

How to Disciple Your Child

(by Mark Steiner, DiscipleLand founder)



A. Celebrate God's Greatness!

God is the focus of the entire universe. He enjoys being Lord of the heavens and the earth! God also deserves to occupy the central focus in the minds, hearts, and souls of every human being. Life begins and ends with Him. Determine to know God on a more intimate basis each year. The better you know Him, the better you and your child will be prepared to face life's challenges. Celebrate God's greatness together!

Help your child experience God's view of family, work, worship, and community. Learn together who God is, what He is like, and what He does. Explore each facet of God's majestic perfection together. God generously rewards those who seek Him (Proverbs 2:1-6)!

B. Know God Intimately

God has given parents primary responsibility for the spiritual training of their children. But many parents don't know where to begin. Proverbs 1:7 offers a clue: without knowledge and fear of the Lord, children cannot learn anything worthwhile. Education begins with the pursuit of God—who He is and what He is like.

Each week, try to learn about one aspect of God's character. Take it upon yourself to find out more about this characteristic together. Use the concordance in the back of your Bible to do a simple word study. To know God intimately, explore each facet of His majestic perfection. Begin your delightful and rewarding journey today!

C. Love God Passionately

Jesus summed up 613 Old Testament laws into two: love God and love people (Mark 12:30-31). But beware of the simplicity of Jesus' words. To love God with ALL the heart, soul, mind, and strength does not mean "business as usual." Loving God demands effort, action, and passion.

Most children today love peer approval more than they love God. They are more concerned about "fitting in" than they care about being set apart for God's special purpose. To love God passionately, learn to enjoy God's presence moment-by-moment throughout the day. Determine not to lose touch with His Spirit. Express adoration and delight in unbroken communion with Him!

D. Serve God Selflessly

Most kids serve themselves before they consider the needs of others. Selfishness is natural. It is part of being human. But God extends a higher calling to His followers. The Lord challenges Christians to demonstrate faithful conduct that honors God and helps people. This requires supernatural strength from the indwelling Christ (Galatians 2:20).

Lift your child's eyes from his or her own interests to see the world from God's point-of-view. Christ has promised to meet all our needs (Philippians 4:19). That is His job. Our job is to walk by faith, serving Him in all we do. Kids will usually follow the example of their parents. When you model selflessness, your children will respond in kind!

E. Treasure the Bible!

No other book is like the Bible. The engaging stories speak clearly to everyday situations. The time-tested principles bring insight and hope. The intriguing biographies encourage righteous living. The Bible is a book to trust and treasure. God directs the paths of His people throughout its pages.

Urge your child to embrace the Bible as God's inspired and authoritative message for everyone. Help him or her see how God's Word has transformed people on every continent. Encourage your child's respect and fondness for God's holy Word. Read the Bible together often. Discover God's treasure!

F. Read Your Bible

Once upon a time, parents asked their children after church, "What did you learn about God?" Today, the question is often, "Did you have fun?" In many churches, kids rarely use their Bibles. Laying a Biblical foundation is essential! For centuries, Hebrew and Christian families have read God's Word together—a cornerstone for family bonding and spiritual growth.

1) Follow a plan. For younger children, a daily story Bible might be best. For older kids or for a wide age range, read from the Bible itself. You may want to download this reading plan and adapt it to your family's needs: DiscipleLand.com/parents

2) Make time! As kids get older, schedules get fuller. Choose a regular time to meet together. For many families, after a meal works best. Five minutes will do. Though the fruit may take a while to ripen, you will reap a bountiful harvest. Decide to do it!

G. Live God's Word

God gave His Word to transform the way we live. Knowing Bible truths is only the first step toward godliness. That knowledge must lead to lifechange. James labels believers who know, but who do not act on the truth, "self-deluded" (James 1:22).

Kids quickly differentiate holiness from hypocrisy. They discriminate between empty words and heartfelt actions. Integrate God's Word into your daily routine. Each time you read the Bible, DO something! Look for S-P-A-C-E:

Sins to Confess

Promises to Claim

Attitudes to Change

Commands to Obey

Examples to Follow



H. Memorize Bible Verses

God has given us amazing minds! These powerful instruments possess an almost limitless capacity to remember. Memorizing Bible verses is a skill and discipline that yields lifelong rewards (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2-3). Learn Bible verses together with your child. Discover the marvelous mental potential that God has given to you!

To begin learning a new Bible verse, read it aloud three times at breakfast, three times at lunch, and three times at dinner (or before bed). Recite the verse in this manner every day for a week. By the end of the week, the Bible verse will be your friend and teacher! To retain a verse for life, recite it aloud once daily for a month.

I. Serve the King!

When Jesus Christ came to earth, He set aside divinity so He could embrace humanity. Though He was Lord and Master, Jesus accepted the role of servant. Christ's messages, miracles, passion, and triumphant resurrection all point to His desire to serve others. Jesus revealed truths about humility and servanthood to His disciples. Track them down together in the Gospels. Encourage your child to look for ways to serve Christ by serving others.

Together, affirm Jesus Christ as personal Savior—and Lord over all. Explore who Jesus is, where He lived, what He did, and why. Travel together through the Holy Land alongside the Man who changed the course of human history!

J. Model Christ's Character

The Bible describes the Church as a radiant bride with no wrinkles, blemishes, or flaws. She is stunningly beautiful—a fitting bride for a noble and worthy Husband. Jesus Christ loves and cherishes His Church the way a groom loves his beloved bride (Ephesians 5:25-29). During a great celebration in heaven, Jesus Christ will marry His beloved Church (Matthew 22:1-14, Revelation 19:7-9).

As Head of the Church, Jesus promises to love, serve, and care for her. Think about your commitment to Christ and to His Bride. Does your local church involvement reflect your love for Him? Do you engender honor and respect toward the church among your children? List ways you can cherish Christ's Bride now—that will delight Jesus at that grand celebration!

K. Abide in Christ

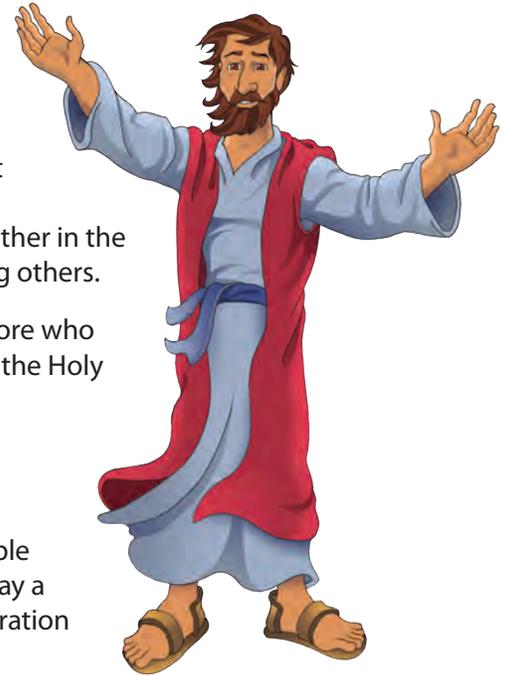
Abiding in Christ is very simple, yet very challenging. It is simply about remaining in constant communion with Jesus. He is our "life partner" who wants to experience the twenty-first century in and through us. Christians receive power from no other source, and apart from Jesus Christ we are useless and can do nothing (John 15:5-6)!

Read John 15:1-11 with your child and draw a picture of the scene that Jesus describes. Talk about ways of abiding and the process of pruning. Encourage your child to point out activities and attitudes that limit his or her ability to bear fruit. Examine your own walk with Jesus and see if anything needs to be adjusted. Commit yourselves to cling wholeheartedly to Christ. He has already made that commitment to you!

L. Count the Cost

Jesus often surprised His followers by giving them tasks that they felt incapable of performing. He s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-d their comfort zones, expanding their faith and commitment. This stretching process helps us overcome complacency, apathy, and lethargy—to achieve more than we thought possible (Matthew 16:24-25; Philippians 4:19). Soon, we add a new skill or reach a higher level of ability.

It is time for every Christian to embrace the rigors of discipleship. It is time to reconsider the cost and rewards of following Christ. Set a higher standard for your spiritual pursuits. Begin anew today and ascend a new summit—for the glory of God! As you climb, your child will observe your zeal and be encouraged to follow your example.





M. Transform the World!

Through 20 centuries, Jesus' challenge, "Make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-20) has stirred His followers to action. Jesus' preeminent passion, the focus of His ministry, His earthly delight—was His twelve disciples. It is certainly true that He ministered to the masses, but Christ poured His life into those twelve diverse men.

After Jesus' ascension into heaven, His disciples knew what Jesus expected them to do. They were to go and repeat with others what Christ had done with them. God changes the world one person at a time. Begin with your own children—today! Walk alongside Jesus, allowing His life to shine through you to others—especially those in your own home!

N. Love Christ's Bride

The Bible describes the Church as a radiant bride with no wrinkles, blemishes, or flaws. She is stunningly beautiful—a fitting bride for a noble and worthy Husband. Jesus Christ loves and cherishes His Church the way a groom loves his beloved bride (Ephesians 5:25-29). During a great celebration in heaven, Jesus Christ will marry His beloved Church (Matthew 22:1-14; Revelation 19:7-9).

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O. Establish Good Friendships

In the upper room, Jesus prayed that the friendships among His followers would mirror the oneness that Christ enjoyed with His heavenly Father (John 17:20-23). Jesus wanted Christians to love, to worship, and to serve alongside each other in such a genuine way that the watching world would be drawn to Him.

The New Testament reveals many "one another" (O-A) principles of friendship and Christian fellowship. Talk with your child, encouraging him or her to look for opportunities to practice each one daily:

- be devoted to O-A
- live in harmony with O-A
- teach O-A
- share with O-A
- serve O-A
- be kind to O-A
- forgive O-A
- build up O-A
- pray for O-A
- be hospitable to O-A

P. Support World Missions

God is the Lord of the whole earth! Just as our loving Father breathes life into every human being, His heart longs for each person to receive forgiveness through Christ. To accomplish this, God gave the Church sole responsibility to fulfill Jesus' urgent command, "Go into the world and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-20). The Church exists to carry out that task.

The Great Commission is not "someone else's job"—it is every Christian's designated duty. Ask God to give your child a heart of love for all people who don't yet know Him. Plant an earnest desire within him or her to help every person find the Lord. Seek opportunities to share the Gospel often. Actively support your church's missions ministries through prayer, finances, time, and involvement.

Q. Follow the Faithful

Saints who plowed the soil before us have left a clear trail to follow. They walked by faith, not by sight. They stored up treasure in heaven—their true home—not on earth. They fixed their eyes on Jesus, not allowing distractions, travails, or pleasures to alter their course. They remained faithful to the end. God is not ashamed to be called their God (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Encourage your child to embrace God's kingdom—as His magnificent plan for all eternity. Overview God's plan for the ages and challenge him or her to walk in the footsteps of Bible champions. Explore the "hall of faith" to meet godly men and women who illumined dark corners of history. Make it your aim to join those who follow Jesus' steps, helping your child impact God's eternal empire!

R. Choose Righteous Role-Models

Your child's role-models will significantly influence attitudes, choices, and conduct. The world offers an array of role-models to sway kids' thinking. The faces and themes are familiar: wealth, fame, beauty, power, talent, strength, popularity, etc. The Bible also boasts a host of role-models for kids to follow. These heroes possess traits that God esteems: honesty, modesty, holiness, righteousness, humility, faithfulness, wisdom, etc.

Talk with your child about the people that he or she admires—pro athletes, film stars, musicians and performers, teachers and coaches, local and national leaders, etc. Don't forget Bible champions, plus ministry, missionary, and church leaders. What characteristics do these people exhibit that attract your child? Discuss the traits that are important to God (Philippians 4:8). Make sure that your child differentiates between what God values and what the world promotes (1 John 2:15-17).

S. Remember Your Roots

One of God's highest priorities is that His children remember their family heritage and build a spiritual legacy. Moses exhorted the Israelites to treasure their identity as God's beloved, chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6-9). In the Promised Land, Joshua commanded the tribes to preserve their property boundaries and family names (Joshua 24:13-15).

Family roots are easily forgotten and often neglected. Help your kids appreciate their ancestors! Tell your children stories about their travails and triumphs. Provide visual reminders about their family heritage—old photographs, antiques, and memory-rich items. Construct a family tree and talk about their spiritual legacy.

T. Prepare for Eternity

When compared with eternity in heaven, the years we spend on earth are infinitely brief. God promises a heavenly home where all His children will experience unimaginable splendor (1 Corinthians 2:9). In fact, Jesus is presently customizing heavenly residences to our individual tastes and interests (John 14:2-3)!

As you prepare your child to face the rigors of adulthood, be sure to keep his or her eyes fixed on Jesus and on eternal priorities. Plan a special retreat to talk about the future and to establish personal goals—both short and long range. Remind your child often that life on earth is a preparation period for eternal life in heaven. Both of you will be "forever" grateful!



U. Walk with God!

Walking with God is the Christian's highest and most exhilarating calling. It integrates the entire person—intellect, emotions, and will. To walk with God, get to know Him more and more intimately. Explore each aspect of His majestic perfection! As you walk with God, you will love him more and more passionately. Express adoration and delight in unbroken communion with Him!

Celebrate discipleship—as God's blueprint for victorious living. For centuries, godly men and women have practiced the disciplines of personal devotions, inductive Bible study, and Christ-centered living. Champion the development of these important skills. Take up Jesus' challenge to count the costs and experience the joys of being His disciple!

V. Pray with Power

God grants Christians an incredible honor—to be in touch with Him every moment of every day! The Lord's unlimited resources and inexhaustible power are at your disposal. Draw near, seeking God's face. Dialogue openly with Him. Pray with your whole heart. Be passionate. God delights in His children and eagerly awaits your requests!

Each morning ask your child, "How can I pray for you today?" In the evening pray together with him or her. Let the H-E-A-R-T acrostic guide your prayer time:

- H**onor God with praise and respect.
- E**xamine your life; confess any sins.
- A**sk God to supply your personal needs.
- R**equest God's help for the needs of others.
- T**hank God for blessing you today!



W. Make Wise Decisions

Biblical wisdom is the ability to live with extraordinary skill—with insight, integrity, and intensity. The Scriptures exalt wisdom as the highest blessing a person can attain (Proverbs 3:13-15). Because wisdom is so valuable, becoming wise requires effort (2:1-6). To start on the path of wisdom, determine to know God—fearing and revering Him (9:10).

Encourage your child to make decisions that consider God's viewpoint and value system (3:5-6). The choices he or she makes today largely determine who he or she will become tomorrow. These ten principles assure good decisions: glorify God, honor your parents, build others up, increase your integrity, protect your body, demonstrate discipline, produce spiritual fruit, keep your conscience clear, defeat the devil, and imitate Jesus!

X. Celebrate Your Uniqueness

God's creative genius knows no bounds. Each snowflake differs from all the others. Even identical twins do not share similar fingerprints, retinas, or DNA codes. God has uniquely and wonderfully configured every human being—and He doesn't make mistakes!

Really get to know your child. Become an expert in understanding how to bring out the very best in him or her. Share your observations about your child's uniqueness with him or her. Read Psalm 139:13-18 together and begin an ongoing "I spy" game in which you identify tendencies, abilities, and special interests in each other. Encourage your child to become no one other than the incredible person God designed him or her to be!