

How can we help our children become Disciples of Jesus?

Background:

Great Commission: “Going make disciples” starts with our families, especially our children. Obedience based discipleship is observable, spiritual growth is evident. Encouraging belief in Jesus is speculative and unobservable.

Current Environment: The external culture is unsupportive of raising children to believe in Jesus. Disciples impact their world, by discovering and encouraging people of peace. Children can do this with their peers. They have access to their schools and neighbors that adults are forbidden to have. Disciples own their beliefs.

Shared Journey: Some traditional “ministry” tends to separate parents from children. Families who are disciples of Jesus share the journey and are united in ministry.

Scriptural Basis: Exodus 12

In the midst of instructing the Hebrew people about the upcoming deliverance/exodus from the slavery of Egypt, God establishes a remembrance and continuation for future generations (vs 14 – 20 and 24 – 27.)

Application: As we consider making disciples and transforming the world in our lifetime, we should consider how to perpetuate discipleship to the future generations (our children and grandchildren.) The end goal is:

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

Revelation 7:9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

Discipleship Principle:

You cannot make a disciple of Jesus unless you are a disciple of Jesus. Making a disciple of Jesus is an “invitation” process. It is inviting someone to join you as a disciple.

Five Disciplines of a Disciple of Jesus:

1. Obey Jesus in everything.
2. Memorize and tell all of Jesus’ commands and teachings
3. Know all of the scriptures, what Jesus taught about them, and agree with those teachings.
4. Imitate Jesus in everything
5. Bring people to be discipled by Jesus (we are brothers – one of another)

Questions:

There are two primary discipleship environments for children, the family and institutional settings such as Sunday schools. Child discipleship will certainly differ in these two environments.

Home:

1. How should discipleship be introduced to children in the family? Should the parents start first by themselves? What instructions and/or training should they receive?
2. What type of response should parents expect from their children based on age/maturity?
3. How long does it take to develop a routine?
4. How much variety should be encouraged in a family's discovery group?
5. How much time is optimum?
6. When are the best times to have a family Discovery Group?
7. How often should a family group meet?
8. How should the discovery process be modified to address multiply times during the week? (number of verses to cover, I will statements, Commitments to share outside of family, helping others.)
9. What parts of the discovery process should be done every time families meet?
10. When and how should facilitator duties be shared?
11. Are there specific passages that should be studied as a family?
12. What other things should be addressed to establish a successful family discipleship group?

Institution/Sunday School:

1. What are the developmental stages (ages) of children that determine the level of discipleship a child can engage in?
 - a. How does the "group" memorization and learning process work for different ages?
 - b. What amount of memorization can child do at different ages?
 - c. When are children able to share memorized passages?
 - d. When can they engage other children in discussion and find people of peace?
 - e. When can children bring the discovery process home to their families?
2. What support do children need when they introduce disciple-making to their families?
3. What passages are best to use with children of different ages/maturity?
4. What other things do we need to know to develop an effective children discipleship program?

The above article was written by my friend and colleague in disciple-making movements, Jim Lilly, a local catalyst and coach who is a field missionary candidate with City Team International. For more info on Discovery Bible Studies, Discovery Groups and Disciple Making Movements at home and abroad, click on this link: <https://www.cityteam.org/idisciple/> (Tom Mouw)