

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Study Guide

FAMILY LIFE

LESSON 4: BIBLICAL PARENTING

INTRODUCTION

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

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.



FAMILY LIFE

LESSON 4: BIBLICAL PARENTING

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

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

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

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. You may have culturally based ideas about what it means to parent a child, but we should always compare them to Scripture. The Bible must influence our perspective on parenting in order to reflect God's image in the home and to the world around us.

GETTING STARTED

1. What was something your parents did right in raising you and your siblings?

2. 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?



STUDY

❖ **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.

Read each of the following verses. Write down what a parent’s role is in each.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9	
Ephesians 6:1-5	
Proverbs 13:24	

From these verses we can see that God passes His commands to future generations through parents teaching their children. The responsibility of children is to obey their parents in the Lord. The responsibility of parents is to bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, gently and with love. When parents are diligent and intentional about discipline and guidance, children learn there are consequences to sin and sin requires punishment. The rod mentioned in Proverbs 13:24 is a symbol of correction and guidance, but does NOT give permission for a parent to 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.
- 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?

❖ **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.

The following verses describe children. Read the verses and write down what the verses tell us.

Children Are...	Verses:	What do the verses Say:
Precious and important to God	Psalm 127:3 Luke 17:2	
Sinful, and in need of salvation	Psalm 51:5 Proverbs 22:15	
An example of simple faith	Matthew 19:13-15	
In need of good examples to follow	Titus 2:1-8 Philippians 3:17	
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.

- For each principle below, read the description and write out examples of ways parents can accomplish this in their home. The first one has been done for you.

Principle	Every Day Examples
<p>Teaching Them God’s Word</p> <p>Our responsibility is to help our children know and respect God’s Word. We should not neglect to teach our children the Gospel of Jesus Christ!</p>	<p><i>Read the Bible often, listen to the Word of God through radio, talk about people in the Bible, memorize verses together as a family, discuss how the Word is relevant to everyday life, tell them the Gospel over and over.</i></p>
<p>Showing the Need of Salvation</p> <p>When children disobey the boundaries and rules we have set, we have the opportunity to show them their need for forgiveness (from us and from God). 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.</p>	



<p>Practising Grace and Forgiveness</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>Demonstrating Reliance on God</p> <p>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!</p>	
<p>Loving Sacrificially</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>Leading them Faithfully</p> <p>We must aspire to be someone our children will want to follow. The most important thing you can do as a parent is to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength.</p>	

❖ **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.

- Has there been a time when you experienced God teaching you, guiding you, chastising you or comforting you as a parent would? Describe the circumstances.



- **God is our Father:** Even if we have not had good parenting examples to follow, we can seek to follow God's example. Consider the perfect way God parents us:
 - **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).

- Of course we cannot be perfect parents – we do not have infinite wisdom, patience and power! But we can strive to be better parents. How would it change our parenting if we followed God's example in the way He parents us? Give practical examples.

❖ **Practical Ways to Parent:** The following are some suggestions for improving our parenting. Consider these points and read the accompanying verses.

- **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).
- Which of the above points are most difficult for you? What could you do to work on them or remind yourself of needed changes?

- How can you help and encourage other parents in their role of passing the Gospel to the next generation?



SUMMARY

- ❖ Our greatest hope for our children should be that they grow to honour and love God. For this to happen, intentional and proactive parenting is required.
- ❖ God places the responsibility of instructing children primarily in the hands of their parents. At times others are called upon when parents are not available for the task.
- ❖ Parents must discipline their children with love and gentleness in order to correct their behaviour and show them their need for salvation.
- ❖ Our purpose as a parent 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.
- ❖ Our parenting should reflect the way God parents us.
- ❖ We are good examples to our children when we love God first with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1.

How do you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? Do you reflect the image of Christ? Who is watching your example?

2.

Did a good example make a difference in your life? (Or if you had none, how might it have made a difference?)