discipleship of Christians who put their faith in the Word made flesh. Therefore, this was a significant change. The content of this item revealed the level to which parents were being faithful to follow the instructions of the CDG curriculum because every parent following the curriculum design would have read and discussed the Bible with their children a minimum of 8 times per month. Everyone who followed the curriculum design received a 6-point score on the item. Those who did not showed that their score was not the result of the curriculum, but rather their lack of participation in it. This successful change helped to partially accomplish the third goal of this project to increase participation in parent-based discipleship.

Qualitative Questions

In addition to the original survey items, three additional qualitative questions were added to the end of the post-test where parents were asked to provide feedback. The list below provides the additional post-test questions in order:

1. What aspects, if any, of the Co-Discipleship Bible Curriculum were most beneficial to you and your family?
2. What aspects, if any, of the Co-Discipleship Bible Curriculum need improvement or were a hindrance to you and your family?
3. Any Comments about the Co-Discipleship Bible Curriculum

These additional items provided an open forum for parents to address any positive or negative response to the CDG curriculum.

Positive Responses to the CDG Curriculum

Of the 27 participants in the post-test, 17 offered positive responses as to how

the CDG was beneficial to them.¹⁷ The positive feedback appeared in three primary areas. First, there were several warm comments about the addition of the “So-What?” supplement to the CDG curriculum. Many parents felt more equipped after receiving the historical and contextual additions to the text. One parent said, “We love that we can actually understand things that may have eluded us before. There is a practical application, real life connection, and ease of understanding that causes ALL of us to gain a better understanding of what we're reading.” Another added, “I appreciate that it brings in historical context and clarification for what is going on in the text.” Yet another said, “The commentary helped with the insight into the texts’ meaning and applications.” In all, the contextual additions seem to have increased the confidence of some parents in handling Scripture as well as increased their understanding of what is going on in Scripture.

The second primary theme that occurred in the feedback was the positive effect the curriculum had on spiritual disciplines practiced as families. One parent referencing the liturgical components embedded in the curriculum said this, “I like having the call and response of Scripture, laying that foundation down to memory for the kids, and then having a larger chunk that we're reading, to engage with the text, having the discussion.” This parent reported to have benefited from the many ways in which the CDG curriculum seeks to spiritually engage parents with their children. Another parent reported, “I really appreciate that my son's teacher(s) are primarily concerned with the heart and spiritual growth and development, rather than academic performance.” This comment speaks to the relationship involved between the teachers and parents using the CDG curriculum and best encompasses one the primary goals of CPS, which is to facilitate a partnership between school and family. The spiritual disciplines were also inferred in the comment of another parent, “It provided an additional resource for our family to read, pray, and

¹⁷See appendix 10 for a list of all the post-test qualitative comments provided by parents.

discuss scripture together.” What is evident in all these is the increased ways parents were gathering together around God’s Word for the spiritual benefit of their family.

Although there are other comments that could be discussed, the third major point of emphasis that arose in the positive comments was related to the structure of the curriculum itself. Succinctly, one parent said, “It is directly biblically-based rather than thematic, which I like.” This comment reveals different ways to approach Scripture. Some parents noted throughout the process that they prefer topical studies. However, the undergirding philosophical assumption of this curriculum, while not against topical studies, believes that the Bible should be understood as a complete document divided into individually inspired books which are best understood by engaging their context. Other parents voiced positive feedback because they valued the structure and the questions the curriculum provided. When read in light of the quantitative results, these additional comments help strengthen the impression that the CDG curriculum served to increase the perceptions and practices of the parents toward parent-based discipleship.

Negative Responses to the CDG Curriculum

Even with a warm reception by many parents about the benefits of the CDG curriculum, many still provided helpful comments about issues they had which will help inform future development. The primary issue stated by parents had to do with the length and complexity of the curriculum for younger students. Eight different parents noted that length was an issue or that it was too difficult to complete with their younger children. This was a primary challenge in creating a Bible curriculum that could be used by parents with students of all ages at the same time. This aspect will have to be corrected in the future if the curriculum is going to be compatible for all families.

The other issue raised about the curriculum was primarily about disagreeing with the content and structure of the curriculum. One parent said concisely, “Too regimented.” Another said, “It was too strict and formal. It seemed forced and it wasn’t

very applicable to my child’s life.” These may reflect the differences incurred when family worship practices are formalized in a multi-denominational setting. Regardless, for some, the curriculum was clearly not a good fit.

There was one lengthy comment of significant complaint added in the final section opened to any feedback that is worth noting. This comment was reflective of a conversation that had already taken place with a specific parent. Although the survey was anonymous, it was consistent with a meeting that took place with a parent over dislike for the curriculum. In that meeting the parent accused the curriculum of being indoctrinating and primarily about grades. The parent had refused to participate in the curriculum for the whole semester, and many of the complaints made were almost exactly what are stated in comment 4 under the third qualitative item.¹⁸ Without disregarding the content or the substance of the complaint, it appears to be from someone who did not actually complete the curriculum. If the comments do in fact come from the same parent, then I would the comments be taken in light of the statement that parent had made, explaining proudly about already being kicked out of six other Christian schools and churches for similar types of disagreements.

Conclusion

This project aimed to alter the perceptions and practices of CPS parents toward parents-based discipleship in a positive way. The first goal to accomplishing this aim was completed through the assessment of CPS parents’ perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship. The second goal to plan and implement a Bible curriculum within CPS was accomplished in its final form after the assessment process was completed. The completion of these first two goals were important primarily for the influence they would have over accomplishing the third goal of this project.

¹⁸See appendix 10.

The third goal of this project was to increase participation and modify attitudes in parent-based discipleship by implementing the Bible curriculum into the parental teaching portions of an UMS. However, this goal was only partially accomplished. Some perceptions and practices were successfully modified, but to have fully accomplished the goal more would have had to been done within the project design to engage fathers, to reframe thinking of education as discipleship, and to more effectively attain paired post-test results. Still, the added data from the qualitative feedback provided helpful insight that the CDG curriculum has been generally well-received and has room for growth. In all, the project could be deemed successful and a worthy effort that leaves much room for improvement. The reflections and insights gained from this project as well as suggested changes and areas for future research are described in detail in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF PROJECT

Introduction

To approach the implementation of a resource based on the perceived needs of others is humbling work. I entered a shift in ministry context that required most of my attention to be poured not into the church itself, but a ministry of the church. I did not know the people of my new context as well as I would have liked. I did not perceive their strengths as rightly as they deserved. And I did not understand their weaknesses as fully as I initially thought before I sought to benefit the people that make up the Covenant Preparatory School community. However, despite these shortcomings, the content and shift of this ministry project served as an aid and resource to strengthen the partnership between school and family to equip parents to better disciple their children. The resolution of this evaluation is first to better support the ministry of CPS with more informed energy and direction to continue to challenge and equip parents to teach their children to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and might. Second, I hope these reflections provide direction and research opportunities for those walking down a similar path.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose and Goals

This project's purpose was to train parents at Covenant Preparatory School in Southern Pines, North Carolina to become disciple-makers of their children. To train parents to disciple their children within the context of the university-model school required the formation of a partnership with parents while still giving deference to the spiritual authority they have over their children. Therefore, the starting point to train

parents to disciple their children to make sure they understood their responsibility to do so.

When the assessment of parent perceptions toward parent-based discipleship confirmed parents' high understanding of their role as spiritual leaders in their children's lives, then the emphasis shifted to develop content that aided the process. Ultimately, this purpose was only met in part because shifts in parents' perceptions and attitudes was minimal. However, parent feedback confirmed that CDG curriculum was found to be a helpful, forward-pushing resource for parents who already sought to be disciple-makers of their children.

Goal 1

The first goal of this project was to assess the perceptions and practices of parents at CPS toward parent-based discipleship. This goal was successfully met when CPS parents used the FDPPS to complete the pre-test as a captive audience at CPS's Back-to-School night. The pre-test included 38 participants. The results showed that the CPS community gave high priority to the discipleship of their children. While this may not be reflective of the greater Sandhills area, the mindset of discipleship for CPS parents seemed to be consistent with the desires of those looking to be intimately involved in the education of their children by partnering with the school to which they sent them.

The pre-test, which incorporated the FDPPS, was completed as a hard copy. The insights from the survey were the foundational support for the final development of CPS's new Bible curriculum.

Goal 2

The second goal of this project was to develop a Bible curriculum that engaged parents in the discipleship of their children. After the evaluation of the pre-test survey, a curriculum was outlined that implemented a robust combination of spiritually engaging practices which targeted four faculties of learning: attentiveness, memory,

contemplations, and creativity.¹ The faculties were engaged at multiples levels through the various interactive components of the CDG curriculum which included: responsive readings, prayer, singing and memorizing Scripture, Scripture reading, and engaging the assigned texts through family discussions and the creation of questions and answers from each week's readings. Before implementation, the CDG curriculum was reviewed and approved by a school board member from CPS, the headmaster of the school, and the senior pastor at Sandhills Presbyterian Church.²

The process was aided in development through the collaboration and suggestions of parents to include a historical and contextual commentary, question starters, and applications for each week. These additional resources proved to be some of the most significant helps to both teachers in the classroom and parents at home. While the curriculum included spiritual, academic, cognitive, and creative components, parents were given the freedom to engage their children in the areas they found most effective and encouraged to incorporate each component at a pace that met the needs and demands of their individual family situation. In general, families at CPS fit a common family pattern. One divorced mother completed each component with her 2 children. In one family, the mother worked full-time, and the father was the primary educator. In every other family the parents were married, and the mother was the primary educator using the CDG curriculum with the children with varying levels of participation from fathers.

The graded components of the CDG curriculum were created not to emphasize grades but to show that students and families interacted with biblical texts in a demonstratable way. To demonstrate these interactions, students were tested on Fridays, either orally or written, from preassigned questions and answers that were derived from the content of each week's readings. Graded homework from each week's Bible readings

¹See the scope-and-sequence in appendix 4.

²See the curriculum evaluation form in appendix 3.

consisted of a single-page document in which students provided a single sentence summary of the reading, answered an assigned question from the reading, and generated questions (the number varied by grade) and answers as a family from the reading. Suggestions for additional assignments which teachers had the option to assign were listed on the scope-and-sequence. Testing provided quantitative values for the student's work, while the Co-Discipleship Guide which students turned in provided a picture of the qualitative results parents generated in the home. These combined resources made up the CDG curriculum that fulfilled goal 2 of this project.

Goal 3

The third goal was to increase participation and modify attitudes in parent-based discipleship by implementing the Bible curriculum into the parental teaching portions of a university-model school. This goal was not successfully met as described. The CDG curriculum successfully created statistically significant change only in 3 of the 16 survey items: items 4, 7, and 11.³

A failure to pair the pre- and post-tests certainly impacted the results. While the average scores increased for many survey items, it is impossible to know which participants were most impacted, or to link the positive results with the feedback presented at the end of the post-test. Even with paired results, however, it is not expected that a significant change would have taken place across every survey item. The curriculum itself did not include evangelism as one of its components and so made no real change, with a mean score of 2.19 on the pre-test and 2.15 on the post-test for survey item 15. Likewise, the role of the church and church leadership was not addressed in the parent-school partnership which the CDG curriculum emphasized. Therefore, survey items 8 and 16 also showed no positive change. Because this project used the well-

³See appendix 1.

supported survey instrument made available by Timothy Paul Jones, it included these questions which were not addressed by this project. It would have been better to seek permission to modify the instrument and eliminate the above listed questions to better suit the purpose and design of this project.

Looking back, goal 3 would have been better addressed with survey items that dealt more specifically with the parent-school relationship. The FDPPS was an excellent resource to assess parents' perceptions and practices but did not provide all the needed criteria for a project that was not implemented within the context of a church. In all, the positive feedback combined with the areas of growth mentioned above show the project had some measure of success even though goal 3 was only accomplished in part.

Strengths of the Project

This ministry project had several noteworthy strengths which might make it an excellent template for future ministry research. There are many resources within the context of the church that seek to equip parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their children, but there are notably less resources that take on this same goal from the context of the school. Because schools get to interact with children and families for several days throughout the week—an opportunity many churches do not get—there is the ability to implement and reinforce a program imbedded with repetition and accountability. Many schools offer Bible courses, but the strength of this program was the establishment of an outline and structure that provided biblical instruction that did not discount or overlook parental authority and responsibility.

Another strength of this program was the ability to minister to parents and students at the same time. Surprisingly, this outcome was an unlooked-for result that came about during this project's implementation. Students were served with intentionality by reading and teaching from Scripture and equipping parents to guide their children through God's Word. But parents were served in ways more revealed than

planned. Because parents at CPS generally acknowledged the need for and their responsibility to disciple their children, I took for granted the inherent challenges that go along with the task of discipleship. One of the ways parents reflected gratefulness and positive feedback was in having a definitive plan and structure that guided them to accomplish the goal they had already acknowledged: to disciple their children. For some parents, to know what they were going to do and how they were going to do it took away much of the anxiety that goes with choosing a path forward.

The second, and most significant, way the CDG curriculum ministered to parents came through the supplements of the “So-What?” section.⁴ This section of the curriculum came about through the concerns of parents about the applicability of the whole counsel of God’s Word. Through the addition of context and application supplements, the overall parent-receptivity toward the curriculum greatly increased. I received numerous comments about how personally beneficial these supplements were for parents in to help them understand passages of Scripture which had previously alluded them. A couple of parents expressed that they found it so enriching they used the resource for their personal devotional time, before they prepared to present God’s Word to their children. A better result could not have been imagined.

Weaknesses of the Project

Several areas stood out as definite weaknesses of the project. Two of those weaknesses related to the construction of the curriculum itself. One of the more ambitious aims of the curriculum was to construct a devotional-like format that was also academically rigorous and gradable, while simultaneously adaptable and helpful for families with children of all ages. For those with kindergarten and first-grade students, there was enough feedback from parents to realize they were struggling to maintain the

⁴See appendix 9.

attention of younger children. This is a challenge for any family that seeks to initiate family worship practices with young children.

A weakness of this project that pertained to the goal to equip parents to disciple their children through the Bible curriculum of a university-model school was the total lack of parent training in the use of the curriculum. Just as teachers often require teacher training with the implementation of a new curriculum, so too, these parents would have greatly benefitted from the opportunity to be trained how to implement the curriculum in their home. Parents were given instruction to take the format provided and manipulate various aspects to fit the needs of their family. For instance, if passages seemed daunting for parents with young children, they could paraphrase sections and highlight significant versus. If singing was a challenge, then they could use provided recordings. If students were too young to ask questions of the text themselves, parents could come up with family questions together. However, even with all these suggestions, parents were given no demonstration of what that might look like in their home. Many CPS parents have taken on the responsibility to teach their children but have no formal skills in education. This presented a major weakness in the project and a missed opportunity to gain parental confidence as it was presented. Still, this could be easily modified in future programs.

Another weakness of the project that relates to the curriculum was the absence of preformatted resources to aid with the execution of the curriculum. Although preformatted worksheets and handouts would have added little to the content of the curriculum, they nevertheless would have served parents by making assignments easier to complete and remove some of the guess-work that was a point of conflict for some. This issue was also a contextual oversight. Much of the curriculum CPS has used is full of handouts and busywork that defines assignments around clearly-hedged borders. In contrast, the CDG curriculum offered a lot of freedom and flexibility that created a level of ambiguity which made some parents uncomfortable. One attempt to amend this issue

was the addition of the CDG handout which more clearly defined the homework portion of the curriculum for parents.⁵

One of the major weaknesses which impacted the final assessment of the project's effectiveness was the change of format used in implementing the post-test. During the pre-test implementation I had a captive audience and was able to present the instructions to complete the survey orally and in written form at the same time. The results of the pre-test were 100 percent participation from the audience and nearly 100 percent successful completion of the survey. In contrast, the mode of delivery for the post-test was either by handout from teachers or an online format via email. Without the personal interaction of contacting parents and distributing the survey and instructions to them in person, the post-test participation levels were much lower. I predict that I would have had significantly more participation if I had delivered the survey personally with instruction. This would not be possible for every context, but since CPS is such a small community, this could have been done with more planning.

The second weakness in changing the mode of delivery was significantly fewer of the parents who participated followed the instructions for how to create their PIN. The PIN was designed to link family units together—mothers and fathers would have had the same PIN and been distinguished by their gender on the survey. What ended up taking place, however, was that several participants created a PIN on the spot without heeding the instructions, which made it impossible to pair their results. Apparently, the instructions to create the PIN were either unclear or too lengthy for parents to read.

The last noteworthy weakness was the constraint of time to develop this project. The shift in my ministry context made working with CPS the best direction to shift the focus of this project. However, this created a major time constraint in the planning process that required the attention and approval of several people as well as the

⁵See appendix 4.

speedy development of a program that could have used more thoughtful attention. While this weakness was out of my control, it nevertheless affected the overall effectiveness of this project.

What I Would Do Differently

After having moved through this project, I would have done several aspects differently. Many of the components I would change are listed in the section on project weaknesses above. This section will elaborate on alternative solutions with an eye toward changing those weak points.

Age-appropriateness

One of the major changes I would make in any future implementation of this project as it relates to the curriculum itself is to consider how to better adapt the material to all ages. As it is, the curriculum has different expectations of assessment for the younger grades, but the best way I can perceive to make the curriculum more user-friendly for parents with young children is through the reduction of content. The readings were never more than two chapters from Scripture at a time, nevertheless some of the narrative readings assigned would have challenged any age. Therefore, I would offer alternative reading plans for parents with younger children to suggest how they might go through the same stories but focus in on the sections that best keep the attention of young children. Older children could read the whole passage on their own before coming back as a family for the consolidated reading and discussion time.

Another age-appropriate addition for younger grades is replace some of the written components with activities that are better suited to their level of development. Rather than writing questions from the text, kindergarten through second graders could draw a picture about what happens or what stands out to them. By allowing this coloring/drawing portion to happen during the reading it would both aid the attentiveness of students and focus their attention on what is going on in the passage.

Older students could share the responsibility of reading the text to keep younger students attentive and engaged. Further, they could share the responsibility to teach their younger siblings by explaining to them what the passage was about after the reading was complete. In this way, each child would have age-appropriate responsibilities that engage their attentiveness, memory, contemplation, and creativity. This format would enable parents to function both as teachers and guides through the Scriptures for their children.

Parent Training Course

A significant alteration I would make to this project is to link the survey study to a parent training course. I would offer a training course to the entire school population and make participation in the survey a part of the course. Additionally, each training session would end with a brief question-and-answer time to understand the benefits and shortcomings of the training program. One of the most helpful aids to this project was feedback from parents, so future adaptations would include more opportunities for parent feedback, in the hopes that I address possible issues earlier in the implementation process.

Rather than asking participants to create their own PIN, one would be created for them and linked to a roster. During the survey study, parents would use the roster to collect their own survey which would be placed inside a manila envelope with their PIN clearly labeled on the outside. Then survey results would be inputted by a third-party to maintain anonymity.

Printed Curriculum

During this project the CDG curriculum was distributed on a weekly basis to parents. This gave the impression to some parents that there was no clear end in sight. In the future, I would provide the CDG curriculum as a printed whole at the beginning of the school year. Parents would then have access to a table of contents that lists each

component of the curriculum in order. Included therein would be the educational philosophy, biblical support, course overview, scope-and-sequence, course objectives, and a how-to guide for using the curriculum, besides the printed materials which would correlate for each individual lesson. A number of these materials already existed but were not provided to parents in a single, comprehensive way that made for easy navigation and a first source for questions as they arose.

After running through this project, I firmly believe that providing a printed curriculum would have increased parent and teacher confidence in the material. Without this single document, any parent interested in looking back on previous work would have had to rummage through old papers or redownload the files from CPS's ClassReach portal. I also felt the need to provide periodic reminders to parents about the purpose and goals of the CDG curriculum over the course of this project but making these statements locatable to parents would have eased the necessity of reminders.

Changing Instrumentation

The FDPPS was a very helpful tool for the initial evaluation of parents' perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship. However, in the future I would create a survey instrument that pertains more specifically to the parent-school relationship and provides questions that answer how the curriculum is being used and parents' response to it. In the future I would use the FDPPS as an initial assessment, then I would evaluate the results and adjust the emphasis of the parent training course where a more specific pre- and post-test instrument would be used. I believe the FDPPS was the right instrument for assessment but would have been more beneficial if used to gauge the types of questions which showed up on the pre- and post-test.

Opportunities for Future Research

After I evaluated the results of this project, a few areas stood out as excellent opportunities for future research. These areas of research could be helpful for anyone

interested in implementing a similar project, or any researcher interested in the subject of parent-based discipleship. Opportunities for future research include a correlational study between family size and perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship, a qualitative study into what aspects most inform the quality and sustainability of parent-based discipleship, and an investigation into parents understanding of the relationship between formal education and discipleship.

One of the fascinating findings from this project after I assessed the pre-test was that parents with 4 to 5 children scored significantly higher than parents with 2 to 3 children on the FDPPS. Because the FDPPS is such a readily used instrument, any interested researcher could rank-order churches that scored high on the survey and seek to see if there was any correlation between family size and perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship in high-scoring churches. Likewise, it would be just as rewarding to see if there was any correlation between family size and perception and practices in low-scoring churches. In the CPS community parents who scored high on the initial assessment also showed improvement after the project was implemented. This perhaps displayed a general openness toward receiving help with discipleship in families with more children.

This project assessed parents' perceptions and practices toward parent-based discipleship and assessed any improvement of those perceptions and practices after implementing the curriculum. In future studies, it would be beneficial to assess the quality of parents' discipleship practices. Do parents believe they are discipling their children in an effective and rewarding way? The feedback from the CDG curriculum offered several positive comments about how the curriculum aided parents in the discipleship of their children, but it had no feedback before the project was implemented by which to assess any notable changes.

One last area for future study is surveying parents' understanding of how formal education relates to their children's discipleship. In this project, mothers were

definitively more involved than fathers. Yet, fathers and mothers at CPS all ranked the discipleship of children by parents—and especially fathers—very highly. What is unclear is the reason why. Was this distinction the result of more fathers having professional responsibilities? Does it point to a discrepancy between parents' perception of discipleship and their actual practice? Or, is it possible that some parents do not consider formal education to be a significant part of their child's discipleship? All of these questions would produce valuable research for anyone designing a similar project. This project did not clearly differentiate between which educational responsibilities were shared and which were the responsibility of a single parent due to occupational responsibilities so definitive answers are not available in the data.

Theological Reflections

I went into this project with strong views about the responsibility of parents to disciple their children. The biblical exposition in chapter 2 helped strengthen and support my convictions, while shaping them through deeper theological study. It became clear to me that the work of discipleship is not just a responsibility of parents, but a gift from parents to their children that is the overflow of their faith in God. More than that, parents who teach their children the tenets of faith and obedience to the Lord embrace God's call to raise their children in him (Gen 18:19).

Children, like any other gift from God, should not be treated with contempt. With the increase of the gift comes the increase of responsibility. Psalm 127:3 says that children are both a heritage and a reward from the Lord, but much like the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30), faithful parents must respond in equal measure to the gift they are given by assuming the weight of the responsibility to raise them in the Lord.

My study of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and Ephesians 6:1–4 emphasized to me that the content of a child's discipleship matters. Primarily, discipleship is based on the Word of God. The discipline and instruction of the Lord with which parents are charged (Eph

6:4) are primarily educational responsibilities. The content by which parents are to train their children is the Word of God. Therefore, any person or resource which makes the discipleship of children its aim must be steeped in Scripture. For those who do not love and revere the whole counsel of God's Word, this process is bound to cause conflict. However, for those who do love and revere the whole counsel of God's Word, they will find a wealth of ways in which to teach from it.

The education and discipleship of a child does not merely mean reading from Scripture, though that should no doubt be included. Deuteronomy 6:4–9 shows that the faith parents desire to pass on to their children can and should encompass a variety of teaching methods. Deuteronomy describes embodying the commands of God in conversation, in actions, and in lifestyle. The discipleship described utilizes multiple devices to confront children with God's ownership of their lives. These reflections greatly influenced the curriculum I developed as I attempted to spur parents to disciple their children in every possible way. Using sitting, standing, singing, memorizing, writing, questioning, and discussing the CDG curriculum aimed to equip parents to teach their children to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and might (Deut 6:4).

Personal Reflections

One of the significant motivations to equip parents to disciple their children is a personal recognition of the damage that is caused when discipleship is lacking in the home. I was raised in a Christian home with wonderful parents who, though loving, did not understand the responsibility to disciple their children. This was largely because they had never been taught this responsibility themselves. The result of years of faith without growth was that my brothers and I were ill-equipped theologically and spiritually to deal with the woes of the world. It is only by the mercy of God that I have been kept in his hands. But I know well that if my parents could do it again with what they know now, they would make the discipleship of their children a priority.

I did not approach the topic of parent-based discipleship as the recipient of its fruits. Rather, I approached the issue aware of the thorns which arise when it is neglected. I approached the subject with the desire to one day be the blessed man who sees his children's children walking with and fearing the Lord (Ps 128). My hope is to, in any way I can, aid any parent who would desire a similar blessing.

Conclusion

This project served as a rewarding experience that taught me the principles of carrying forth a research project. In it I sought to equip parents to be the primary disciplinarians of their children. For the purposes of ministry, this is a process that should be carried forth only with much biblical, theological, historical, and practical study. Because of the work that preceded the research I was better equipped and committed to see the project to its end. More importantly, the way I think about discipleship was greatly influenced by the careful study that preceded this project. The part for which I am most grateful is that I was strengthened in my zeal for the church, for CPS, and in my desire to provide resources that help others love Jesus more. The educational emphasis of this study has greatly aided the development of my philosophy of education and given me numerous ideas to apply to educating children in the Lord.

APPENDIX 1

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

Agreement to Participate The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the perceptions and practices of parents toward family discipleship at Covenant Preparatory School (CPS). This research is being conducted by Blake Willard for purposes of revealing a baseline for measuring family discipleship perceptions and practices at CPS to further develop teaching instruments and curriculum for the benefit of CPS. In this research, you will provide simple demographic information, then answer the following statements with the answer that is most true. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Parents, to ensure the data is not skewed, please complete the survey individually before consulting with your spouse and/or other participants.

Personal Identification Number:

To link your survey with family units for further future research please create a PIN which consists of the **number of children you have, the month and year of your youngest child.**

For Example: Number of children = 5, youngest child's birth month is July, and birth year is 2018. So, my PIN = 50718

PIN (5 Digits): _____

Demographic Question

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?
 A. Yes
 B. No

2. What is your marital status?
___ A. Single
___ B. Married
___ C. Divorced
___ D. Widowed
3. What is your gender?
___ A. Male
___ B. Female
4. Are you a member at your church?
___ A. Yes
___ B. No
5. How old are you (in years)?

6. How many children do you have?

THE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

This survey is intended for parents with children living at home.

For the purposes of this survey, "church leaders" include
pastors, elders, ministers, deacons, teachers, or small-group leaders.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
01. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
02. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
03. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
04. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
05. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
06. Parents—and particularly fathers—have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
07. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
08. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Never	Once	A couple times	Three or four times	Five or six times	Seven or more times
09. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past <i>WEEK</i> have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. How many times in the past <i>WEEK</i> has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. How many times in the past <i>MONTH</i> have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. How many times in the past <i>MONTH</i> have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. How many times in the past <i>TWO MONTHS</i> has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. How many times in the past <i>TWO MONTHS</i> have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. How many times in the past <i>YEAR</i> have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. How many times in the past <i>YEAR</i> has any church leader made contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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APPENDIX 2

FOLLOW-UP FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

Agreement to Participate The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the perceptions and practices of parents toward family discipleship at Covenant Preparatory School (CPS). This research is being conducted by Blake Willard for purposes of revealing a baseline for measuring family discipleship perceptions and practices at CPS to further develop teaching instruments and curriculum for the benefit of CPS. In this research, you will provide simple demographic information, then answer the following statements with the answer that is most true. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Parents, to ensure the data is not skewed, please complete the survey individually before consulting with your spouse and/or other participants.

Personal Identification Number:

To link your survey with family units for further future research please create a PIN which consists of the **number of children you have, the month and year of your youngest child. This PIN should be the same number used in the earlier survey completed at the beginning of the school year.**

For Example: Number of children = 5, youngest child's birth month is July, and birth year is 2018. So, my PIN = 50718

PIN (5 Digits): _____

Demographic Question

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?
 A. Yes
 B. No
2. What is your marital status?
 A. Single
 B. Married
 C. Divorced
 D. Widowed
3. What is your gender?
 A. Male
 B. Female

4. Are you a member at your church?
 A. Yes
 B. No
5. How old are you (in years)?

6. How many children do you have?

7. Is your child enrolled in the Tuesday/Thursday Tutoring program?
 A. Yes
 B. No
8. Who is the primary educator in the home?
 A. I am
 B. My spouse
 C. We share the responsibility equally
 D. Other

THE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

This survey is intended for parents with children living at home.

For the purposes of this survey, "church leaders" include
pastors, elders, ministers, deacons, teachers, or small-group leaders.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
01. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
02. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
03. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
04. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
05. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
06. Parents—and particularly fathers—have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
07. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
08. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Never	Once	A couple times	Three or four times	Five or six times	Seven or more times
09. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past <i>WEEK</i> have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. How many times in the past <i>WEEK</i> has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. How many times in the past <i>MONTH</i> have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. How many times in the past <i>MONTH</i> have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. How many times in the past <i>TWO MONTHS</i> has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. How many times in the past <i>TWO MONTHS</i> have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. How many times in the past <i>YEAR</i> have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. How many times in the past <i>YEAR</i> has any church leader made contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Please consider offering any comments and/or critiques deemed relevant for the continued improvement of Covenant Preparatory Schools Co-Discipleship Bible Curriculum.

Follow-up questions:

What aspects, if any, of the Co-Discipleship Bible Curriculum were most beneficial to you and your family?

What aspects, if any, of the Co-Discipleship Bible Curriculum need improvement or were a hindrance to you and your family?

Any Comments about the Co-Discipleship Bible Curriculum:

APPENDIX 3

TABLES

Table A1. 2 categories for survey items

2 Categories for Likert-Type Statements	Statements
Parent Perceptions	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Parent Practices	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

Table A2. Pre-test mean scores of parents
with 2 to 5 child families

Pre-test mean scores	Family size
68.81	2-child families
66.12	3-child families
75.38	4-child families
84.17	5-child families

Table A3. Pre-test results showing age differences
in 2- to 5-child families

Number of children	Age range	Mean age
2	28-43	35.81
3	29-47	36
4	32-48	36.38
5	33-47	38.5

Table A4. Pre-test results of mean scores for lowest scoring survey items

Survey items	Mean score
a. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth	3.95
4. How many times in the past <i>YEAR</i> have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	2.19
5. How many times in the past <i>YEAR</i> has any church leader made contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	2.63

Table A5. 8 paired surveys for 2 sample means *t*-test

	<i>PRE-TEST TOTAL</i>	<i>POST-TEST TOTAL</i>
Mean	73.125	79.875
Variance	140.4107143	83.83928571
Observations	8	8
Pearson Correlation	0.587400906	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	7	
t Stat	1.940631768	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.046724015	
t Critical one-tail	1.894578605	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.09344803	

Table A6. Post-test results regarding primary educator in the home

Demographic question	Male	Female	We share the responsibility
8. Who is the primary educator?	1	22	2

Table A7. Pre- and post-test results regarding total mother and father participation

Survey	Mother participation	Father participation	Total
Pre-test	23	15	38
Post-test	19	8	27

Table A8. Means and *t*-test results of statistically significant items

Survey Item	Pre-test mean	Post-test mean	Result of <i>t</i> -test
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	5.26	5.71	$(t_{(64)} = 2.03, p = .0234)$
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.	5.34	5.64	$(t_{(64)} = 1.79, p = .0387)$
11. How many times in the past <i>MONTH</i> have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	4.84	5.68	$(t_{(63)} = 2.40, p = .0097)$

APPENDIX 4

CO-DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM EVALUATION
RUBRIC

1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Does the curriculum elicit parent participation in the discipleship of their children?					
Does the curriculum clearly state the expectations of and the responsibilities of parents?					
Does the curriculum equip parents to know what practices to engage and how to do it?					
Does the curriculum engage the four faculties: attentiveness, memory, contemplation, and creativity?					

APPENDIX 5

CO-DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE SCOPE-AND-SEQUENCE

Course Title:

CO-DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE – JUDGES THROUGH KINGS (Family Portion)

Curriculum Guide Description:

Students will demonstrate learning by actively participating in the Co-Discipleship course and reciting each component reverently and from memory. By working through the books of Judges through Kings and engaging the text students should gain a better understanding of the primary themes and stories from these texts. Through the Co-Discipleship with their parents, students should develop a deeper understanding and connection between the Bible, worship, and their family life. Parents will provide feedback of hurdles and seek help from teachers as needed. At the end of the year parents will provide a self-assessment evaluating their strengths and weaknesses implementing the Bible in their family life.

Additional Course Content:

The Remainder of the course content, including readings and activities not completed at home, will take place in the classroom.

Student Activities

1. Co-Discipleship
2. Assigned Reading
3. Students will produce family-generated questions and answers based on assigned reading.

Assessment Tools

1. Complete a “What We’ve Learned from God’s Word” Folder
2. Recitation of Family Worship Liturgy.
3. Most important Character (or Event) Paper. Choose 1 Book

Special Accommodations

1. Parents are permitted and expected to help their children in the formation of their Bible questions and answers, as well as helping them learn the Co-Discipleship Guide. This is a partnership assignment between parents and their children.
2. Expectations are sliding based on age.

Faculties Engaged from Each Component of Curriculum

Four Faculties of Learning:	Attentiveness	Memorization	Contemplation	Creativity
Responsive Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confession • Prayer 	X	X	X	
Singing Psalms	X	X	X	
Memorization Portion	X	X	X	
Developing Questions	X	X	X	X
Answering Questions	X	X	X	X

APPENDIX 6

CO-DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM TEACHER PORTIONS

Introduction to the Co-Discipleship Guide

Inspired by the narratives and events in Judges through 2 Kings

Purpose:

The purpose of this curriculum is to prepare parents to lead their children through the books of Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings, gaining a fuller understanding of these sections of Scripture by reading significant passages and events. Parents are to lead their children through these readings and develop worship practices at home using the Co-Discipleship Guide as a guide to maintain family discipleship practices.

The Co-Discipleship Guide, when practiced, should better equip parents to engage their children in biblical discipleship and increase confidence approaching questions from the Bible.

*This should not feel like homework because **all Bible assignments are to be completed together**—either as a family, mother and child/children, or father and child/children, but should be written by students.*

Once the Co-Discipleship Guide becomes routine it should become increasingly easier as most of the content is set to memory.

SAMPLE LESSON

WEEK 10 (OCT 22-26): RUTH 3-4

Teachers:

- Monday** Read Ruth 3 as a class and discuss the content of the passage with students using the supplemental “So-What?” as is helpful for creating dialogue. Present the questions and answers from the assessment questions.
- Wednesday** Read Ruth 4 as a class and discuss the content of the passage with students using the supplemental “So-What?” as is helpful for creating dialogue. Review the questions and answers from the assessment questions.
- Friday** Discuss and review the content of Ruth 3 and 4 before assessing students on the assessment questions either orally or in a written form.

Assessment Questions (For Teachers):

1. What significant figure comes through the line of Ruth and Boaz?
A: *David comes through the line of Ruth and Boaz and Jesus comes through the line of David.*
2. What was Ruth proposing when she said, “Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer?”
A: *Ruth was proposing marriage.*
3. What was the custom in Israel that Boaz used to make an agreement for the right to marry Ruth?
A: *To confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel.*
4. What did the women of Israel say Ruth was like to Naomi?
A: *The women of Israel said Ruth was better than seven sons to Naomi.*

Homework (assigned by teachers, administered by parents):

TUESDAY:

Complete: Co-Discipleship Guide

Memorize: 1 Samuel 2:7

Read: Ruth 3-4

Answer: What is the passage about?

Answer: Read Ruth 3:10-12 and describe why Boaz may have been hesitant to go after Ruth?

Write: 1 question (Kindergarten), 2-3 questions (1st through 2nd), or 3-4 questions (3rd through 6th) that families formed from the passage.

THURSDAY:

Complete: Co-Discipleship Guide

Rehearse: 1 Samuel 2:7

Review: Have student orally explain the passage: Ruth 3-4. (If needed, reread to show comprehension)

Answer: 1 question (Kindergarten), 2-3 questions (1st through 2nd), or 3-4 questions (3rd through 6th) that families formed from the passage.

APPENDIX 7

CO-DISCIPLESHP CURRICULUM PARENT PORTIONS

Co-Discipleship Guide

Inspired by the narratives and events in Judges through 2 Kings

Purpose:

The purpose of this curriculum is to prepare parents to lead their children through the books of Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings, gaining a fuller understanding of these sections of Scripture by reading significant passages and events. Parents are to lead their children through these readings and develop discipleship practices at home using the *Co-Discipleship Guide* to inform family discipleship practices.

The *Co-Discipleship Guide*, when practiced, should better equip parents to engage their children in biblical discipleship and increase confidence both raising and answering questions from the Bible.

*This should not feel like homework because **all Bible assignments are to be completed together**—either as a family, mother and child/children, or father and child/children, but should be written by students.*

Once the Co-Discipleship Guide becomes routine it should become increasingly easier as most of the content is set to memory.

PARENTS:

As a family, please follow the interactive and responsive portions below.

RESPONSIVE READING

Leader: Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

Serve the LORD with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

Children: Know that the LORD, his is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

All: **For the LORD is good;**

his steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations.

(Psalm 5 of David)

LISTEN/SING PSALM 3

O Yahweh, how many are my foes!

Many are rising against me;

many are saying of my soul,

“There is no salvation for him in God.”

But you, O Yahweh, are a shield about me,

my glory, and the lifter of my head.

I cried aloud to the Yahweh,

and he answered me from his holy hill.

I lay down and slept;

I woke again, for the Yahweh sustained me.

I will not be afraid of many thousands of people

who have set themselves against me all around.

Arise, O Yahweh!

Save me, O my God!

For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;

you break the teeth of the wicked.

Salvation belongs to the Yahweh;

your blessing be on your people!

(When David fled from Absalom his son)

CONFESSION:

(Consider adjusting your posture during the confession)

Leader: “When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes.... ‘Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.’”

(2 Kings 22:11,13)

*All: Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.*

(Psalm 51—David’s confession after he had gone in to Bathsheba)

Leader: Hear good news! “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn our clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD.”

(2 Kings 22:18-19)

PRAY:

(Parents may lead, assign, or say the prayer in unison as a family)

Leader: Let us pray,
“O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, ‘If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.’ And now behold, *enemies have gathered against us, those very enemies whom you called us to love (Matt 5:44)*, behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit. O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

(Adapted from the Prayer of Jehoshaphat—2 Chronicles 20:6-12)

All: Amen

MEMORIZATION PORTION:

(Verse assigned on *ClassReach*)

- A. SEMESTER 1—Hannah’s Prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10)
- B. SEMESTER 2—David’s Lament for Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:19-27)

SELECTED READING:

(Passages assigned on *ClassReach*)

ASSIGNMENT:

(Questions assigned on *ClassReach*)

TUESDAY:

Answer: What is the passage about?

Answer: Assigned Questions

Write: 1 question (Kindergarten) or 2-3 questions (1st through 6th) that families formed from the passage.

Turn in: on Wednesday

THURSDAY:

Have student orally explain the passage. If needed, reread to show comprehension

Answer the questions you formed together on Tuesday about the assigned text. (To be turned in on Friday using handout below)

EXAMPLE OF WHAT STUDENTS TURN IN FRIDAY
FOR HOMEWORK:

CO-DISCIPLERSHIP GUIDE

PASSAGE

1. What is the passage about? (*In one sentence*)

2. Why is David so confident he can defeat Goliath?

STUDENT'S QUESTIONS

1 question (Kindergarten), 2 questions (1st through 2nd), 3 questions (3rd through 6th)

1. **Q:** _____

A: _____

2. **Q:** _____

A: _____

3. **Q:** _____

A: _____

APPENDIX 8

PRE- AND POST-TEST RESPONSES

Table A9. Pre-test demographic question responses

PIN	Do you consider yourself a Christian?	What is your marital status?	What is your gender?	Are you a member at your church?	What is your age in years?	How many children do you have?
50316	Yes	Married	M	Yes	37	5
50316	Yes	Married	F	Yes	33	5
20713	Yes	Married	F	Yes	44	2
30818	Yes	Married	M	No	33	3
40218	Yes	Married	F	No	35	4
40317	Yes	Married	M	Yes	35	4
20714	Yes	Married	F	Yes	29	2
20714	Yes	Married	M	Yes	28	2
21213	Yes	Married	M	Yes	37	2
21213	Yes	Married	F	Yes	38	2
20310	Yes	Married	F	No	38	2
20310	Yes	Married	M	No	39	2
0	Yes	Married	M	Yes	39	2
20715	Yes	Married	F	No	36	2
20815	Yes	Married	F	No	31	2
50909	Yes	Married	F	Yes	40	3
41016	Yes	Married	M	Yes	37	4
41016	Yes	Married	F	Yes	36	4
20174	Yes	Married	F	Yes	37	2
40418	Yes	Married	F	No	32	4
51217	Yes	Married	M	Yes	35	5
51217	Yes	Married	F	Yes	36	5
21114	Yes	Married	M	Yes	40	2
30616	Yes	Married	M	No	33	3
30615	Yes	Married	F	Yes	31	3
40317	Yes	Married	F	Yes	34	4
20815	Yes	Married	M	No	31	2
30710	Yes	Married	M	No	47	3
0	Yes	Married	F	Yes	43	5

20813	Yes	Married	F	Yes	37	2
40713	Yes	Married	M	Yes	48	4
9259	Yes	Married	F	No	36	3
41014	Yes	Married	F	Yes	34	4
21221	Yes	Married	F	Yes	31	2
30715	Yes	Married	F	No	36	3
51216	Yes	Married	M	Yes	47	5
30715	Yes	Married	F	Yes	29	3
20415	Yes	Divorced	F	Yes	38	2

Table A10. Post-test demographic question responses

PIN	Do you consider yourself a Christian?	What is your marital status?	What is your gender?	Are you a member at your church?	What is your age in years?	How many children do you have?	Is your child enrolled in the Tuesday/Thursday Tutoring program?	Who is the primary educator in the home?
20714	Yes	Married	F	Yes	37	2		
19734	Yes	Married	M	Yes	39	2		
14321	Yes	Married	F	Yes	37	2		
03130	Yes	Married	F	Yes	36	3	Yes	I am
40317	Yes	Married	F	Yes	35	4	No	I am
31605	Yes	Married	F	No	31	2	No	I am
21211	Yes	Married	M	No	10000	2	No	I am
21213	Yes	Married	F	Yes	38	2	No	I am
40418	Yes	Married	M	Yes	32	4	No	My spouse
50116	Yes	Married	F	Yes	34	5	No	I am
50319	Yes	Married	F	Yes	36	5	No	I am
2541	Yes	Married	F	No	36	3	No	I am

20918	Yes	Married	F	Yes	33	2	No	I am
51207	Yes	Married	F	Yes	36	5	No	I am
31015	Yes	Married	M	Yes	35	3	No	My spouse
20209	Yes	Married	F	No	36	2	No	I am
41010	Yes	Married	F	Yes	34	4	No	I am
30615	Yes	Married	F	Yes	32	3	No	I am
20310	Yes	Married	F	Yes	38	2	Yes	We share the responsibility equally
51216	Yes	Married	F	No	43	5	No	I am
20714	Yes	Married	M	Yes	29	2	No	We share the responsibility equally
40415	Yes	Married	F	No	36	4	No	I am
30915	Yes	Married	M	Yes	45	3	Yes	My spouse
50316	Yes	Married	M	Yes	37	5	No	My spouse
20813	Yes	Married	M	Yes	42	2	Yes	My spouse
30618	Yes	Married	M	No	36	3	No	My spouse
30618	Yes	Married	F	No	36	3	No	I am
20415	Yes	Married	F	Yes	37	2	No	I am

Table A11. Pre-test FDPPS responses

PIN	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Sum
50316	6	6	3	5	6	6	5	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	3	3	82
50316	6	6	3	5	6	6	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	4	3	84
20713	4	3	3	2	1	2	5	5	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	37
30818	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	1	6	90
40218	6	6	5	5	4	6	6	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	4	85
40317	4	3	3	5	5	5	4	4	3	6	3	3	3	3	3	3	60
20714	4	5	5	5	5	6	4	2	3	5	3	4	3	4	2	1	61
20714	4	4	5	5	5	6	4	2	3	4	3	3	3	4	2	1	58
21213	5	5	4	6	5	6	6	2	4	6	5	5	6	4	1	1	71
21213	4	5	5	6	6	5	5	2	5	5	6	6	6	5	2	1	74
20310	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	5	5	6	6	6	6	4	6	90
20310	6	6	2	6	6	6	4	5	6	4	6	6	6	3	2	3	77
0	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	2	6	5	6	6	4	6			74
20715	5	5	6	6	6	3	6	2	5	5	6	6	6	3	2	2	74
20815	5	2	5	6	5	4	5	2	5	6	2	3	2	4	1	1	58
50909	3	2	5	3	2	6	5	4	1	6	2	2	3	4	2	3	53
41016	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	4	2	3	77
41016	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	3	2	87
20174	6	5	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	3	2	6	84
40418	4	4	6	6	6	6	6	5	3	6	6	6	3	6	1	1	75
51217	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	6	93
51217	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	4	90
21114	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	6	4	6	6	6	3	1	82
30616	2	5	4	5	5	4	5	3	1	6	2	2	2	1	1	1	49
30615	3	5	5	6	5	6	6	3	2	4	6	6	3		1	1	62
40317	4	5	6	6	5	6	5	5	4	6	5	6	3	5	2	1	74
20815	5	3	5	5	5	6	5	2	4	1	4	5	4	4	1	1	60
30710	5	5	5	5	6	6	5	4	6	6	4	6	6	6	1	1	77
0	1	1	3	3	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	3	72
20813	5	5	5	6	5	5	6	5	6	4	6	6	6	3	4	3	80
40713	4	2	4	5	4	5	6	5	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	3	59
9259	3	2	2	3	4	6	5	3	2	6	2	3	1	1	1	1	45
41014	6	6	5	5	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	2	4	86
21221	4	4	6	6	6	6	5	3									40
30715	6	5	5	6	6	5	6	2	6	6	6	6	6	4	1	1	77
51216	6	5	4	5	6	5	5	5	6	6	6	5	6	6	3	5	84
30715	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	2	5	6	5	6	4	5	3	1	76
20415	5	4	3	5	5	6	5	5	6	6	6	6	5	6	3	5	81

Table A12. Post-test FDPSS responses

PIN	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Sum
20714	6	5	5	6	6	6	5	4	6	6	6	6	6	4	4	4	85
19734	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	5	6	5	5	3	2	2	77
14321	5	4	5	6	5	5	6	4	6	4	6	6	6	4	3	1	76
03130	6	6	6	6	6	3	6	1	6	6	6	6	6	2	2	1	75
40317	4	5	5	6	6	6	6	2	4	6	6	6	6	5	3	1	77
31605	5	4	5	6	6	3	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	2	3	80
21211	4	3	5	6	5	6	5	1	6	5	6	3	3	6	1	1	66
21213	2	5	5	6	6	6	5	2	4	6	6	6	1	6	2	1	69
40418	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	4	3	6	6	6	6	6	2	2	80
50116	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	2	2	86
50319	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	2	4	90
2541	3	3	2	3	3	4	5	3	3	6	6	4	1	1	1	1	49
20918	4	4	5	6	6	6	6	3	6	6	6	6	4	6	1	2	77
51207	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	4	5	91
31015	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	4	6	6	6	6	2	1	83
20209	3		6	6	6	6	6	2	5	5	6	6	6	2	1	1	67
41010	6	6	4	5	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	2	4	86
30615	4	5	5	6	5	5	6	5	4	6	6	6	6	6	3	1	79
20310	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	6	4	2	6	87
51216	6	6	4	4	6	5	3	5	6	1	6	6	6	5	2	1	72
20714	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	3	3	4	6	1	2	65
40415	2	3	5	6	5	5	6	3	6	4	6	6	2	2	4	1	66
30915	4	3	5	5	3	6	5	4	4	4	6	5	6	3		2	65
50316	6	5	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	6	91
20813	3	4	2	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	2	5	2	3	2	2	65
30618	2	2	5	6	5	5	6	2	6	5	4	5	1	4	1	1	60
30618	4	4	6	6	5	6	6	2	6	6	6	6	3	5	1	1	73
20415	5	5	4	6	6	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	3	4	85

APPENDIX 9
CO-DISCIPLESHP CURRICULUM
SUPPLEMENT

SO-WHAT? FROM RUTH:

The book of Ruth ends telling us that Ruth and Boaz were the Great-Grandmother and Great-Grandfather of King David. And who later came from David? Jesus! So, this is a very important union, and the book is showing the outstanding character of the people who were the parents to David and later Jesus. They were of outstanding character and at a time when everyone did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25). Remember, Ruth took place “in the days when the Judges ruled the land” (Ruth 1:1). In one of the most dangerous and morally debase times in Israel’s history we are presented with noble Ruth and honorable Boaz.

In Ruth 3, Ruth lays herself at Boaz’s feet in order to make her intentions known that she desires a husband. By putting herself before Boaz he cannot get around the decision of whether or not he will redeem Ruth as her kinsmen redeemer. A kinsmen redeemer was a part of a law set up by God in Israel, that widows without heirs to take care of them may be redeemed by relatives of their deceased spouse. The kinsmen redeemer would marry the widow in order to provide an heir for the original husband. This means the first child they bore was technically considered the son of the deceased husband. In this way the inheritance given from God to his people would remain in the family forever.

When Ruth says to Boaz in 3:9, “Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer,” she is essentially proposing marriage to Boaz. Boaz’s response shows both his delight in Ruth and his noble character. Boaz had not avoided redeeming Ruth for lack of desire but because there was a closer family member who was technically responsible to do so (3:12). But Ruth’s plan of going to Boaz at night, though dangerous, ultimately worked, because Boaz promised to resolve the issue that very same day!

In Ruth 4, we get to see Boaz make good on his word and secure the marriage with Ruth. The exchange of sandals was an ancient Israelite custom for making a contract between two parties. Ruth 4 gives the impression that Boaz desired to marry Ruth not merely out of obligation, but that he really loved her. For Boaz to marry her he would have had to pay off all the debt on Naomi’s land, as well as provide an heir that would not be considered his child, but Naomi’s. But he was willing to incur all these costs to marry Ruth.

PARENTS: WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS CAN WE ASK OF THE TEXT?

What kind of person was Ruth? What kind of person was Boaz? What was Ruth proposing to Boaz? What was the funny custom with trading sandals? Who came from Ruth and Boaz? Do they give us any examples that we could follow today?

APPLICATION:

- *Do right even when it's lonely*—You can do good and be faithful to God even when it seems like no one else around you are, like Ruth and Boaz during the time of the Judges. Likewise, God takes notice of those who remain faithful to putting their trust in him. Remember Naomi went back to Israel bitter (Ruth 1:20) and without hope, and Ruth attached herself to Naomi and her desperate situation. God, however, took notice of them and provided for them. Providing for them both hope in life, and a name to be remembered forever because of who came from them (David and Jesus).
- *Do right even when it's hard*—Sometimes doing the best thing and doing the right thing is hard, or even dangerous. Ruth went to Boaz by night, risking being rejected by him, risking shame, and even risking her life. To get the thing Ruth needed (a redeemer) she had to be brave and accept the possible consequences. Are you brave enough to do what is right, even if it is scary or dangerous?
- *Godly relationships often require mutual sacrifice*—Just as Christ sacrificed himself for us and we are to live sacrificially for others, we see both Ruth and Boaz made a number of sacrifices for others before they could be married. Can you have a good relationship that requires no sacrifice?

APPENDIX 10

POST-TEST QUALITATIVE COMMENTS

What aspects, if any, of the Co-Discipleship Bible Curriculum were most beneficial to you and your family?

1. The teachers commentary on the chapters being read. It helps me gauge what is the direction and interpretation of the passage according to the teacher (and/or school).
2. Reinforcing that it is okay to ask questions about scripture and the importance of then searching for the answers.
3. It was nice to learn together
4. The 'so what' guide. We love that we can actually understand things that may have eluded us before. There is a practical application, real life connection, and ease of understanding that causes ALL of us to gain a better understanding of what we're reading
5. Helps me have a plan that I can consistently follow. It is directly Biblically based rather than thematic, which I like. It allows for application in our school and home life. I feel supported by the teachers and church leadership if I have questions or struggles. I like that the same values that we want to instill are being reinforced at home and school. Also I really appreciate that my son's teacher(s) are primarily concerned with the heart and spiritual growth and development, rather than academic performance.
6. some guided structure
7. It gave us an opportunity to dive into the word of God together
8. I appreciate that it brings in historical context and clarification for what is going on in the text.
9. Enjoyed having a designated scripture to read with basic questions
10. Gave us an opportunity to discuss and connect on spiritual matters and reflect on scripture as a family
11. I like having the call and response of Scripture, laying that foundation down to memory for the kids, and then having a larger chunk that we're reading, to engage with the text, having the discussion.
12. It provided an additional resource for our family to read, pray, and discuss scripture together. The commentary helped with insight into the texts' meaning and applications.
13. It has been helpful to have some basic talking points and application available from the "so what" portion each week to go along with the scripture reading.
14. The new so what has helped be prepared with understanding before I take the information to my kids. I felt like it made the time more effective and therefor worth doing
15. All of the material is useful and is used as a beneficial tool to teach our children about the Bible.
16. Questions at the end
17. Praying together as well as how the topics apply to every day life in which the child can understand.
18. Having children think of questions is awesome
19. None

What aspects, if any, of the Co-Discipleship Bible Curriculum need improvement or were a hindrance to you and your family?

1. I'd like feedback on the answers to the questions we come up with. First are they good questions and second do you agree with our answers.
2. None
3. We have our own study that we like to focus on
4. None.
5. No end-state provided, too much focus on grading, it forces us to just get it done for the sake of getting it done.
6. There was quite a lot of material in the "So What" readings, the passages themselves were rather lengthy. In comparison with other subjects, the Bible seems much more in depth. However, I would simply adjust to our needs accordingly.
7. It's too long for young kids. Most of my kids can't read so it's hard to do as a family.
8. Very advanced for my young child. Needs to be broken down for each grade
9. I'd rather recite and discuss smaller amounts of scripture as it was a bit much for my young child.
10. When doing the entire guide every evening, it is long enough that we can't do our own devotional program. This is a good one, so that isn't too much of a problem. But at times, we'd like to do our own devotional, especially as we follow the liturgical year (for instance, focusing on Isaiah during Advent, then leading up to the Gospel stories of Jesus' birth). This makes it hard to do both. As it is, we have found it more workable to do the memorization/confession portion in the evening, and read the larger Bible chapters and have the discussion in the morning.
11. For our family, we had to condense the CDG due to this past season of our lives due to an uneven, sometimes chaotic, schedule. So we didn't also follow the liturgy of the CDG and primarily read through the weeks' readings, discussed and completed the required questions. Ideally, we would've loved to do the CDG as proposed, but it wasn't always possible. Not entirely sure I can fault the CDG for that.
12. It'd be great if there was a way to make it more kid-friendly for their ages but I am grateful that my child is learning the Bible all the same:)
13. Originally I couldn't grasp what to actually turn in and there were so many other new things to teach it fell to the wayside.
14. Seemed more like seminary based material vs. application based for a child's world.
15. N/A
16. Too long for younger kids to sit through/understand
17. I would like to see the Co-Discipleship integrated with the FWG. It was difficult trying to merge the two
18. Too regimented
19. It was too strict and formal. It seemed forced and it wasn't very applicable to my child's life.
20. None

Any Comments about the Co-Discipleship Bible Curriculum:

1. Please put the Bible sound off questions with the science and history because we keep overlooking them somehow each week.
2. None
3. Truly thankful for it. It absolutely takes more time to complete during our at home days, but the benefit is tremendous.
4. If the goal of bible class is to engage the parents, don't grade the children on how the parents lead their child. If there is a goal, (there is not a clear goal as far as we can tell) tailor the curriculum to the individual grade level. If it's your goal to indoctrinate, stop it, that's destructive. Spiritual growth/discipleship is not something readily quantifiable; and therefore, should not belong in a school of any type. When a person reads the Bible, throughout their life, the meaning of/what they get out of, each passage can change as they develop. If you want to have a bible class use biblical things that are not in refute or change from person to person or time to time. For example: this week we read about Johnathan, David and Saul, what I wanted teach, and incidentally what my kids got out of the passage on their own, was how Saul's jealousy was maddening for the king. However, when I went over the sound off questions with my kids... turns out we were wrong. So, now my kids might be wrong at school when quizzed... and their parents look like fools... If you want to shovel answers down the throats of kids and parents please stop, you're doing harm for people that are trying their hardest to engage their children. I'm sure there must be another family that might feel the same way, If not we are insane or the only ones doing this right.
5. The curriculum between first grade and kindergarten needs to match up, so the kids are reading and studying the same thing.
6. Thank you for the information. I know this must take a lot of work but I think its a great resource for our family.
7. Thank you for working on this program.
8. For younger kids, the physical act of writing out the questions and answers on top of their other schoolwork, was daunting and tremendously time-consuming.
9. None. We appreciate it.
10. Like a good wine it will keep on getting better!
11. N/A
12. No
13. Initially I "grumbled" at the extra work from the co-discipleship guide, however it is very much needed in our household. It brings us closer together in our journey towards Christ. Thanks!
14. Definitely has potential
15. I would like my daughter to learn the love of Christ rather than the wrath of Christ at this age.
16. I personally do not like the Co- discipleship curriculum. I do not think it is age appropriate. I want to spend my time talking to my children about God's unconditional love rather than judges and the Old Testament.
17. We have really enjoyed it

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING PARENTS AT COVENANT PREPARATORY SCHOOL IN SOUTHERN PINES, NORTH CAROLINA, TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

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This project was designed to develop a Bible curriculum that trains parents to be primary disciple-makers of their children at Covenant Preparatory School in Southern Pines, North Carolina. Chapter 1 explains the purpose, goals, context, and rationale for the project. Chapter 2 provides a biblical and theological basis why parents are to be the primary disciple-makers of their children. An exploration and exegesis of Genesis 18:17–19; 22:6–7, Deuteronomy 6:4–9, Proverbs 1:8–19, Ephesians 6:1–4, and 2 Timothy 3:14–15 provide the primary supporting texts supporting the purpose of this project. Chapter 3 provides historical, theoretical, and practical support for training parents to disciple their children in a Christian school. Chapter 4 describes the project’s initial assessment, curriculum development and implementation, post-assessment, and results. Chapter 5 evaluates the project’s success and describes areas for future improvement.

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