

THE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS

In a culture that has handed off the spiritual formation of God's people to "professionals" in the church, it is easy to pass off the duty of family discipleship as well. This can be seen in the "drop off" mentality of discipleship that many parents opt for, due to a variety of reasons. Regardless the reason, the result of this is a less than ideal model of discipleship. In fact, this type of discipleship devoid of parent's influence in their child's life stands in opposition to the biblical idea of parenting (Deut. 6). In short, parents should be the greatest spiritual influence in their child's life and an essential task of parenting is the spiritual development of their child. Scripture is clear: there is no such thing as a parent who does not influence their child in this regard. Parents will either lead their child away from God or they will lead their child into a flourishing relationship with God. While that decision is ultimately one that the child will make, a parent's own relationship with God and how it is lived out, either clarifies or muddies a child's perception of what God is like.

The Church has been given a gift during this season of uncertainty in our culture. Now more than ever two truths ring louder than they did before. The first is that the church is not building, but the people of God. Second, parents are to be the main disciple makers in their children's life. If parents step into the role of disciple maker now, they will see immense spiritual growth in their children's life, as well as, their own.

Here are five principles that parents can incorporate today in their homes:



LIVE IT OUT



READ THE BIBLE REGULARLY



ASK HEART QUESTIONS



SCHEDULE FAMILY WORSHIP



SHARE THE GOSPEL DAILY



LIVE IT OUT.

One of the most essential things you can do for your child is model what an authentic relationship with Jesus looks like. Children not only model what they see, but they learn by watching. We simply can not give what we do not have. The old adage "do as I say, not as I do," does not work here. If there are inconsistencies between our actions, priorities, and decisions and what we claim as a follower of Christ, then we can not be surprised when the same happens in our children. That doesn't mean that parents have to be perfect all the time! What it does mean is living humbly as a sinner who has been saved by Jesus. When we mess up, we teach our children how to confess sin. When we overreact, we teach our children what it means to apologize. When we are anxious, we teach our children what it means to trust in God in every circumstance. Everyday, we have the opportunity to show our children how to approach God in prayer. Living out our faith in front of our children can be one of the greatest tools in your discipleship toolbox.



READ THE BIBLE REGULARLY.

As Christians, we believe the Bible is God's message of salvation to the world. It is filled with poetry, narrative, songs, and other genres of writing with one resounding purpose: for humanity to know God and be known by Him. The biblical worldview that develops from reading and learning Scripture is essential for the Christian life and seeing God, ourselves, our neighbors, and the world in the proper light. Therefore, it is imperative that parents read Scripture regularly with their children. We recommend the Jesus Storybook Bible for little children, and an easy to read version of Scripture for older elementary students.



ASK HEART QUESTIONS.

A parent's job is not focused solely on behavior modification, but on heart transformation. Scripture tells us that everything flows from the heart (Proverbs 4:23). Therefore, the root of every decision, every action, and every thought comes from the heart. Parents can certainly curb behavior through discipline and incentives, but what God is concerned about is the heart. Parents may get results if they only focus on behavior modification, but it will never deal with the true issue at hand: a rebellious heart. Therefore, parents are called to ask heart questions. By teaching our children to discern what is going on in their heart (why they yelled, why they hit their sibling, why they took an extra cookie) we are teaching them to think critically about why they act, not just the act itself.

Further reading: Parenting by Paul Tripp and Shepherding a Child's Heart by Ted Tripp.



SCHEDULE FAMILY WORSHIP.

This is a specific time set apart for the purpose of worshipping God and talking about spiritual things. This looks differently depending on the family. This could be a short devotional and worship song via youtube or spotify once a week, or a dinner time devoted to reading Scripture and asking ways you can pray for one another. There is no right or wrong way, the goal is for your family to make time during the week to focus on the things above.

We recommend using the family discipleship guides that our team produces a few times a year as a launching point. However, there are plenty of great family devotionals you can use as a regular part of your family worship. Feel free to reach out to our family ministry team for recommendations.



SHARE THE GOSPEL DAILY.

Sharing the message of Scripture and salvation is essential to the Christian life and the development of your child. They need to hear about how God has made a way for people to be in a relationship with Him. As parents we have an incredible opportunity to turn our every day conversations into purposeful ones. Whether it is playing with playdough, legos, princesses or superheroes, we can take ordinary moments throughout our day and turn them into gospel forming opportunities. Reminding ourselves and our children about the Gospel refocuses our heart each day towards pursuing and loving God. It also reminds us that we need to be praying for our child's salvation everyday as we do our best to lead our families in the ways of the Lord.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT ARE THE KEY POINTS OF THE GOSPEL?

Depending on the age of your child, you may need to contextualize the content below, but these are great truths of the Gospel that are important for your child to know as they take their first steps into their relationship with Jesus.

God is perfect. He cannot be near sin and unrighteousness. (Isaiah 59:2)

We are messed up and by nature, we are sinners. (Romans 3:23)

Because of sin, God can't be near us. We're sinful.. Therefore, God can't be with us. God loves us, and WANTS to be near us, but our sin prevents that. We deserve to die for our sin. (Romans 6:23, Hebrews 9:22)

Jesus, God's son, lived a life without sin, and didn't deserve to die. He was perfect, but died to pay the price for our sin. (Colossians 1:13, Isaiah 53:3-12)

In order for God's righteousness to be satisfied, Christ (who was perfect (1 Peter 1:18-19)) took the penalty for our sins. (1 Corinthians 13:3, 2 Corinthians 5:21, John 3:16, Romans 6:23, 1 Peter 2:21-24).

Salvation is free to us, we just have to ask for and accept it. (Romans 10:9-10).

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Now, we live with a new purpose and identity found in God. Our salvation is just the starting point of our relationship with God that will last throughout eternity.

WHAT RESOURCES DOES FAIRVIEW CHURCH OFFER TO PARENTS?

The Fairview Family Ministry Team's desire is to come alongside parents in the spiritual development of their child. Our team oversees the Kid's and Student ministries, writes seasonal devotional curriculum, produces videos and parenting resources, teaches discipleship classes for a variety of age levels, and offers counseling when needed. We are here to help and serve you, please feel free to reach out to us at any time.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD BE BAPTIZED AND BE ALLOWED TO TAKE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

There are many differing viewpoints on this subject and so a simple “yes” or “no” or “age” would not suffice. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper fall into the category of an “ordinance.” This means that a requirement for both of these ordinances is faith in Christ. As the parent, you know your child best, but neither of these two things should be rushed into.

Some parents believe it is best to wait as the child matures before partaking in these ordinances, while others see no reason to hesitate once the child has made a profession of faith. Regardless, there should be no reason to judge one another or their parenting, because both types of parents have been given the God given authority to disciple their own child.

The important thing is that the child should have an understanding of their own sinfulness and an appreciation for Jesus' sacrifice for sin on the cross, evidenced by their decision to follow Jesus before partaking in these two ordinances. If your child is not a follower of Jesus and wants to partake in either of these two ordinances, it presents a great opportunity to share the Gospel with your child. Baptism symbolizes what has happen inside of someone who has put their faith in Jesus. They were spiritually dead before they went down in the water, but are raised to new life in Jesus when they come up. The Lord's Supper symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sins. The bread represents His body broken for us, and the cup of grape juice, the blood spilled for us. Both ordinaces presents the hope that we have in Jesus' death and resurrection. When we die to ourselves and put our faith in Christ, we are raised with Christ to new life in him!

At Fairview Church, prior to a child's baptism, we recommend that you and your child take our Starting Point Class. This class is designed to walk parents and children through major elements of faith and these ordinances. Any baptism candidate (whether adult or child) must have a baptism interview prior to their baptism.

Please reach out to Bek (rjones@myfairview.org) or Pastor Jon (jspallino@myfairview.org) with any questions you may have.

