



The Simplicity of Family Discipleship

“Daddy,” my six-year-old leaned over and whispered in my ear, “should I change it to baseball? Because that’s what our family does”—and I was reminded that family discipleship can be far simpler than we sometimes think.

Three or four months had passed since this particular child was placed in our home for adoption. In her previous family, football and soccer had been the sports of choice. Our family, however, watches and enjoys only one sport—baseball, the consummate expression of all that is beautiful and good about human nature and recreation. And so, whenever our new child asked about rules or teams related to other sports, the response she typically received ran along the lines of, “I’m not really sure about that. Baseball is the sport that our family usually watches.” No one suggested other sports were defective or inappropriate; we simply pointed out the pattern that our family follows.

A few months into the adoption process, we began encouraging our new child to take notes during the Sunday morning sermon. Soon afterward, the pastor illustrated a point in his sermon by telling a story that involved playing football. And that’s when my child leaned over and asked, “Should I change it to baseball? Because that’s what our family does.”

I quietly assured her that there was no need to change her notes to exclude football—but it was clear that we had “discipled” our child in a particular way of life without even planning to do so. This “discipleship” had so deeply shifted her worldview that she was prepared to edit the pastor’s sermon illustration to fit our family’s recreational proclivities.

How had this happened?

1. It happened because we had pointed her attention again and again to a different set of habits. No one in our household criticized or condemned other sports; we simply oriented her attention to the particular pattern we follow in our household.

2. It happened because we enjoyed the experience of baseball together. When we head to a baseball game, we’re excited, and we choose clothing that supports our team. In our home ballpark, there are rituals and liturgies that we follow religiously—we buy cookies from our friend Elizabeth as soon as we arrive, the younger children get out their coloring books in the middle of the fifth inning, and we take a walk around the ballpark and ride on the carousel in the bottom of the seventh inning.

3. It happened because our family reenacted in tiny ways what she saw happening on a larger scale at professional games. A Wiffle Ball game in our backyard is about one-fourth the size of the infield of a regulation ballpark; there are only six players, there is no cheering crowd, and concessions are limited to whatever we happen to find in the refrigerator. It’s silly and small, and it rarely turns out the way we planned. Home-run balls are sometimes lost because they land on the neighbor’s trampoline, we frequently miss fly balls because our outfield warning track is a tomato patch, and if you aren’t careful when sliding into second base you may collide with the gutter spout—but all of these little plays are tiny echoes what the minor- and major-league teams do in big ways, and these small reenactments in our backyard feed the children’s appetite for the real thing.

How Family Discipleship Happens

So what does this mean for us when it comes to family discipleship?

1. In everything you do, point your child’s attention again and again to a greater glory and a grander story. Look for opportunities to talk about how the little stories of their lives fit into the big story of God.



2. Enjoy the experience of worship with God’s people. No, not every Sunday will turn out to be a bundle of unending ecstasy for your family—that doesn’t happen in my family, and it probably won’t happen in yours. We have four children, and there are Sundays when it’s a victory worth celebrating that our family made it to church with everyone’s underwear on the inside instead of on the outside. And yet, even with these challenges and more, we as parents can make the choice to do our best to prepare well for Sunday worship and to make it a priority in our schedule. We can talk about our church’s worship services with eager expectancy, and we can surround weekly worship with experiences that our family enjoys. And, after it’s over, we can make time to discuss the highlights instead of complaining about all the ways that the worship services failed to meet our expectations.

3. Reenact in little ways at home what happens in a big way at church. No, our family faith-talks won’t always turn out the way we planned. Compared to our church’s worship, family worship times are likely to seem silly and small. But the purpose of our family’s times of worship isn’t to provide a big-league church experience at home; it’s to cultivate our children’s awareness of God’s presence in every part of life and to feed their appetite for the work that God is doing through His church.

The same patterns of life that disciple children in a particular sport can shape their formation as followers of Jesus Christ. When it comes to sports, it’s possible that our children may someday embrace the despicable heresy known as the New York Yankees—or even turn to false sects such as soccer or lacrosse. And, if they do, that’s fine.

Mostly.

But, when it comes to their discipleship in Christ, it’s my prayer that God uses these ordinary efforts to form a faith within them that far outlasts my days on this earth.

Taken from Dr. Timothy Paul Jones and used with his permission. Check out his other parenting resources at his website and monthly blog - www.timothypauljones.com

GOD CREATED EVERYTHING!

PRESCHOOL

WEEK 1

GOD CREATED ANIMALS - GENESIS 1:24-25

READ Genesis 1:24-25 This summer we are learning that God created everything! Today we learned that on the sixth day of creation, God created animals!

EXPLORE TOGETHER Ask your child what his or her favorite animal is. Look up information about it on the Internet or at your local library. Then talk about the many animals we don't see very often. Share information with your child about how important habitats are to the animal as well as each one's defensive abilities. Discuss similarities between species of animals as well as differences. Consider finding pictures and information about some unusual animals and learning about them with your child. Remind him or her that each animal is important because God made it. Pick a few animals you don't normally think about and thank God for them.

Prayer Time - Dear God, thank You for creating animals! From little mice to giant elephants! We love You. In Jesus name, Amen!

WEEK 2

GOD CREATED MAN - GENESIS 1:26-31

READ Genesis 1:26-31 Today in VicKids we learned that after God created animals on the sixth day, He created people too! The sixth day was very special because it's when man was created, and God called what He did very good!

EXPLORE TOGETHER Spend time this week reflecting on people. Take time to pull out a mirror and tell your child to smile and look into the mirror. Say, God created you! Next gather coloring supplies and together draw pictures of your family. Add other facets of creation in the picture, i.e. grass, trees, flowers, clouds, sun, pets, etc. Point out the different days of creation that are all in one picture together. Remind your child that God created everything!

Prayer Time - Dear God, I am glad You created this wonderful world and all that is in it. Thank You so much for creating us. In Jesus name, Amen!

WEEK 3

GOD RESTED - GENESIS 2:1-3

READ Genesis 2:1-3 This week in VicKids we learned that on the seventh and final day of creation, after God created everything, God rested.

EXPLORE TOGETHER As Christians we know how important it is that God rested on the seventh day. We follow His example by setting aside one day as a day of rest - this is called the Sabbath. After worship services, spend your afternoon in relaxation, enjoying God's creation. Remind your child how God takes care of us and how He does this. Spend the day thanking God for everything He has done throughout the week. Make sure you spend the day of rest in the way God intended.

Prayer Time - Dear God, thank You for making us and giving us a day to rest. You did not create this day because You needed rest, but because You wanted us to rest. Help us to always remember You are our creator and help us want to be more like You. We love You. In Jesus name, Amen!

WEEK 4

GOD CREATED EVERYTHING - GENESIS 1 - 2:1-3

READ Genesis 1-2:1-3 All summer long we have talked about how God created everything! Today we reviewed all seven days of creation!

EXPLORE TOGETHER As we finish our summer of creation, find time to spend with your family either at a park, or the zoo if possible. As you walk through the park point out as many days of creation as you can. Start with the sky, clouds, and sun. See if your child can remember the day of creation it was created on. Then move to the seas, dry land, birds, and fish. Next point out any animals, from a squirrel running across the grass to a dog barking nearby. Afterwards, look at each other and remind your child that people were made on day six. Finally, take time to sit together and rest. Remember that God created rest for all of us on the seventh and final day!

Prayer Time - Dear God, You are the only one powerful enough to create something from nothing. Thank You for creating this wonderful world. Thank You for making everything we see! We love You. In Jesus name, Amen!

THE BIBLE SAYS WHAT?

ELEMENTARY

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM - JEREMIAH 33:3 (NKJV)

WEEK 1

Read: Jeremiah 33:3 This week in VicKids your student learned about Daniel and his encounter with King Nebuchadnezzar. The king had a dream that caused inner torment and frustration, so much so, that he demanded his wise men explain the dream to him, without giving them any details. When they could not interpret his dream, the king ordered them to death. But then Daniel was given an opportunity and had until the next morning to find the answer to the king's request. After many hours of praying and seeking the Lord, Daniel comes back and tells the king the meaning of his dream. Everyone was saved because of Daniel and his dedication to the Lord.

Explore Together: This week with your family take some time to talk about why it is important to seek God and His answers, rather than our own. Many times, we can assume we know what's best when facing different situations, but in reality, God knows what is best for us. Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV) shows us that God's knowledge and understanding are much higher than our own, which is why we must rely on Him rather than our own understanding (Proverbs 3). Daniel not only knew this principle, but it was one that he lived out.

Pray: Lord I thank you for your grace and love. I know we don't deserve it, but you give it freely. Help us this week to understand what it takes to rely on you and your word, rather than our own ways. Father, we know you are always looking out for our best interest and you have the right answers. In Jesus name, Amen.

JEREMIAH - 1 CORINTHIANS 16:13 (NLT)

WEEK 2

Read: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:13 This week in VicKids your student learned about Jeremiah and his pursuit to share God's good news. Many religious leaders were against Jeremiah and what he said on behalf of the Lord. Even though he was in right standing with God, almost everyone who heard Jeremiah didn't LISTEN to him. No matter the adversity that Jeremiah faced, he served the Lord even when he didn't know the outcome, he served Him wholeheartedly, without fear.

Explore Together: Take some time this week to talk with your family about why it is important to obey the Lord and stand up for what is right, especially when it might not be the most popular decision. Jeremiah spoke about how God put a burning passion in his heart to share the good news to those around him, despite what troubles or situations he faced. God has called all of us for a specific purpose and with specific gifts. These are meant to be used for the glory of God and not our own. When we truly obey Him, He will bless and supply all our needs, according to his riches and glory (Philippians 4:19). Take some time this week to talk about why it is important to obey God and what He has instructed us to do, through his Word.

Pray: Lord we thank you so much for today's teaching that instructs us to live for You and Your glory. Help my family to understand what it means to be a true follower of Jesus and live according to Your guidance and Your Word, just like Jeremiah In Jesus name, Amen.

NOAH AND THE ARK - GENESIS 9:14-15 (NLT)

WEEK 3

Read: Genesis 9:14-15. This week in VicKids your student learned about Noah's ark. This story is about how God wiped the earth of all people except Noah and his family. Two of every animal came aboard the ark in order to preserve them from this catastrophe. Noah, his family, and the animals were on the ark for 150 days during the rain and floods. When the waters receded, God put a rainbow in the sky as a physical representation of his covenant with man, that he would never flood the earth again.

Explore Together: This week with your family take some time to talk about why it is important to follow the Lord and pursue a Christ-honoring lifestyle. God wiped out the earth because the people had lost their way and allowed sin to distance themselves from God. Also, take some time to research some of the other promises/covenants found in the Bible that God has provided for us.

Pray: Lord we thank you so much for today's teaching on Noah and the ark. Father, we also want to thank you that we have a way to wipe the slate clean when it comes to sin because of your son dying on the cross for us. Lastly, Father, my family and I thank you so much for your son dying on the cross for us, what an amazing gift, let us never take it for granted. In Jesus name, Amen.

NEHEMIAH - NEHEMIAH 8:10 (NLT)

WEEK 4

Read: Nehemiah 8:10 This week in VicKids your student learned about Nehemiah and his endeavor to rebuild the walls of ancestral city, Jerusalem. Nehemiah faced many obstacles during his time constructing the wall, he had men attack and steal from him, and even had close friends betray. God spoke and warned Nehemiah of the challenges he would face, making him always prepared for what was to come. Much to the puzzlement of his enemies, Nehemiah put his trust in God and saw His miraculous hand at work!

Explore Together: Take some time this week to talk about why it is important to seek God and his plans, rather than our own. Nehemiah sought the Lord for the plans of what to do with the wall in Jerusalem. He knew he wasn't able to do it on his own and therefore he spent time in prayer and fasting seeking answers. This week challenge yourself to find out the things you need to know from God in order to be as effective as possible for His glory. Nehemiah didn't build the wall to be famous, he did it because God chose him, and God has chosen you for something very important as well!

Pray: Lord, thank you so much for today's lesson that instructs us to seek you and your plans. I ask that you would help my family and I grow closer as we learn what it is that you want us to do and what path to take. In Jesus name, Amen!

PARENTS **NEED TO KNOW**

Being an Internet **AWESOME PARENT**

Recently, **Google** launched a brand new resource for parents and children in an effort to help them be more confident in the exploration of the Internet. It is designed to teach the fundamentals about "digital citizenry" and how to make better decisions when on the 'Net.

This website is loaded with resources that will help you and your family be digitally aware, safe and a resource for other families who may not be as savvy as you are! Here are just a few these new resources:

- **Be Internet Awesome Curriculum (2019)** - Six new media literacy lessons for the updated curriculum.
- **5 Printable Activities** - To coincide with ready-to-teach Google slide lessons.
- **Be Internet Awesome Family Guide** - This gives you the tools and resources to learn about online safety and citizenship at home.
- **Internet Code of Awesome** - Learn the 5 pillars of Internet Awesomeness and the code of conduct.

Campus Calendar

NORCROSS

07/10 - VicKids Volunteer Orientation - 7:00 pm
Lower Level Connector

HAMILTON MILL

07/28 - "The Talk" Workshop - 1pm, Classroom B

MIDTOWN

07/06 - Men's Breakfast
07/13 - Men's Outreach
07/21 - VicKids Showcase Community Event
07/27 - Citywide Outreach

NEW RESOURCES FOR INTERNET AWESOMENESS

<http://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com>

If you raise your children, you spoil your grand-kids. If you spoil your children, you raise your grandkids.

Anonymous

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSES

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3 NKJV

"Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong". 1 Corinthians 16:13 NLT

"When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, and I will remember My covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life." Genesis 9:14-15 NLT

"The joy of the Lord is your strength!" - Nehemiah 8:10b NLT

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