

FAMILY DISCIPLINESHIP



HELPING YOUR HOUSEHOLD
ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE RHYTHM OF
TIME, MOMENTS AND MILESTONES



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INTRODUCTION

The Guide

Being a parent is one of the most stressful, fun, messy, beautiful, overwhelming, encouraging and difficult callings in the world. Every child in every family is unique, and raising kids is an endlessly challenging adventure.

In this adventure, God has called parents to be the prime spiritual discipler in their child's life: to teach them to know & love Jesus with all their heart, soul, mind & strength, and to obey all that He has commanded. (Matt. 28:20; Gal. 4:19).

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”
Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Our church wants to come alongside each parent and help you do just that. Whether you are a new parent or you have older kids, our desire is that this Family Discipleship Guide will be a tool to help you get started and help you establish a sustainable rhythm of gospel-centered living and Family Discipleship.

Now, you may feel your own inadequacies when it comes to your own understanding of God and His Word, or your ability to train up your children in it. Be encouraged! You're not alone! Skills aren't developed on their own, they come with practice, and there's never a better time to practice than now.

Family (According to the Bible)

When God created man, He quickly placed him in a family. Adam was put to sleep, Eve was perfectly crafted out of a rib from Adam's side, and the two became one flesh. They were husband and wife- the first family. Enjoying unbroken fellowship with God, they received the command: “Be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth” (Gen. 1:28). God called them to (a) have children, (b) fill the earth with His image, and (c) tend to both diligently for His glory.

Even in the first family, God created clear roles. There was one husband & one wife, a marriage design from God before sin ever entered the world. Their sons & daughters were to come under the authority of their parents. We see God repeat his heart for the family all throughout Scripture.

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God created the family to teach us about His nature. Families are a gospel shadow. They help us understand God's relational nature and how He relates to His children. Throughout Scripture, God uses family-imagery to teach His people about His care, provision, forgiveness, power, love, and discipline. When God redeemed the Israelites, He called them into a "family." He is a perfect Father who adopts all who would love and trust in Jesus, calling them dearly loved children of God.

God created the family to nurture and bring life. Families are made up of people bound together by marriage, blood, and/or adoption. The family is the first and most foundational unit of a society. Families are the means by which mankind multiplies and fills the earth. Families are the primary place a person is to be nurtured, cultivated and cared for. God's intention for His image-bearers is that they know the covering, care, instruction, protection, and love that comes from belonging to a family. This is so important to God that He commands His people to draw in those without families- the widow, orphan, foreigner, and outcast- and provide for them in a family-like manner.

Because God intends for us to flourish within the context of families, He graciously gives instructions about how families ought to function. He appoints roles for parents and children, establishing an authority structure, and setting boundaries for our good. God calls parents to care for, love, lead, instruct, and discipline their children, not harshly, but with compassion and wisdom. God calls children to joyfully submit to the authority of their parents, and to honor them in everything. The integrity of the family structure was so key to the flourishing of the people of God.

When God sent His Son, Jesus, He placed Him within a family. Although Jesus did not head a physical family of His own, He made the way for all who love Him to be born again as a dearly loved, adopted child of God. Jesus brought forth the spiritual family of God through His death and resurrection.

Regardless of our experience, we can all testify to the impact our families have had in shaping our character, values and beliefs. Whether through their presence or absence, our family has marked us in ways no one else can. There is no greater potential for human influence than from a parent to their child. This is by God's design.

INTRODUCTION

The Role of the Family in Discipleship

In many ways, culture has convinced parents that it is better to outsource the education & training of their children to professionals. We send them to teachers, counselors, tutors, coaches, and churches to learn and develop. Because of this reality, many parents walk in insecurity over their parental influence.

There is nothing wrong with utilizing specialists for the sake of your child's continued growth; But when it comes to spiritual matters, God gives the primary responsibility to parents (Deut. 6, Ps. 78, 145, Eph. 6). Whether they realize it or not, parents are constantly imparting values to their children. Kids naturally imitate their parents. They mirror mannerisms, repeat words, and mimic facial expressions. They learn what's important by watching how mom & dad spend their time, money, and attention.

For this reason, God commands parents to actively shape the character and spiritual development of their kids. Foundational to a parent's ability to disciple their kids is having an active relationship with the Lord themselves. Before you can make a disciple, you must be a disciple. Therefore, a parent's first and greatest obedience is to love the Lord with all their heart. God calls us to walk in repentance, to be in community with other believers, to use our giftings to serve others and build the Church, and to share Jesus with those who don't yet know Him. Striving to serve the Lord in these areas builds your life on the Rock, and sets the example for your children to follow.

God gave parents the unique influence to teach their children how to live gospel-centric lives. They have the privilege of showing their kids how to draw close to the Lord through prayer, worship, and studying Scripture.

The Role of the Church in Discipleship

While parents carry the responsibility, the church family is also entrusted with the joyful duty of discipling the next generation. Don't think of church as a place, but rather a community. A church family is simply the relationships we have with fellow believers as we do life together. The church is the men and women who carry our burdens, share our sorrows and celebrations, pray with us, encourage us, and receive our crisis phone calls late at night.

In this respect, the role of the church is to come alongside parents to help disciple their children, and offer care, love, support, accountability, and prayer. A church community provides additional voices of truth for children.

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The church family also takes care of the spiritual orphan. They draw in those without Christian parents and teach them the ways of the Lord. Many of us first heard the gospel from a camp counselor, a teacher, a coach, a small group leader, or a friend who loved us enough to share. Discipling the next generation is a community undertaking.

The next 4 sections will outline the framework for Family Discipleship:

- 1. Modeling**
- 2. Time**
- 3. Moments**
- 4. Milestones**

MODELING

In the context of family discipleship, **modeling** consists of setting a godly example for your family, living out your genuine walk with God, and demonstrating true repentance when you sin.

- ❓ If you looked at your weekly schedule or read a transcript of every word you said in a day, what would it show are the most important things in your life?

We make time for what we consider important. Looking at how we spend our time can help us assess what we have prioritized. What time in your week is strategically & intentionally given to **your** relationship with God and **your family's** growing relationship with God?

- ❓ Was a “walk with God” modeled for you in your own upbringing?
- ❓ What would you like to see repeated from your own upbringing?
- ❓ What would you like to see redeemed or changed for the better?

Read Deuteronomy 4:9 and 6:4-9. Take note of the things God calls us to do “diligently.” Our kids learn from how we live. Read Galatians 5:19-23.

- ❓ How would someone care for their soul “diligently?”
- ❓ What spiritual habits & fruit of the Spirit would you like to see developed in your kids that you want to work on modeling?

When it comes to spiritual growth, knowing where to start can be a struggle. Some of us have never seen a healthy version of it lived out. It's easy to feel too busy for it. Take a moment to consider your personal rhythm of spiritual disciplines.

- ❓ What are the biggest challenges you face when it comes to...
 - Bible study?
 - Worship?
 - Prayer?
 - Rest?
 - Fasting?
 - Generosity?
 - Evangelism?
 - Confession?
 - Serving?
 - Engaging in church community?

MODELING

It's important to remember that we are talking about working in healthy rhythms, not trying to heap more guilt on ourselves for where we lack. Spiritual growth is gradual, and it happens when we are intentional with it.

The following page shows a diagram of how you might map out a typical week to include rhythms of spiritual discipleship. It includes things like daily Bible reading, meeting with a Christian friend, times of prayer, a spiritual fast, church attendance, small group, etc. Then there is a blank diagram on the page following. It's for you to be creative and intentional with how you plan for your spiritual health!

TIME

Family discipleship time is being intentional with the already-rolling rhythms of your family's life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about, and living out the gospel. Family Discipleship time isn't necessarily about adding a formal teaching time, although that can certainly play a role, its about being intentional with a time where you can lead your family in conversations about Jesus. You may utilize gathering points that already exist for you, like going to church together, eating a meal together, cummting to school, or bedtime routines. It might also mean establishing a new rhythm, like a family game night, family devotions, or a family service project.


? On a scale of 1-3, rate how much time & consideration your family gives to the following activities:

- 1 = Not enough time & consideration
- 2 = The right amount of time & consideration
- 3 = Too much time & consideration

- Each family member has time to themselves.
- The whole family does something fun together.
- The whole family has an in-depth conversation together.
- We have fun spending time with people outside the family.
- We talk about the gospel together.
- We attend church together.
- We serve together.
- The whole family eats meals together.
- The parent(s) plan(s) time for when the family will be together.
- We work out, participate in activities/hobbies and/or play sports.
- We work at our job(s).
- We sleep.
- We watch TV, read, play video games and/or listen to music.
- We build relationships with those who don't know Christ.
- We spend time with our church family beyond Sunday services.
- We manage conflict in a healthy way.
- If married: My spouse & I have time for just the two of us, without kids.

? Now that you have finished the exercise, consider both the downtimes and the busy times of your household. What are the first words that come to mind? Where do you see healthy or unheathy tendencies? Is there anything that you would like to change?

TIME

-  Is there intentional time built into the rhythm of your family for discipleship?
When is it?

Whenever discipleship times might happen, the two key components of it are:

- (1) **rhythm**: designating the times (you're committed to them & consistent with them)
- (2) **intentionality**: designing the times (planning & purpose)

Daily Family Discipleship Time Ideas

- **Family Meals** - Plan certain meals that you can sit at the table together. Ask questions about their day & intentionally respond with gospel-centric conversation. Pray together and you could even add Scripture reading/memorization or reading a devotional at breakfast or dinner.
- **Family Prayer** - At some point in the day (first thing in the morning, last thing at night, on your drive to/from school) pray together. Intentionally work at taking your prayers deeper.
- **Bedtime Routine** - If you have younger children, gather them together before bedtime to read a Bible story. Choose a verse to read & then pray through it together.
- **Commute Time** - Keep a devotional in the car and have someone read today's excerpt, then talk about its application and then pray together. This is also a great time to pray OVER your kids, pray a blessing over their lives, pray that they would see gospel-opportunities today while at school, that God would use them, etc.

Weekly Family Discipleship Time Ideas


- **Movie Night** - Plan a night that involves family, food, fun, and your faith, like:
 - **Movie Night**: Watch something together that could spark conversation while eating popcorn. Most movies have a theme of rescue, heroism, sacrifice, friendship, redemption or defeating evil. Use these as conversation-starters about the gospel.
 - **Game Night**: Play a board game, a card game, or a sport together and then spend some time encouraging each other in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22) you see growing in each other (patience, kindness, joy, self-control, etc.)
 - **Restaurant Night**: Take the family out to dinner and talk about what the Lord is doing in your lives. Seek opportunities to live out your faith in public, to show love to your server or the people you encounter while you're out.
- **Worship Service** - Go to church services together, and afterwards discuss what you remember or learned from the teaching.


TIME

- **Family Bible Study/Devotions** - Pick a devotional that your family can read together, or a book of the Bible. Then talk about how the Scriptures from it apply to life, and then pray together.
- **Community** - Attend a church small group together where other Christian families are gathering together for the purpose of encouragement, spiritual strength, and accountability.
- **Weekly Family Traditions** - In general, consider anything that your family does on a regular basis, and think about how you might intentionally design the time for it to be a spiritual discipleship time. This could be just about anything from watching your favorite show or sports team together, yard work, grocery shopping, etc. But again remember, its about intentionally drawing Jesus-centered moments from it.

Monthly Family Discipleship Time Ideas

- **Service** - Find somewhere you can serve together. This could be anything from serving a meal at a homeless shelter, to writing letters to our military or elderly, to helping a neighbor with housework, or serving on the church's greeting team together.
- **One-on-One Time** - Create space for one parent to take out one child individually- to a movie, to a meal, or anything fun and special for that child. If you have more than one child, have a night of the week or month where one of your children receives intentional and complete attention from you. Maybe you can let one of your kids stay up a little later for some special, focused time or you can do something special for them the same day each month, like a note, or a gift, or an event.
- **Guys' Night or Girls' Night** - Have the boys of the family do something with Dad or the girls with Mom on a regular basis to encourage and discuss becoming a young man of God and a young woman of God.
- **Neighborhood Evangelistic Party** - Have your unchurched friends over to foster a ministry of hospitality and evangelism with your kids. Pray with your kids before they all arrive, that God would help them see opportunities to talk about & show the love of Jesus.

 What times of your day, week or month could you dedicate to family discipleship? How often will you do them? What's your rhythm?

 How can you help keep the commitment to family discipleship times so that it is consistent, thoughtful and intentional?

Use the chart on the next page to design what you'd like a typical month to look like for your family discipleship times. Think when, where, what, and who...

EXAMPLE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME PLAN

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2
S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend worship service together • Family Game/ Movie Night 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend worship service together
M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing
T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing
W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Elder-Led Prayer together • Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Home Group • Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing
T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family devotional • Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family devotional • Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing
S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Family Breakfast • One-on-one time with child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Family Breakfast • Dinner with neighbors

WEEK 2		
WEEK 3	WEEK 4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend worship service together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend worship service together 	S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	M
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with Home Group Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with Home Group Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	W
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family devotional Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family devotional Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedtime: Read, Pray, Sing 	F
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big Family Breakfast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big Family Breakfast 	S

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME PLAN



	WEEK 1	WEEK 2
S		
M		
T		
W		
T		
F		
S		



WEEK 3	WEEK 4	
		S
		M
		T
		W
		T
		F
		S

MOMENTS

Family discipleship moments are capturing those “moments” that can happen at any random time in everyday life, and leveraging them to have a gospel-centered conversation. “Moments” are about being observant and prepared to take advantage of opportunities to communicate God’s truth whenever a circumstance might come your way.

Ephesians 5:16 teaches us to “*make the most of every opportunity.*” Jesus captured moments like these often, using the moment to disciple the one he was with:

- **Luke 21:1-4** Jesus observed a widow giving away small coins, so Jesus uses it to teach His disciples about Kingdom economics.
- **Luke 13:1-5** Jesus refers to the Tower of Siloam, a current event, and helps His disciples answer “why bad things happen.”
- **Luke 11:37-12:3** While at dinner with the religious Pharisees, He uses the cups & bowls on the table to illustrate how sin can remain on the inside when we only clean the outside.
- **Mark 10:17-27** Jesus meets a wealthy man who is unwilling to part with any it, and He uses the conversation to teach His disciples about having the right view of money.
- **Mark 10:35-45** While James & John are arguing about who is better, Jesus teaches a Kingdom principle about servanthood & humility.

A family discipleship moment could come anytime. It might come with the opportunity to pray over an ambulance passing by, or to visit a sick friend, or when you drive by a funeral or a wedding. It could be in moments of discipline or moments of celebration. Perhaps if your child comes home sad, lonely, or hurt. Like Jesus saw, there are a plethora of opportunities that present themselves in everyday life.

There are 2 main things we’re trying to communicate & teach in family discipleship moments:

- **Attributes of God:** to know God (Who is God? What has He done? What is He doing? What is He like?)
- **Godly Character:** to grow in godliness (Who am I? Who has God called me to be? What has He asked of me? How can my heart become more like His?)

MOMENTS

- ?** **What are attributes of God** that you'd like your kids to be well aware of? What kind of circumstances might you be able to leverage to communicate those attributes? What will you say?
- ?** **What Fruits of the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22) would you like to see in your kids? What common situations might be opportunities to foster those traits? What will you say?
- ?** **What selfless acts of service** would you like to see your kids model? What kinds of situations might help them see & understand how God can use them?

Developing Family Discipleship Language

We've created some language that may help you in capturing your family discipleship moments. Below is a list you might want to consider implementing into your conversations at home. These short phrases can be used to answer many of life's questions and can be applied to a multitude of circumstances. Imagine getting on your child's level, looking them in the eyes, and having these truths to share with them.

Highlight the ones that you would like to start using in your home, as you leverage family discipleship moments:

1. Five Foundational Truths

- God is good.
- God wants a relationship with us.
- There is brokenness in the world because of sin, but God gave us a solution to fix our brokenness... Jesus.
- Jesus came to save sinners.
- God wants to use us to bring His love & hope to a broken world.

2. Attributes of God

- **Wise:** God knows what is best.
- **Generous:** God gives what is best.
- **Loving:** God does what is best.
- **Good:** God is what is best.
- **Unchanging:** God never changes.
- **Creator:** God made everything.
- **Holy:** God is completely perfect & separate from sin.

MOMENTS

- **Just:** God is right to punish sin.
- **Faithful:** God always does what He says He will do.
- **Provider:** God meets the needs of His children.
- **Merciful:** God does not give His children the punishment they deserve.
- **Attentive:** God hears and responds to the prayers of His children.
- **Sovereign:** God has the right, wisdom, and power to do all that He pleases.
- **Almighty:** Nothing is too difficult for God.
- **Compassionate:** God sees, cares, and acts when His children are in need.
- **Glorious:** God shows His greatness and worth.
- **Worthy:** Only God deserves all glory.
- **Refuge:** God is a place of safety and protection for His children.
- **Deliverer:** God rescues His children.

3. Godly Character

- **Love:** a caring commitment to God and others over yourself.
- **Joy:** delighting in things that honor God.
- **Peace:** a calm confidence in God's goodness and power.
- **Patience:** being slow to anger, waiting kindly and quietly.
- **Kindness:** being generous with your possessions, your words, and your actions.
- **Goodness:** doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason.
- **Gentleness:** expressing compassion in words and actions.
- **Self-control:** freedom from following our sinful thoughts and emotions.

4. Christian Phrases

- **Sin:** the bad things we think, feel, say, and do that don't honor God. Our hearts are sick with sin.
- **Sinful nature:** all people were born sinners.
- **Confession:** telling the truth about your sin.
- **Repentance:** to confess your sin and turn from it to follow Jesus.
- **Glorify:** to show, honor, and enjoy God as most valuable.
- **Pride:** to make ourselves more important than others.
- **Authority:** the right to be in charge.
- **Compassion:** to care and act when others are in need.
- **Worship:** the right response to the goodness of God.
- **Forgiveness:** to release someone from their wrong.
- **Disciple:** a friend and follower of Jesus.
- **God's children:** those who love and trust Jesus.
- **God adopts** into His family those who love and trust Jesus.
- **The Kingdom of Heaven:** anywhere Jesus is honored as the highest & best King.

MOMENTS

- **Grace:** God freely gives His children what they don't deserve.
- **Gospel:** the good news of God's plan to rescue the world from the problem of sin through Jesus Christ.
- **The Bible:** God's true Word. It is from God and about God.
- **Jesus:** when we look at Jesus, we see what God is like, because Jesus is God.
- **Prayer:**
 - We pray to the Father because of the Son with the help of the Holy Spirit.
 - There are 4 types of prayers:
 1. **Praise:** telling God how great He is.
 2. **Thanksgiving:** thanking God for what He does and gives.
 3. **Confession:** telling God the truth about your sin.
 4. **Request:** asking God to do or give something.
- **Forgiveness:** God forgives fully, freely and forever.
 - Fully: all of your sin is forgiven, all the way, in full.
 - Freely: a gift, not because you earned it or deserved it.
 - Forever: God's forgiveness is lasting. He doesn't change His mind or ever take back His forgiveness.

Scriptures to use when capturing moments:

1. Sadness:

- "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)
- Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. (Psalm 42:5)
- The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (Psalm 18:2)

2. Anger:

- Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. (Psalm 37:8)
- In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:26-27)

3. Complaining:

- Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky. (Philippians 2:14-16)

MOMENTS

4. Fear/Courage:

- Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. (Isaiah 41:10)
- Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. (Jer. 17:7)
- When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. (Psalm 56:3)
- The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. (Hebrews 13:6)

5. Forgiveness:

- Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Colossians 3:13)
- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

6. Humility/Servanthood:

- Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)
- Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace... (1 Peter 4:10)

7. Hardship/Suffering:

- "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)
- Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16)

8. Honesty/Integrity:

- Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' (James 5:12)
- Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out. (Proverbs 10:9)
- The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy. (Proverbs 12:22)

9. Kindness:

- Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6:31)
- Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18)
- Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

10. Temptation:

- Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith. (1 Peter 5:8-9)
- Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it. (Genesis 4:7)
- The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

MOMENTS

11. Identity:

- This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)
- Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. (Romans 8:37)
- And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8)
- For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

MILESTONES

Family discipleship milestones are about taking time to celebrate occasions with your family to commemorate God's work in their life. In our culture we already celebrate many milestones: birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, promotions, etc. Family discipleship milestones is about celebrating those same milestones, but planning a way to point to the faithfulness of the Lord.

Examples in Scripture

Consider what we've seen God's people do in the past to commemorate and celebrate what God has done:

- **Genesis 9:12-17 - The Rainbow**
God gave His people a lasting sign to remind them of His wrath & his promise.
- **Genesis 8:20, 12:7-8, 35:1, Exodus 17:15, Joshua 8:30, Judges 6:24, 1 Samuel 7:17, 2 Samuel 24:25- Building Altars**
God's people built altars after a significant victory, to commemorate what God had accomplished for them.
- **Exodus 12:1-20, Leviticus 16- Festivals & Holy Days**
God initiated several holidays so His people would remember & celebrate His goodness and His history of faithfulness.
- **Exodus 16:31-33- Jar of Manna**
God commanded Moses to fill a jar with manna so future generations would be reminded how God provided for His people.
- **Joshua 4- The Stones of Remembrance**
God instructed Joshua to place 12 stones next to the Jordan River to remind the people of how God had delivered them.
- **1 Corinthians 11:23-26- The Last Supper**
Jesus used elements so His people would be reminded of His broken body & shed blood on the cross.
- **Acts 11:25-26- The People of God are Called Christians**
To designate the disciples as those who follow Christ they were given a new name, "Christians."

- **?** Did you have any family traditions growing up that you'd love to see continue in your family? Do you have any family traditions now that could be better leveraged to commemorate Christ through it?
- **?** What family traditions could you create in the way you celebrate birthdays that will bless your children and point them to the faithfulness of the Lord?

MILESTONES

Sometimes we are going to mark a milestone that's already happening naturally in a child's life, and other times we are going to make a milestone for them.

"Marking" Family Discipleship milestones

You can mark a spiritual discipleship milestone out of birthdays, graduations, a new job, getting a driver's license, accepting Christ as Savior, baptism, and more, because these are already significant milestones in their lives. But now plan how you can use that significant event to point to God's faithfulness. **Here's some ideas:**

- Buy them a momento to remind them of the spiritual aspect of this milestone.
- Give them a scripture to commemorate this milestone.
- Buy them a Bible and write the date of that milestone in it.
- During the celebration, take a moment to pray God's favor & blessing over them.
- Read a Scripture over them as part of the celebration.
- Have guests take turns encouraging them with how they've seen God at work in the child's life.
- Set a spiritual goal for the next year.
- Invite their spiritual mentor to say something special.

For Holidays, consider these ideas:

- Read Advent scriptures leading up to Christmas (our church provides this!)
- Bake a birthday cake for Jesus at Christmas.
- Serve together somewhere for a holiday.
- Invite unbelieving friends to celebrate a holiday with you to experience the spiritual emphasis you bring to it.
- Commemorate Thanksgiving by writing a list of things to thank God for.
- Celebrate the New Year by making spiritually-focused family resolutions/goals.
- On Veterans Day, write letters to soldiers & pray for those serving in the military.

"Making" Family Discipleship milestones

Unlike "marking" family discipleship milestones out of something already happening in the child's life, "making" is what we do to create a way to bring spiritual significance to something. Here are some ideas:

MILESTONES

Family Adventures:

- A family missions trip.
- A family camping retreat.
- Serving at an outreach as a family.
- Kids/Youth camp.

Rites of Passage:

- Child dedication.
- A special getaway to talk about purity, dating, and God's design.
- Giving them a purity ring.
- A special way to celebrate becoming a young man/woman of God.
- Graduation.
- The accomplishment of something significant.
- Baptism in water.
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- Taking communion for the first time.
- Reaching a savings goal.
- Cooking a meal.
- Taking on a new responsibility.
- Learning to tithe.
- Buying their first car.
- When they begin to volunteer at church.
- Given their first Study Bible.

Making a Plan

Use the chart on the next page to design a Family Milestone plan for the next few stages of your family's lives.

MILESTONE PLAN

YOUR IDEAS

**IDEAS FOR FAMILY
TRADITIONS**

**IDEAS FOR FAMILY
ADVENTURES**

**IDEAS FOR
GIFTS/MEMENTOS
TO BESTOW**

**IDEAS FOR
BIRTHDAY/ANNIVERSARY
TRADITIONS**

MILESTONE PLAN



A G E	S A M P L E	I D E A S / P L A N S
BIRTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baby dedication with Home Group; choose life verse for child	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Birthday party with community	
2 - 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gift of their first Bible	
5 - 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual family vacations	
11 - 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First communion; start serving at church	
15 - 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organize "rite of passage"	
18 & UP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduation party	



Resources