

AIDS FOR DISCIPLING OUR OWN CHILDREN

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We ought to be concerned about discipling our own children and youth! Their future does depend upon our consistency in molding their lives for Christ. In Matthew 28:18-20 we are commanded to win people to Christ, and that they be baptized, but also we are under command to *"instruct them, or to teach them"* all things. The second Greek word means *"to teach,"* or to disciple them!

It is not my intent to go into great detail in this section, but to give some suggestions and helps toward the building up of our youth and children in doctrine, so they will be *"established in the faith."* Paul taught much about "follow-up" as we may call it today, and he also practiced such a labor in the lives of converts. (II Timothy 2:2; Colossians 1:28,29; I Thessalonians 2:7-12; Galatians 4:17; II Thessalonians 3:8)

We have two books available for follow-up or for the purpose of discipling our children and youth. These are books that I have authored some years ago and are also available through our office or in meetings. They are listed at the end of this section (they are excellent), along with other suggestions of materials that you might use.

DEFINING THE TASK OF DISCIPLESHIP

Before we get into the areas of truth, suggestions, and materials that we want to share in this section, possibly we need to define what the task of discipling really is so that we will approach it correctly as parents.

In no sense is this material the "last word" on discipling but suggestive as a compilation of ideas, doctrines, etc., that should be included.

Why It Is So Needed Today

Young people today are lacking stability. Christian youth need something solid and stable to build their lives upon. Many things contribute to the instability of their lives such as:

- **A Lack of Trust.** We have taught our young people not to trust anyone or anything. They basically do not trust the establishment, government, adults, or institutions about them. Government has made grandiose promises that it cannot fulfill. Parents make pledges that they do not keep. Our youth are constantly disappointed and brought to distrust of everything.
- **A Lack of Commitment.** All around them our youth see parents, people in every walk of life opting out when the going gets tough. Instead of weathering the storm, finding answers and doing right out of commitment our young people see adults take the path of least resistance, and least demand upon themselves.
- **A Lack of Submission to Authority.** Students rebel against teachers, parents, and law enforcement. Men do not want to submit to authority. Women do not wish to submit to their husbands. Liberty without restraints has become the goal of many.

Many people (including parents) are engaged in every activity imaginable as they seek their own fulfillment. In this state of affairs youth are seeking for someone who cares, someone whom they can trust and respect.

Why It Must Begin At Home

Many churches have discipleship programs today, and in some cases have "full-time" assistant pastors who labor in this ministry. Often the burden for the outsider, or new convert, is very evident while we neglect our own children who are growing up in the church. Before we go looking for people to disciple, we need to start with our own families. We have them but a few short years, we cannot depend upon the Christian School, and local church to fulfill the task that God has given us as parents. (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 6:20-23; 22:6; 4:1,2; 4:10-13)

What Is Involved In This Task

A disciple in the earliest use of the word (in the Greek) did not mean someone who was trained by a tutor or who paid for training. A disciple was a person whose life was molded by another who gave himself to the one being molded or trained. (note carefully II Timothy 3:10-12) Paul and Timothy experienced a togetherness in the totality of life. Timothy was not only taught, and was learning, but was molded by the very life of the Apostle Paul. Timothy was a co-laborer, a friend in intimate relationship with Paul.

To disciple our own children means more than just completing a course of study (though that is involved), but it also means sharing, and living the "life together" of dedication, love, and application of Biblical truths. (John 3:30)

We cannot force our young people to live for Christ as this must become a decision of their own hearts.

THE LORD JESUS EXPECTS OUR VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT

In discipling our children, the initiative must remain with them. (Luke 9:23,24; 14:27-33) To force such upon them without the presence of an inner conviction causes our children to live a lie. At the same time we must challenge them, excite them, and encourage them in every possible toward a *discipleship of life*. *The Christian life is a walk in continuous discipleship*.

Discipling is designed by God with our best interest in mind. We do God no favor by committing ourselves to Him. It is He who does us the favor by offering us discipleship. It is the only way to have the blessed, overflowing life that He wants us to have. (John 10:10) For discipleship is a commitment to the Person of Christ.

It is the discipler and the disciple bound together in a mutual love and fellowship found in Christ. It is an allegiance together to HIM that brings the strength in the relationship between the two that makes possible the molding of the life of the disciple. This is a basic **"key"** to success in the work of discipling another.

- The parent discipling his own child is confronted with the task of fulfilling his obligation as a parent as well as the commitment to the person of Christ in such a task.
- Discipleship deals first with the **inner quality** of life and **then the outward performance**, as both are involved. (John 13:34,35; John 14:15,21,23)
- The word, *disciple*, is used about 250 times in the Gospels and the Book of Acts. It usually means someone who is attached to the Person of Christ as Master of their life.

The word never means something someone does to another person! As a parent we do not convert our child to Christ, all of it is the work of the Holy Spirit so while I can influence my child for Christ, and guide that one, only God can do the work in the heart and life. So to disciple our children is to work with them, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God to help mold their lives and bring surrender to the Savior as Lord of their lives.

We must **make our youth accountable** in the effort we put forth to disciple them. We as parents **can only expect what we inspect**. And it is our responsibility to **go through the materials with them**, holding them accountable to study, and complete the materials given them. This is why it is imperative that we secure good materials, or courses of study and then monitor their work in it. Better yet, we ought to study each lesson with them as they finish them. Also we could study through the materials given below, looking up each verse together which would help immeasurably.

The following materials about areas of truth are given as a guide that should be covered in helping your youth or children in "maturing them, developing them, and giving doctrine for the establishing of their lives."

THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE LORD

In Salvation

(Romans 3:12-24; Romans 5:6-10; John 1:11-13; Romans 6:23; Romans 12:9-13; John 3:16-18) Children and youth need to thoroughly understand God's plan of Salvation. **We must be careful that we do not take it for granted that they know HIM** just because they have made a profession. We have many in our churches who have made their profession but their lives do not show that they have Christ. Where there is birth, there will be life! Do they have life? We need to have them go through a good course or use materials that will aid them in understanding. That is another reason why discipling materials are so important, and need to be used in the home with and for that child, and/or youth.

In Assurance of Salvation

(I John 5:11-13; John 5:24 hath; I Peter 1:5 kept; John 6:37-41; John 10:26-27) Many times young folk have a real struggle about being sure they are saved. They must be directed to a good course of study that will get them into the Word of God by which they can be positive about their relationship to Christ.

In Submission, Dedication to Christ

(Romans 14:9; Romans 12:1,2; 6:13; John 15:10,14) It is a great strengthening for our youth to come to the place of totally yielding their lives, bodies, their all to the Lord. They must see this in our lives, and be encouraged to yield to HIM. It would be very wise to direct them through some course of study or materials to aid such a dedication. If we are to have strong, victorious youth, we must give them direction and help toward surrender. This will not take place unless the come to an understanding of the importance of "*dying to self, dying to the old nature or the old man.*" (I John 2:12-14; Romans 6:1-11; Gal. 2:20; John 3:30)

In a Vital Prayer Life

(Matthew 7:7; John 14:13,14; 16:23,24; John 15:7; I Thessalonians 5:17; Luke 11; Luke 18) We must help them build a vital prayer life where they "know they are in God's presence", know how to get answers to prayer, and know the joy of a walk with God.

This is not learned by accident nor can we presume that they will easily come to this on their own. They need to see a Dad and Mom pray, and enter into a prayer life with the parent. Kneeling together, praying unhurriedly is so important, as well as the study of some course that will help to build them in this area of their lives. It should begin with dad praying at their bedside every night whether they are awake or asleep. Daily pray over them and for them will greatly enhance the importance of prayer in their own minds and hearts.

In Study of the Word, a Quiet Time

(Mark 1:35; John 8:31; 5:37; Jeremiah 15:16; I Timothy 2:15; II Timothy 3:16,17) It is so vital that youth and child learn early the dire necessity of the Word of God in their lives for victory, growth, and service. (II Peter 3:18; I Peter 2:2; Psalm 119:9,11; Matthew 4:4) We must aid them in this by having a good study course that will excite them in the blessing of it all.

In a Walk In His Will

(Psalm 37:23; Colossians 4:12; 1:9; Ephesians 5:17; 6:6; Psalm 119:105; I Timothy 4:12; Romans 12:1,2) If they are to be in God's will, "*that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God,*" then we must build this desire in their lives. Also as parents, we must walk in God's will, seeking it, and helping the child and youth to understand the importance of knowing and doing God's will. **The verses with all these sections are for your study and consideration.**

In Worship and Praise

(Psalm 1; Psalm 145; Psalm 89; Ephesians 5:19,20; John 4:2-24; Revelation 4:9-11; 5:9-14) We must instill in the lives of our youth the need to worship God, to rejoice in Him, and to learn to praise Him for all things.

To Practice Stewardship, to Give

(Malachi 3:10; II Corinthians 9:6-8; Luke 6:38) As our youth and children are taught to tithe, and to give above it in offerings, they must first see our example and consistent giving.

THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO HIS WORD

To Study It

(II Timothy 3:16,17; Acts 17:11) A good follow-up course or discipling course could get them started on a lifetime pursuit of the study of God's Word. Few things would benefit them more than that. We must assist, encourage and excite them in this!

To Memorize It

(Colossians 3:16; Psalm 119:9,11) To have the Word of God hidden in the heart is of great necessity if we would have strong, victorious youth who overcome sin and Satan. Families must memorize the Word of God together. The verses used in the character trait section of the book: *Tools For the Christian Family* found on the web site -- **watke.org** could give a good beginning. Nothing takes the place of memorizing the Scriptures.

To Meditate In It

(Psalm 1:1-3; Joshua 1:8; Philippians 4:8; Proverbs 4: 23; Psalm 119:105; 130) To meditate means "*to roll over in the mind, to give extended thought to, to deliberate over.*" Meditation is the "touch-stone" of life. **What we meditate upon, or give our thoughts to we are becoming!** Our values, interests and priorities are largely controlled or built by what we think upon.

THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO HIS CHURCH

Understanding the New Testament Church

(Acts 2:41-47; 14:21-28; 13:1-3; 12:1; 16:5) All these portions should be studied and meditated on. They all speak of the local Church. The Church is a group of saved, called out ones, baptized, and serving the Lord. It is made of members who are called out from the world to serve the Lord. The word, "Church" is used over 100 times in the New Testament and means "separated, called out ones". It usually (over 100 times) is speaking of a local church, in a local place, doing God's will, with God's power, for God's glory.

The Importance of Service There

Our children need to understand the importance of the local church, and their labor and service there, as God's appointed institution to reach the world. (Hebrews 10:24,25; I John 1:3; Acts 14; 16, 18) In the three chapters just listed, Paul was laboring in each place to reach people, and to plant a New Testament church. It was when the leaders were in prayer in the local church, ministering to the Lord that God called Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 13)

The Blessing of Christian Fellowship There

(I John 1:3; Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24,25; Psalms 122:1) Parents must excite their own about the blessing of fellowship with fellow believers. The early church is a wonderful example of continuing faithfully in doctrine, fellowship, etc. (Acts 2:42-47)

The Importance of Baptism There

(Acts 2; Acts 8; Acts 10) In each of these portions people were baptized because of their faith. God sets forth the order of faith in Christ, or salvation, and then baptism. Again a good follow-up course of study will have a chapter of study in this area. We need to go through such a course with our youth.

THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE GREAT COMMISSION

To Be An Active, Vital Witness

(II Timothy 4:1,2; Psalm 126:5,6; Luke 24:44-47; John 20:21; Matthew 28:18-20) This can only be done by carrying tracts, taking the gospel to those around us, sharing what Christ has done for us, and giving witness to the resurrection, that HE is ALIVE and can SAVE to the uttermost those who come to God by Him. (Hebrews 7:25; Acts 4:12; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 4:33) We must be the example to our youth, and aid them in an active, vital witness.

To Testify With Power

(Acts 1:8; Acts 4:31-33) Our youth must be taught the importance of having the power of the Holy Spirit upon their lives, and therefore the "boldness to witness for HIM."

To Put the GO in the GOspel

(Matthew 28:19-21; Acts 8:4; Acts 5:42) As parents we must GO if we expect our youth to GO. We must labor with them, taking the gospel to our communities, and using every opportunity to reach the lost of our own neighborhood.

To Work At Discipling Others

(II Timothy 2:2) Paul labored to build others to the place of "producing reproducers". That ought to be our goal as well. Parents must help their youth, and children to bring others to salvation and then help that person whom they have won until they have "won others to Christ". We must help the new convert to also win yet others. This will necessitate a "follow-up" ministry for building others in the faith. As families we can continuously disciple someone or some family. This could take place in our own home with teens having a part in this ongoing ministry.

THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit

(Ephesians 5:18; the word Holy Spirit, or Spirit is used over 60 times in the book of Acts. See Acts 6:3,5; Acts 1:1,5,8; Acts 4:31.) We are under command to yield to His Person and allow Him to work in our lives. Our youth need to study this subject until they understand this important truth and until it is real, and vital in the life.

To Not Grieve Or Quench The Holy Spirit

(Ephesians 4:30; I Thessalonians 5:19)

To Walk In The Spirit

(Galatians 5:16-17, 24,25; Romans chap 8) Again parents are accountable to help their youth to know how to yield to the Holy Spirit, to walk in His guidance, and to not grieve Him or quench His work in their lives. A good study of the ministry, person and work of the Holy Spirit is very vital... (We have such a book, entitled, "*Do You Know the Holy Spirit*" and a set of tapes of eight messages on this subject.) They can be ordered from our office. A good follow-up ministry will also include this subject and will help us to apply Biblical truth.

THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD, SIN AND SATAN

Having Victory Over Temptation & Satan

(I Corinthians 10:13; I John 4:4; 5:4; Romans 8:37; Ephesians 6:10-18) It is imperative that parents help their children and youth to be overcomers, for they must know how to deal with temptations, and defeat sin and satan in their lives. A good follow-up course of study (like we have in print) would **help you** to **help them** know how to stay in fellowship with the Lord and to have victory in daily living.

Having Victory Over the World

(Romans 12:1,2; John 16:33; I John 2:15,16) The world's enticements is what satan is using more than anything else today! He is using the medium of TV more than anything to bring compromise and to destroy the "keen edge" of desire after spiritual things on the part of God's people. It is imperative that we help our youth to be overcomers! We must take a stand against worldliness for our homes and direct the lives of our children toward godliness. (Titus 2:11-15; Galatians 1:4) "*These things teach, and rebuke.*" (II Tim. 3:16-17)

Bringing About Separation From Sin

(Romans 6:12-14, 16,17; John 8:31-36; Romans 8:1-16; II Cor. 6:14-18) God has called us to separation, and parents must help their youth to have a hatred of sin, and a love of righteousness. It is said of Christ that He hates iniquity and loves righteousness. (Hebrews 1:9) The Greek word translated iniquity means literally, "lawlessness". God expects us to help our children and youth to embrace godly living! (Titus 2:11-14) Again a good study of discipleship materials will give them direction to this end, as they apply the Word of God with a yielded heart and life.

Being Consistent in Confession of Sin

(I John 1:7,9; Proverbs 28:13; Psalm 66:18) Without a consistent walk with the Lord we all fail. So often youth do not sense the loss of fellowship with the Lord, nor the tremendous need of maintaining a clear heart. We need to help our youth "*to walk in the light, as He is in the light*", which means to walk in transparency, openness, and honesty about our needs. To have a clear conscience, a good conscience (Acts 24:16) necessitates having "short accounts" with the Lord by daily cleansing, through daily confession of sin. Our youth and children must see our example in all these aspects of daily living.

Putting On the Whole Armour

(Ephesians 6:10-18) We need to study this portion with our youth, in detail, and help them to constructively put on the "*whole armour of God.*" A good detailed study of this would help them to know how to be an overcomer against Satan's wiles, and darts, and how to walk in daily victory. (I Peter 5:8,9) Far too often we assume that our children will turn out right just because we all attend services, read our Bibles, and they attend a Christian school. The question is "do they know how to walk with God" in a victorious life?

Practicing Submitting to God and Resisting Satan (James 4:7) They must see us submitting to God, and resisting satan's work in our lives. It must become a practice of daily life and living! We must teach our youth to fully submit and learn to "say no" to sin, and satan's enticements which come to us through the world, and through the sinful nature within. We need to make Galatians 5:16-24 and 2:20 a practical truth and reality to them and in our own lives. (Study also Romans 8:1-18.)

Willingly Fleeing Sin, Living a God-Filled Life (II Timothy 2:22) Parents must help their youth to flee youthful lusts, and to have a life that is God-filled. This will mean memorizing the Word, strengthening the resolve by daily surrender of the will in obedience and positively doing the things listed in the former points that will build the life.

We must have a good study course with them that will set forth the "old nature and new nature", and how to walk in the new nature God has given us, as they learn to surrender and yield to the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-14)

We can give our youth no greater heritage than the heritage of a godly life. If they know how to walk in God's will, do His bidding, and have a heart after righteousness we will have achieved the goal that ought to be the determination of our lives as the parent. Every effort and expense in time and money is worth it all! May God help us to do it!

When we consider motivating our children and youth we must always consider the following:

- **It is the Holy Spirit** who reaches inside the person and motivates him to action. He only is able to change this person's sense of values, purposes and perspective. We cannot force someone to do something. Only the Holy Spirit can give that young person the conviction and ideals that will mold the life. We must cooperate with His ministry in the life. Sometimes we think that our child's blindness to truth is rebellion, but maybe not so at all, but just a lack of spiritual perception. (Cf. I Corinthians 2:9-3:2) The Holy Spirit's work, the Word of God, and the example of committed Christians are crucial in motivating our youth to follow the Lord.

- **Secondly, it is exposure to the Word of God** that brings changes in lives. God wants His Word to have a profound impact on the life. (Hebrews 4:12) As you counsel your child refer constantly to the Word of God. When you correct or rebuke your child, refer him to the Word of God. Help him ask, "What does God say?" "What does God want?" "What am I to do?" "What is His will for my life?"

Help your youth through the Word of God to see the greatness of God, His power, and the importance of giving his life totally to the Lord. Challenge him or her to memorize, and meditate upon the Word of God. We must emphasize the importance of a life that is saturated with the Word of God.

It is God who works in us *"to will and to do of His good pleasure."* (Philippians 2:13) He has saved us and called us, for His own purpose. (II Timothy 1:9) We as parents must function in cooperation with Him in the process of molding the lives of our own. It is a team effort with us functioning as coaches. May God help us!