ONE GENERATION AFTER ANOTHER WILL CELEBRATE YOUR GREAT WORKS; THEY WILL PASS ON THE STORY OF YOUR POWERFUL ACTS TO THEIR CHILDREN. Psalm 145:4
Disciple-making at Home

As parents, we want to provide the very best of everything for our children. We want the best educational foundation, the best athletic or musical foundation and the best economic foundation. But how often do we ask if we are providing the best spiritual foundation for our children?

Proverbs 14:26 says “In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and His children have a refuge” (HCSB). Psalm 103:17-18 reminds us that “…the Lord’s faithful love is toward those who fear Him, and His righteousness toward the grandchildren of those who keep His covenant, who remember to observe His precepts” (HCSB). How does a parent teach a child to “fear” the Lord? How do children learn to earnestly desire to love and please the Lord who deserves reverence and awe? What does it take to build a biblical worldview in our children so they are spiritually grounded as they branch out and live in today’s world?

A great starting place is making family worship a priority. Family worship can be as simple as a Scripture reading or Bible story and prayer or it can be an elaborate time of Scripture reading, prayer, songs, games, crafts, discussion questions and mission focus. Reading Scripture from the Bible or purchasing a family devotion guide are both good places to start. Consider purchasing a children’s Bible with realistic illustrations to use with younger children.

Creating a dedicated time of worship can be a time of trial and error. A family may begin by dedicating one time per week with the hope of adding more times of worship throughout the week. What time of day works best for the rhythm of your family — breakfast, dinner, bedtime or some other time of day? How long should we plan to spend in worship?
The ages of your children will be a big factor in planning family worship. The younger the child, the shorter their attention span and the shorter your family worship should be. A good rule of thumb for expected attention span is one minute per year of age plus one additional minute.

Younger children are literal thinkers — “they see what you say” — and so your discussion should focus on real life application. As your children mature you may consider expanding your discussion to deeper and more abstract concepts. Consider sharing the responsibility of Scripture reading with your children. Ask to see if they want to take turns planning and leading this special time.

Holidays are a great time to begin an intentional time of family worship. Advent readings using an Advent wreath with candles, Thanksgiving jars or Resurrection eggs are all tools that give direction to family times. Instructions for creating and using these items can be found online or at your neighborhood Christian bookstore.

Family worship can become a highlight in the life of your family. It may also become a challenge to prioritize this time in a way that prevents family worship from becoming a painful chore. Psalm 78:4 says, “We will not hide them from their children, but tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done” (ESV). This verse describes a time of joyfully sharing about God in ways that impact children for the future. Your attitude will play a large part in the success of your family worship. Pray for a dedicated heart to disciple your children well. “I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them” Jeremiah 32:39 (ESV).
DISCIPLE-MAKING WITH YOUR FAMILY
"Teach a child how to follow the right way; even when he is old, he will stay on course."
Proverbs 22:6 (The Voice)

This familiar proverb gives clear instruction about the need for parents to train and disciple their children. The process of disciple-making is enhanced when parents understand how their children learn.

DISCIPLE-MAKING WITH INFANTS THROUGH 2-YEAR-OLDS
Infants’ primary need is to feel safety and security. We accomplish this when we meet their needs with personal interaction that is warm and loving. Consistently meeting needs builds trust which is foundational to faith development. Infants, 1-year-olds, and 2-year-olds are building language skills, and parents have a wonderful opportunity to disciple their young children by using short sentences, finger plays and simple songs about Jesus, God, and the Bible. Think of ways to incorporate teachable moments and Bible references throughout the day. Choose simple board books with Bible stories. Offer blessings for meals and pray aloud for young children at bedtime and throughout the day. Expressing thanks to God for life’s blessings can make faith expressions a normal part of every day. These steps can help family worship find a natural place in the rhythm of the day.

Children ages 1 and 2 have very short attention spans. They learn through imitation, repetition and positive reinforcement. Celebrate when your toddler joins the family worship group or allow them to play quietly when older siblings are present and need opportunity to focus. Include them in brief
Young children are learning at the fastest rate they will ever learn. Every encounter impacts their mental, physical and emotional development. It is important for parents to include encounters that help with spiritual development, as well. Just as Paul reminded Timothy, “You, however, must continue in the things you have learned and are confident about. You know who taught you and how from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” 2 Timothy 3:14-15 (NET). Parents can be the trusted disciple-makers that influence their young child in ways that lead to wisdom and faith in Jesus.

DISCIPLE-MAKING WITH 3, 4, AND 5-YEAR OLDS
Ask any preschool teacher to describe this age and the first word is ACTIVE. Why walk when you can run, skip or hop to your destination? Burgeoning independence makes “NO” a preschooler’s favorite word, even when “YES” would bring what they desire. Preschoolers learn primarily through play. They learn to make choices, understand consequences, problem solve, build relationships and make sense of their world through play. Play allows preschoolers to learn how to lead and follow, develop empathy for others and the benefit of cooperation. Cause and effect is a big concept for preschoolers and opens the door to “why” questions. Asking the same questions in a myriad of ways and repetitive reading of the same books, hearing the same stories and watching the same videos over and over are characteristics of this age. Imaginative play develops and games of pretend are enjoyed. Vocabulary continues to develop and modeled behaviors are incorporated into their personal behavior.
Family worship with your preschooler should continue to be brief, with six to 10 minutes as an expected length of time. A Bible story from a Bible storybook or Scripture reading from a children’s Bible, a prayer and song will be enough at this stage. Routine in format gives preschoolers a sense of security, confidence and control.

Preschoolers are very literal and “see what you say.” Abstract concepts of faith, sin, and grace are learned through time spent in experiential learning. Assign these abstract words to real life experiences to serve as concrete evidence of these concepts. In time, children will incorporate these ideas into their concepts of the world.

Make your stories come alive with sensory words and actions. Set the tone by describing the setting of your stories: is it hot, cold, wet, dry, loud, quiet or still? What sounds might one hear in the setting of the story? Might they hear trees cracking, donkeys clopping, doors slamming, walls crashing or horns blaring in the distance? Alternate the pitch, tone and volume of your voice to make the distinction between the characters or the actions they are taking. Engage your preschooler’s senses to hold their attention and make the story come alive in their imaginations.

Is there a simple game that would help your preschooler focus on prayer? A jar or basket containing craft sticks with prayer suggestions will help focus your family prayer time. A child-friendly Nativity set offers concrete ways to tell the Bible story. Adding pictures chosen from the Internet can add visual interest. Re-enactments and drama will help your younger children engage firsthand with the biblical narrative. Ask open-ended questions that lead to real life application. The question, “What would
“happen if...?” builds on their interest in cause and effect. Offer a safe place for children to respond without fear of ridicule.

Remember that repetition and modeling are important tools in discipling preschoolers. Do your preschoolers see you pray over important decisions and offer thanks to God and to others? Is forgiveness offered, requested and freely given?

Preschoolers can learn simple Scripture passages. Choose a family verse of the week and repeat it together throughout the day. Post it on the bathroom mirror, dashboard of the car, the refrigerator door and dinner table as a reminder to repeat it to your preschooler. If applicable, use it in teachable moments throughout the week. Continue to review and reinforce previously learned verses to keep memorization fresh.

The safety and security of family worship will build lasting memories and strong spiritual foundations for your child that can be passed on to their children. “Let these words that I’m commanding you today be always on your heart. Teach them repeatedly to your children. Talk about them while sitting in your house or walking on the road, and as you lie down or get up” Deuteronomy 6: 6-7 (ISV). Disciple-making in your family is not a suggestion. It is a covenant promise and command for parents. It is not a one-time event. It is a lifestyle of pointing your children to the wonder and plan of God for their life. Resolve today to make family worship the cornerstone of your family living life together.

DISCIPLE-MAKING WITH SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN
The attention span of younger, elementary-aged children may increase to 10 to 15 minutes in length. They continue to enjoy active learning that involves their participation in games, discussion, memorizing
Scripture and Bible reading. Repetition and reinforcement of key points are important and happen as stories are connected chronologically and faith concepts are built and developed through time. Connecting Scripture and faith concepts to real life helps forge a biblical worldview for your child. With a little creativity you can implement an “ABC approach” — “Abstract Becomes Concrete” — to family worship. Ask yourself the question, “What are some concrete ways to show evidence of abstract faith concepts?”

Family worship time is also a great time to reinforce and use the resources your church may provide. Sunday School take-home sheets often have a suggested list of Scripture readings or activities that you can incorporate into your family time. The use of the printed Bible story can help parents learn age-appropriate ways to share Scripture with their children. Use of printed devotional books to guide family worship is another great option.

Offer scenarios for developing problem-solving skills using faith concepts to help point children to Jesus. Create a safe environment where children can ask and explore faith questions without fear of mockery or ridicule. Model and connect faith concepts in your personal life with your children. This is one of the most effective ways to disciple them as you “walk your talk!”

Service opportunities and mission projects are important tools for helping children learn to be more like Jesus and to apply “ABC” faith concepts. James reminds us in James 2:15-18, “Imagine a brother or sister who is naked and never has enough food to eat. What if one of you said, ‘Go in peace? Stay warm! Have a nice meal!’ What good is it if you don’t actually give them what their body needs? In the same way, faith is dead when it doesn’t result in faithful activity” (CEB).
George Barna, founder of the Barna Group which is a market research firm specializing in studying the religious beliefs and behavior of Americans and the intersection of faith and culture, has found that the moral direction of a person’s life is set by age 9 and the spiritual direction of most people is in place by age 13. Building a moral and spiritual foundation should be a priority for parents. Your influence can have eternal consequences and can never begin too soon.

**DISCIPLE-MAKING WITH PRETEENS**

The transition stage between childhood and the teen years — the “preteens” — can be an interesting time in the life of your family. Torn between playing with dolls and wearing makeup, moving to middle school, the onset of puberty and accompanying body and voice changes can be both stressful and endearing. Preteens are undergoing great changes as their brains go through a major rewiring and their need for both roots and wings intensifies. Family dynamics during this time can impact family worship and a parent’s role in disciple-making.

Preteens are increasingly aware of the world at large and current events and crisis may cause them to question what they have been taught by parents and their faith community. They may seek to establish that the truth defined for them for so long continues to be true to them on a personal level.

Schedules for extra-curricular activities and their own need for rest may impact the established routine for family worship. Their transition to more abstract and global thinking can deepen the faith conversations in which the family engages. As their desire for independence grows, parents may tend to emotionally step back from their child, but it is critical that their parent-child relationship remains a priority and times of focused attention continue to happen. Preteens need a safe, non-judgmental
place to ask questions and explore their faith. This exploration may sound like doubt at times, but the process of questioning can deepen their faith as they explore faith issues and develop ownership of their belief system.

Worldview from a humanistic society may collide with your desire for a biblical worldview for your preteen. Opportunities to problem solve and serve others can be arenas for connecting faith and belief to life and open the door for meaningful faith conversation. Preteens will look for inconsistencies between a parent’s words and their actions. Serving alongside your preteen will demonstrate the depth of your commitment to Christ. Working as partners in ministry will build confidence in their understanding of their role as a disciple of Christ.

More music and media can be incorporated into family worship. Open-ended questions about their friendships, local and world events, spirituality and morality can lead to deeper faith conversations. Remember to allow adequate time for conversation. Parents need to consider how they engage so that preteens do not feel “preached to.” Be ready to direct preteens to Scripture and teach them how to use Bible study tools to do their own research.
PRAYING WITH YOUR CHILDREN
Praying with Your Children

Teaching your children to pray is one of the most important gifts you will ever give them. Jesus’ disciples recognized its importance when they asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Teach children that prayer is talking directly to God and that God is always ready to hear them when they pray. Children need to learn that not only can they talk to God, but they need to be ready to listen and respond to His direction.

Children can learn to use the ACTS acronym for their prayer time.

A—ADORATION. Helping children understand the nature of God is an important task of family worship. Reflecting God’s greatness as an act of worship sets the stage for a receptive heart.

C—CONFESSION. Helping children recognize and confess that their actions can displease God and are called sin is an important lesson that children need to understand before making a confession of faith and becoming a Christian.

T—THANKSGIVING. Thankfulness for both the good and difficult times in a person’s life develops a maturing faith.

S—SUPPLICATION. Supplication or requests for God’s help in supplying what is needed is last in this acronym. Helping children appreciate all that God supplies and focusing on the needs of others can increase a child’s awareness of the presence of God.

We often teach children rote prayers, and there is a time and place for them as they are learning to pray. As a child’s spiritual development continues, encourage them to have heart conversations with
God using their own words. Silent prayer, prayer using Scriptures and visual reminders of prayer are important ways children can be taught to pray effective prayers. Consider using “popcorn” prayers in your family worship time to make prayer time more engaging. Each person “pops” up with a quick prayer as it comes to mind. Use physical prayer prompts like family pictures, prayer journals or finger plays to remind your child to pray for an individual or a particular situation.

Consider offering a daily blessing for your child to remind them that God is in control and that you desire to see God’s will lived out in their lives. Model prayer throughout the day as opportunities present themselves, whether you are praying for God’s presence in a difficult circumstance or offering thanksgiving in times of joy and happiness. Let your children see you honor prayer as a first choice instead of a last resort. Remember that as parents what is important to you will become important to them.
BIBLE GAMES

Some inexpensive ways to develop confidence in using the Bible are Bible skill games. These games can be adapted for Scripture memorization and Scripture review.

SPILL & SPELL
This game uses refrigerator alphabet magnets. Set the timer for two minutes. Pour the alphabet magnets on a cookie sheet. Spell as many books of the Bible as you can. Rotate to the next player or team and follow the same rules.

BIBLE BOOK STICKS
Write the books of the Bible on tongue depressors. Mark two bags with the divisions of each testament. Scramble the Old Testament and New Testament sticks on a flat surface. As quickly as possible pick up the sticks and return them to their proper Testament container. To make the activity more challenging, make Bible division bags such as books of the law, prophets, the Gospels, letters, etc., and separate the sticks into their divisions or have the children place the sticks in order to complete the game.

BIBLE ALPHABET GAME
Use on old shower curtain to create a game board. Create a path around the game board consisting of square spaces large enough that children can stand and move from square to square. Write a letter of the alphabet inside of each square that corresponds with the first letter of a book of the Bible. Starting at the beginning of the path, each player rolls a numbered game cube and moves that many
spaces. Players must name a book of the Bible that starts with the letter located in the square they land on. If the player cannot name a book that starts with that letter, the player must return to the beginning. To increase the level of difficulty, each player must name the books before and after the book they recited.

NEW TESTAMENT PYRAMID STACK
You will need 27 plastic cups with the books of the New Testament written on the cups. Turn the cups upside down and write the name of a book of the New Testament on the side of the cup. On “go,” players will put the books in order. The first row will be Matthew to 1 Corinthians. Second row: 2 Corinthians to 1 Thessalonians. Third row: 2 Thessalonians to Philemon. Fourth row: Hebrews to 2 Peter. Fifth row: 1 John to 3 John. Sixth row: Jude-Revelation. The “New Testament” cup will be placed on the top.

BIBLE SKILLS “TWISTER®”
Use an old “Twister®” game. Develop Bible skill questions and print them on yellow, green, blue, and red cards. If the spinner lands on a yellow dot, the child must correctly answer a “yellow” question in order to complete the remaining instructions on the spinner (left foot green, right hand red, etc.).

BIBLE DUPLO WALL
Place a piece of clear tape on the side of your Duplo blocks if you do not want them permanently marked. Write the names of the books of the Bible or the words of your memory verse on the tape or side of the block. Have the children put the words in order to build a wall.
PING PONG BOUNCE
Write the names of the books of the Bible on each ping pong ball. Have the children try to correctly bounce the balls into containers marked Old Testament or New Testament.

BIBLE PING PONG TONG RELAY
Have the children race across the room carrying one marked ping pong ball in a set of tongs. When a series of balls are accumulated, the team puts the Bible book names or words of the verse on the balls in order.

HAVE A BALL!
Have kids sit in a circle and pass around a ball (or any object). Whoever has the ball when a stop signal is given is the one who gets to talk. Ask kids to pass the ball around the circle and share one thing they learned from the Bible that day. If everyone has a chance to share, go around the circle again and have kids share something they will do about what they learned.

Games ideas courtesy of “Games That Teach Bible Skills: A Bakers Dozen” by Bill Emeott, Lifeway.com. For more ideas Google: “LifeWay game of the week”
# 52 Key Scripture Verses for Families to Learn Together

*Use your preferred version of the Bible*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Preschool Version</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Genesis 1:1</td>
<td>God made the heavens and the earth (or world).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Genesis 1:27</td>
<td>God made man and woman.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Genesis 1:31</td>
<td>God saw everything He made and said it is good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Deuteronomy 6:5</td>
<td>Love God or Love God with all of your heart.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Joshua 1:9</td>
<td>Do not be afraid because God is with you.</td>
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<td>6. Joshua 24:24</td>
<td>We will obey God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Job 37:14</td>
<td>Look at the wonderful things God has made.</td>
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<td>8. Psalm 4:8</td>
<td>God will protect me when I sleep.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Psalm 13:6</td>
<td>I will sing songs to God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Psalm 19:1</td>
<td>God made the beautiful sky.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Psalm 56:3</td>
<td>When I am afraid, I can trust God to help me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Psalm 86:11</td>
<td>I will obey God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Psalm 92:1</td>
<td>I will praise God with music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Psalm 100:3</td>
<td>God made us.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Psalm 118:24</td>
<td>I will thank God for today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Psalm 119:11</td>
<td>I will learn what the Bible teaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Psalm 119:66</td>
<td>I can trust the Bible is true.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Psalm 122:1</td>
<td>I am glad to be able to go to church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Psalm 139:14</td>
<td>God has made me wonderfully.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21. Proverbs 15:1 I can use kind words.
22. Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times.
23. Isaiah 48:17 God will teach me how to live.
24. Jeremiah 29:11 God has a plan for my life.
25. Nahum 1:7 God always cares for me.
26. Matthew 7:12 Love others as you love yourself.
27. Mark 1:35 Jesus prayed by Himself.
28. Mark 10:27 All things are possible with God.
29. Mark 12:30 Love God.
30. Mark 12:31 Love others.
31. Luke 1:31 His name will be Jesus.
32. Luke 1:37 Nothing is impossible with God.
33. Luke 2:6-7 Jesus was born and laid in a manger.
34. Luke 2:52 Jesus grew like I will.
35. Luke 18:1 We can pray.
36. John 3:16 God loved the world so much He gave His son, Jesus.
37. John 13:34 Jesus tells us to love one another.
38. John 15:14 Jesus knows we are His friends when we obey Him.
39. Acts 5:29 We can decide to obey God.
40. Acts 20:35 We can help other people.
41. Romans 12:18 We should try to get along with other people.
42. 2 Corinthians 9:7 God loves a cheerful giver.
43. Galatians 6:10 Let us do good to everyone.
44. Ephesians 2:10  God made us to do good for other people.
45. Ephesians 4:2   Be patient with other people.
46. Ephesians 5:19b-20 We can praise and give thanks to God with music.
47. Philippians 4:13 God gives me strength to do things.
48. Colossians 3:20 God wants us to obey our parents.
49. 1 Thessalonians 5:16 Pray and give thanks always.
50. 1 Timothy 4:4   Everything God made is good.
51. 1 John 3:18  Show love with your actions.
52. 1 John 4:7   Love comes from God.

SUGGESTED PARENT RESOURCES

BOOKS

Adventure Bible Storybook. Catherine DeVries. (Zonderkidz, 2009)

Bible Stories for Growing Kids. Francine Rivers and Shannon Rivers Coibim. (Tyndale House Publishers, 2007.) Also available on CD.

Day by Day Begin-to-Read Bible. Karyn Henley. (Tyndale House Publishers, 2007.)

Faith Begins at Home: The Family Makeover with Christ at the Center. Mark Holmen. (Regal Books, 2005.)

Jesus Calling: 365 Devotions for Kids. Sarah Young. (Tommy Nelson Publishing, 2010.)

Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name. Sally Lloyd-Jones. (Zondervan, 2007.)

Lead Your Family Like Jesus. Ken Blanchard. (Tyndale House Publishers, 2013.)

My First Bible. Leina Lane. (Concordia Publishers, 2005.)

NIV Adventure Bible, Book of Devotions. Robin Schnitt. (Zondervan, 2008.)


Raising Your Kids to Love the Lord. Dave Stone. (Thomas Nelson, 2012.)

Read and Share Toddler Bible. Gwen Ellis. (Tommy Nelson, 2007.)


The Children’s Bible in 365 Stories. Mary Batchelor. (David C. Cook, 1998.)

The Early Readers Bible. V. Gilbert Beers. (Zonderkidz, 1995.)

The One-Year Book of Dinner Table Devotions and Discussion Starters. Nancy Guthrie. (Tyndale House Publishers, 2008.)


The One-Year Book of Fun and Active Devotions for Kids. (Tyndale Kids, 2000.)

The One-Year Devotions for Preschoolers. (Tyndale Kids, 2004.)

The Preschooler’s Bible. V. Gilbert Beers. (David C. Cook, 2012.)

The Toddler’s Bible. V. Gilbert Beers. (David C. Cook, 2012.)

WEBSITES
ministry-to-children.com/family-worship/
sojournkids.com/resources-for-teaching-young-children-to-love-god/