

7 Practical Ways to Disciple Your Kids

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TOOLS FOR RAISING KIDS WHO LOVE GOD AND LOVE OTHERS

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“Daddy,” declared our four-year-old son Landon emphatically, “the Bible says not to sing!”

“What?!” I asked with a confused, yet inquisitive tone of voice.

“The Bible says not to sing,” he said again.

After taking a step back to think about what it was he was actually trying to tell me I asked, “Do you mean the Bible says not to sin?”

“Yeah, dad,” he said enthusiastically. “Like when you push your friend at the slide because you want to go first. And then he pushes you back. And then you push him. God doesn’t like when we do that kind of stuff, right?”

Oh, the faith of a child. From singing to sinning, discipling our children is not for the faint of heart. You don’t have to be a parent for more than five seconds to feel like, in some way, you’re already messing up. If you feel inadequate, you’re not alone. Many of us didn’t grow up in homes with parents who disciplined us.

Yet, as parents, we spend more time with our kids than anyone else—even their pastor. That’s why we are to be the primary disciplers of our kids. As parents, think about the ability we have to influence an entire generation of Christ followers.

But how do we do that? Where do we begin?



1

YOU WERE NOT MEANT TO DISCIPLE YOUR KIDS ALONE

First, we were not meant to teach or disciple our children alone. Moses writes in Deuteronomy 6 the best way to instill the love and commands of God onto the hearts of our kids. But he's not just speaking to parents. He's speaking to Israel, or the entire Church.

In other words, when you need help discipling your kids, or have a question, don't be afraid to ask. You can talk to your pastor, another close friend, or even an older couple in your church you look up to. Whoever it is you admire, seek them out. This is the power of being plugged into a local church. We're in this together.

2

NOT ALL CHILDREN LEARN THE SAME WAY

Discipling your children begins by teaching them the Bible. However, keep in mind that not all children learn the same way. Developmentally, our kids are also unlikely to be on the same emotional or spiritual level. Understanding each child individually helps us know how we can best teach the Bible. We want our kids to be interested in what they learn. If learning the Bible is boring for them, it won't be pleasant for anyone. Find ways to keep it fun!

For example, think about your own kids and how different they are. Consider the best way you could help each child memorize the 66 books of the Bible. By having him / her:

- Repetitively write the books in order
- Write a song or rap about the books of the Bible and recording a music video
- Create a game or puzzle. Writing all 66 books with markers and construction paper, cutting them out, and then placing them in order

- Find a song online reciting the 66 books and listening to it before bed or during drive time

No matter what, keep it fun!

3

MOVE KIDS FROM KNOWING THE TRUTH TO LIVING THE TRUTH

Third, keep in mind that the goal in teaching the Bible to our children is not just to help them learn the truths of the Bible, but to also apply these truths in how they live their lives, especially with how they treat others. As you see your children become developmentally ready, begin to expose them increasingly to more in-depth study and life application.

4

MAKE DISCIPLINE ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP

The word discipline means, “to train.” When your children misbehave, use biblical values as anchor points “to train” your children. In addition to the passages we can point our children to about obeying Mom and Dad (Eph. 6:1-3; Prov. 30:17), consider other biblical truths you want to highly value in your home (i.e. telling the truth, treating others with kindness, holding the tongue, etc.) and set the rules based on those passages. When your children disobey, link their behavior to the passage and value your family esteems. For the list of 100 family values we use to help families list their top five, [click here](http://www.joshuastraub.com/values). (www.joshuastraub.com/values)

5

ARE YOU THE ADULT YOU WANT YOUR KIDS TO GROW UP TO BE?

I know. You might have stopped reading after seeing this question. It’s tempting. But to move our children from knowing the Truth to living it out requires we live what we preach. Research shows the greatest predictor of who our kids become is not what we do or know about parenting, but

who we are as adults. That's why modeling our own spiritual growth before our kids is necessary.

As parents, one of the best ways to instill the love of the Bible in our kids is to show them how we read, pray through, and learn from it. Never be shy about sharing with your child what God is teaching you from His Word. Our children aren't born knowing that our basis for right and wrong is the Bible. We have to tell them—and more importantly—show them.

Use dinnertime or bedtime to help your children see how a decision you recently made was based on a particular truth from the Bible. When our children make the connection between our actions and the truth of the Bible, they begin to see the Bible lived out before them in the hearts of others. For example, maybe you chose not to gossip about someone (Eph. 4:29); you took an extra shift at work because your family needed the money (Prov. 6:6); you complimented your spouse (Prov. 16:24); you took dinner to a family in need (Gal. 5:13). Share with your kids about these decisions.

6


YOU DON'T NEED TO ADD ANYTHING TO YOUR DAY

Instead, Moses, in Deuteronomy 6, told us to use the built-in times of the day God already gave us—when our children wake, during mealtimes, drive times and at bedtime. Our family rule is to prohibit any screens during mealtimes. I would highly recommend not having any screens during these four important times of the day. Try to hold these four times as sacred as you can. And always tuck your kids in bed every night instead of sending them to their room by themselves. They need our presence.

7

DISCIPLESHIP VARIES WITH EACH CHILD

We begin by suggesting you set up a weekly Family Bible Time for the entire family—a time meant for uniting you together as a family where you can talk about what you're



learning and pray together. Apart from that time, your children are likely to be on different spiritual, intellectual and emotional levels, especially if you have children with a wide age range. In these cases, it may be advantageous to hold a personal study (a Bible Date) with each child. This one-on-one approach provides your child the opportunity for asking personal questions or revealing struggles as it relates to living out the Bible. Real life stuff they wouldn't want to share with their siblings in the room.

If you haven't picked up on it by now, discipling our kids is as much about the time we spend with them as it is about the actual reading of the Word or going through a Bible study. Don't force more than your kids can consume each week. Also, don't put unnecessary guilt on yourself for not covering a specific number of chapters or verses or completing a devotional. Your time together will quickly fizzle out this way. Instead, hone in on building your relationship with your child. Talk to your child about your own relationship with God. And most of all, keep it fun.

For there is no better way to instill the love and commands of God on the hearts of our kids than in an environment of positive memories your kids shared with you.



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