

First published in Loveland Reporter-Herald 9/27/2026

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Discipleship Starts at Home

Who is responsible for the children?

Not long ago the answer came without hesitation: the parents. Raising children was never simple, but mothers and fathers bore the weight of it — accountable finally to God, the Giver of children as gifts. “Children are a heritage from the Lord” (Psalm 127:3, ESV).

That conviction shaped a culture. Our nation was founded on principles that assumed a Creator both holy and love — the God before whom the seraphim cry, “Holy, holy, holy” (Isaiah 6:3), and of whom John writes, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Our founding documents did not invent that God; they acknowledged Him. On that acknowledgment rested an architecture of family and civic life.

That foundation has come under steady pressure, often from the people most blessed by it. Human reason and preference are offered as replacements for divine revelation. What is casually called secularism is not a neutral space cleared of religion but a rival worldview, quietly deconstructing the Judeo-Christian tenets of Western civilization, including the family.

Scripture has seen this before. Judges closes with a haunting line: “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). That is not freedom but spiritual chaos — a people who traded God’s authority for their own judgment. Proverbs warns where such a road ends: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

So Christians in this generation find themselves contending for what was not, until recently, open for debate: Who is responsible for our children?

Consider the drift in our public institutions. School districts have begun disciplining — sometimes expelling — students for social media posts made on their own time. The legal standard, “nexus to school,” is so loose that in some districts such a post carries the same maximum penalty as a violent felony on campus. Meanwhile, students who walk out of class to protest causes the culture approves are praised for exercising their First Amendment rights. The honest question is whether the same grace would extend if the message displeased those in charge. The Supreme Court warned long ago that students do

not “shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate.” The pattern is a quiet transfer of parental authority to the state, never put to a vote.

Long before there were school boards, God gave His instruction for children directly to parents: “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:7). Notice who is addressed. Not the priest. Not the magistrate. Not the schoolmaster. The parent. The home was meant to be the first classroom and the kitchen table the first pulpit. Fathers are charged to bring their children “up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Mothers and grandmothers are honored for the “sincere faith” passed through generations (2 Timothy 1:5). Proverbs is clear: “Train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6).

None of this exempts the state from its proper work, and none excuses parents who have outsourced what God entrusted to them.

For those who have embraced the Jesus of history, the days ahead will ask more, not less. Our culture treats biblical conviction as intolerance and tolerance as a virtue only when it flows one direction. Paul’s exhortation still stands: “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (Colossians 1:10). That walk begins under our own roofs.

The Great Commission was not delegated to the state. Jesus told His disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). “All nations” begins with the small nation at our own dinner tables. If we will not disciple our children, someone else will — and increasingly, someone else is offering.

So this is a pastoral word, offered firmly and without heat. Parents, take up again what was always yours. Pastors, equip the families in your care. And to any weary mother or father: you are not alone. The God who gave you these children has not withdrawn the grace to raise them.

Discipleship starts at home. It always has.