

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Leader's Guide

FAMILY LIFE

LESSON 4: BIBLICAL PARENTING

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Family Life. This series of lessons looks at spiritual leadership in the home as it pertains to building a healthy Christian family. It begins with a framework for understanding the Biblical basis for family and moves on to some challenges faced by families such as preparation for marriage, managing finances, leading one's children, and building good communication with your spouse. This series of lessons takes the view that spiritual leadership begins in the home – and both men and women have specific roles in this regard. These lessons present God's best design for families, while recognizing that in today's world families can come in many forms. The lessons will benefit those who are married, those who have the role of a parent, as well as young people who desire healthy relationships in the future.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is Christians who are maturing in their faith and desiring to serve God sincerely. The lessons will also benefit church leaders who teach the foundations for marriage and family, and how to develop strong relationships within them.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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FAMILY LIFE

LESSON 4: BIBLICAL PARENTING

PURPOSE

To learn what the Bible teaches about parenting, and to explore how parents can accomplish God's purposes in this world.

LEADER'S NOTE

Being a parent is an awesome responsibility, and being biologically connected to a child doesn't necessarily make us a good parent. We must be intentional, proactive and purposeful in how we raise our children. If we pursue any spiritual leadership, that leadership begins in the home. God has given mothers and fathers the responsibility of intentionally leading, instructing and disciplining children. This lesson does not apply only to parents who are currently raising young children, because many of us will be involved in some form or other giving leadership and guidance to the next generation. Help your participants overcome culturally based ideas of parenting that are contrary to the truth of God's Word. When we are faithful to God's guidance and relate well to our children, we demonstrate God's love to them and the world around us.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ What was something your parents did right in raising you and your siblings?
- ❖ In what ways are you like your parents? In what ways are you different?
- ❖ If you are a parent, or find yourself raising children, what are some of the biggest challenges you face? What would help you do a better job? What are your worries for your children?
- ❖ What hopes do you have for your children and their future? How do these hopes influence how you parent them?
- ❖ How have you experienced God parenting you?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH:

- ❖ **The Bible and Parenting:** God calls Himself our Heavenly Father, and reminds us that we are His children. God parents us perfectly. But most of us find parenting a difficult task. Caring and



providing for children takes energy and resources, and it can break the heart of a parent to see their child in pain or rebellion. And yet, children can bring us joy and hope! Our greatest hope for our children is that they honour us and love God. We may have other hopes, but hope alone is not sufficient.

- **Intentional and Active:** Being a parent is more than being biologically connected to children, or being given the responsibility to feed and protect them. *Biblical parenting* is active and intentional. Consider these passages of Scripture:
 - **Deuteronomy 6:4-9:** God passed His commands to future generations through parents teaching their children. The Word of God should be part of daily family life. The responsibility of teaching children is not given only to priests or teachers, but primarily to parents.
 - **Ephesians 6:1-5:** The responsibility of children is to obey their parents in the Lord, and honour them. The responsibility of parents is to bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, gently and with love.
 - **Proverbs 13:24:** Parents are to be diligent and intentional about discipline and guidance. Children must understand that there are consequences to sin, and sin requires punishment. The rod in this verse is a symbol of correction and guidance, but does NOT give permission to a parent to beat or physically abuse their children.

- **Non-Parents in a Parent Role:** During our lifetime, many of us will find ourselves in the role of a parent, whether we are raising our own children or not. Grandparents, relatives, friends and neighbours sometimes care for children. God gives the responsibility of discipline and instruction to *parents* first. But when parents are not available for the task (for whatever reason), these other care givers may be needed to fill this role. The following lesson can apply to anyone parenting children. To God, this is an important, honourable task for both men and women.

ASK:

Conduct a brief discussion with all participants around the following questions.

- What makes a successful parent in your society? What responsibilities do parents have toward their children, and children toward their parents?
- *What makes a successful parent in God's eyes? What should the result of good parenting be?*

TEACH:

- ❖ **The Purpose of Parenting:** Individually, our purpose in the world is to glorify God and bear His image. A married couple is to glorify God and bear His image to the world through their relationship and the way they work together as one. Parenting, if it is done well, can also communicate the nature of our heavenly Father to the world.

- **Children are a Gift from God:** God's plan for parenting goes beyond our desires for them to become successful, wealthy, happily married, fruitful, famous, etc. Our



children belong to God, and He gives us the responsibility to teach, guide and love them. Each child is:

- o precious and important to God (Psalm 127:3, Luke 17:2).
 - o sinful, and in need of salvation (Psalm 51:5, Proverbs 22:15).
 - o an example of simple faith (Matthew 19:13-15).
 - o in need of good examples to follow (Titus 2:1-8, Philippians 3:17).
 - o told to honour and obey their parents so they will know how to honour and obey God (Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:1-4).
- **Our Purpose as Parents:** Our children's relationship to God is the most important thing about them. It is not whether they are well educated or become successful. Therefore, our purpose as parents is to pass the Gospel to the next generation. The outcome of this is that we raise independent, faith-filled children who will glorify God with their lives and bear His image to the world.

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How can we accomplish this? And how can spiritual leaders encourage and equip other Christians to do this? We must first see the important significance the Gospel has in a Christian home, and how this can be passed on to the next generation.

- ❖ **Passing the Gospel to the Next Generation:** Many youth do not continue on with the faith of their parents. Many churches and communities are suffering because young people are not taking responsibility to serve God. This happens when the Gospel is not passed from one generation to the next, or when children willfully reject it and disobey God, choosing to live apart from Him. However, parents need to be faithful in sharing the Gospel with their children, and children need to see that this is very important to their parents. Passing the Gospel to the next generation requires a commitment in the home, and a supportive church community. It involves:

- **Teaching them God's Word:** Our responsibility is to help our children know and respect God's Word. Read the Bible to them, talk about people in the Bible, memorize verses, and discuss how the Word is relevant and important to everyday life. When children see you reading your Bible and witness your reliance on God's Word, they will know it is important. We should not neglect to teach our children the Gospel of Jesus Christ!
- **Showing them their Need of Salvation:** Every child is in need of salvation. When children disobey the boundaries and rules we have set, we have the opportunity to



show them their sinful nature and need for forgiveness. Discipline is the act of teaching obedience, and it starts with setting rules. When children obey you, they are learning to obey God. Discipline should correct behaviour, teach obedience and restore relationship. It should also deter repeated disobedience. Parents must never discipline to harm their children or release their own frustrations. When disciplining, parents must remain calm and in control. They should teach their children to ask for forgiveness -- from the parent and from God.

- **Practising Grace and Forgiveness:** We should be quick to forgive children when they are repentant, and demonstrate undeserved grace to them. It is by our forgiveness and grace that they see a picture of God's forgiveness and grace.
 - **Demonstrating Reliance on God for Obedience:** We must never expect our children to be able to obey and comply with our rules without help. They will need reminders; they will need to rely on God. Consider how we are all unable to comply with God's standards without a regeneration of our heart and the help of the Holy Spirit living in us! When children have trouble obeying, pray for them and with them, and teach them to ask for God's help.
 - **Loving Sacrificially:** We demonstrate God's love to our children through our love for them. They deserve our love, our nurture and our care even at times when they don't deserve it. It will sometimes be a sacrificial love, putting our child's needs ahead of our own.
 - **Leading Them Faithfully:** We must aspire to be someone our children will want to follow. When we show them how to live, we should demonstrate the joy and peace that following God brings. The most important thing you can do as a parent is to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. Displaying a Christ-like spirit will give your children an example to follow.
- ❖ **Parenting our Children as God Parents Us:** Have you considered how God parents us, His children? We must follow His example as we parent our own children. When we do, we will have a positive witness to the world around us. Even if our own parents had poor parenting skills, God will help us do a better job with our children as we seek and obey Him. However, we need to recognize that there are no perfect parents! That's why we need God's help.
- **God is our Father:** Consider the perfect way God parents us in these examples:
 - **God listens to our cries** (Psalm 145:19, 1 John 5:14-15).
 - **God is patient with us** (2 Peter 3:9).
 - **He blesses us** (Ephesians 1:3-6).
 - **He gives good gifts** (James 1:17, Matthew 7:11).
 - **He disciplines us** (Hebrews 12:5-6, Psalms 94:12-13).
 - **He teaches us** (Isaiah 28:26, Psalms 51:6, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - **He lets us experience consequences** (Ezekiel 23:35, Proverbs 19:15).
 - **He forgives and offers grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 John 1:9, Romans 6:23).
 - **He displays love** (John 3:16, 1 John 4:19, Romans 5:8).

**❖ Practical Ways to Parent:**

- **Pray Often and Always:** We will need God's strength and wisdom to parent well. When you don't know what to do as a parent, the first response should be to pray. We should always pray for and with our children, that they will know the Lord. When we face rebellious children and difficult circumstances, we must rely on God and pray that our children will return to faith (1 Thessalonians 5:17, Philippians 4:6).
- **Set Aside Time for Family Worship:** Family times of worship can be daily, such as after an evening meal, or weekly. Sing songs together, read God's Word and talk about it, memorize a verse together, talk about God's purpose for your family (2 Timothy 3:15, Colossians 3:16).
- **Share your Faith Story with your Children:** Many parents are reluctant to share their past mistakes with children because they fear they will lose respect. It is important, however, to share your faith journey. Children will enjoy hearing stories about your childhood. Talk about when you decided to follow Jesus Christ, and what this decision has meant to you. Share the difference God makes (1 Peter 3:15).
- **Be Consistent with Discipline:** When parents are inconsistent in applying discipline, children can become confused or try to hide their sins from their parents and from God. When you set rules, keep them at all times (Proverbs 13:24).
- **Know Your Child's Heart:** Learn about your children. What one struggles with may be another's strength! Each person is unique and is dealt with by God in a unique way; you may need to parent each child differently. Help children to see where they are weak, and strengthen them with encouragement. Be aware of when they are discouraged (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- **Admit when you are Wrong:** This might be the most difficult thing for a parent to do. When you fail, admit to your children what you did wrong. When you fail to admit your mistakes, you set an impossible standard for our children who may become discouraged. You should ask forgiveness of your children if you have done something you shouldn't have. It does not demonstrate weakness, rather great strength! Children will respect your fear of the Lord and imitate it (James 5:16, Colossians 3:13).
- **Teach Them to Rely on God:** When our young children are in trouble or danger, we want to be near them, to help and comfort them. As we train our children to become independent, we must teach them to rely on God first, not us. We can direct them to God's Word for answers, encourage them to pray independently and rely on God when they are afraid. Our children belong to God – it is to God they will give an account (Psalm 118:8, Psalm 146:3).

- ❖ **If you are Not A Parent:** Not all of us will have our own biological children. However, sometimes we find ourselves in a position of caring for children. We can still seek and employ God's wisdom in these situations, and as we share our faith journey with them. Children are watching us and will learn from us. Tell them how you came to Jesus Christ, tell them what you have learned in your life, let them learn something that will change their life for the better. Each of us should



pray for and encourage parents in their difficult task of raising children. Pray for the next generation that they will grow to delight in the Lord!

DISCUSSION

- ❖ How are you loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength as you reflect the image of Christ? Who sees your example and follows it?
- ❖ What difference does a good example make in your life? (Or if you had none, how might it have made a difference?)
- ❖ How do these ideas about parenting reflect the way you were parented, or how you have been parenting your children? How are they different?
- ❖ How can a church support and come alongside to help parents in this task? In what ways have parents diminished their responsibility and relied too heavily on the church to teach their children God's truth? What can you do to help others in their parenting task?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Pray that participants would take seriously the call to pass the Gospel to the next generation. Pray that those who are parents will fulfil their role diligently, and set an example that will bless future generations. Pray that hearts of the fathers will be turned to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. Pray that God's love will be reflected in and through families to the rest of the world, and for generations to come.