

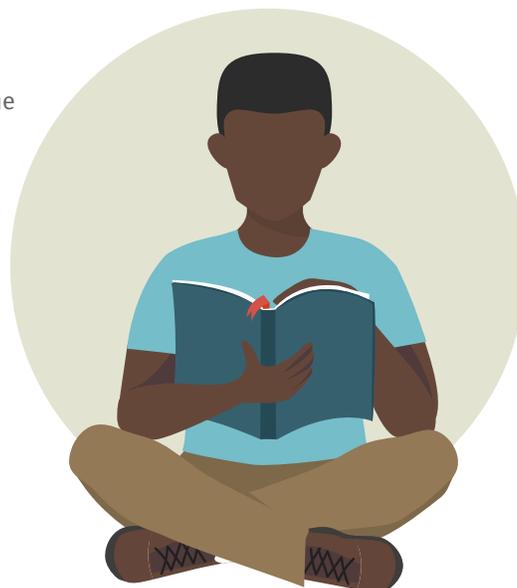


CONTINUING EDUCATION

and the Christian Parent

Adults might opt to go back to college to enhance their skills and become more valuable in the workforce. Employees regularly engage in relevant, ongoing training on the job to be more eligible for promotion or simply as an industry requirement. Professionals often subscribe to journals and attend workshops relevant to their areas of study to stay current and sharp.

Your baptism is like the life decision equivalent of declaring your major, and regular Bible study is your occupational continuing education.



We can easily recognize the benefits of continuing education in our careers. Is the concept of continuing education relevant to the Christian parent? Absolutely! Your experience in learning the Bible better as you age and develop spiritual maturity can appropriately be described as a continuous education in becoming more like Jesus Christ.

Your baptism is like the life decision equivalent of declaring your major; being a disciple of Jesus Christ is your main career; and regular Bible study is your occupational continuing education.

World's best Boss

We can think of it this way: Jesus Christ—in addition to being our Teacher, Redeemer, King of Kings, Brother, and so on—is also our Boss.

One Bible translation states: “Whatever you do, put your whole heart and soul into it, *as into work done for God*, and not merely for men—knowing that your real reward, a heavenly one, will come from God, *since you are actually employed by Christ*, and not just by your earthly master” (Colossians 3:23-24, JB Phillips Translation of the New Testament, emphasis added). Interpreting Jesus Christ as our Boss can help bring us comfort and perspective on a daily basis. He’s the best Boss we could ever work for!



The analogy is continued in Scripture. Pillar members in the early New Testament Church were even described as “workers” frequently (Romans 16:3, 9, 21; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 1:24; 6:1; 8:23; Philippians 2:25; 4:3; Colossians 4:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3 John 1:8). We can draw encouragement from this concept and build our own support network of “coworkers” in our parenting career.

“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”



On being disciples

Parenting is certainly a full-time occupation. And with each new phase of parenthood come new opportunities to learn.

The mission statement given to parents in [Deuteronomy 6](#) is a substantial one: “These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” ([verses 6-7](#)).

A true disciple of Jesus Christ studies His teachings and sticks to them.

We parents know we can only “teach them diligently” if we are also *learning* diligently—in other words, continuously and with earnest intensity. And our spiritual Boss happens to be the perfect Mentor as well.

So if our main career focus as Christian parents is to be disciples of Jesus Christ, what does that mean exactly? Most students of the Bible are familiar with the word *disciple* meaning “one who follows.” But the meaning of *disciple* conveys more in its meaning than just being a follower. It also means a learner, pupil, or adherent (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*). In other words, a true disciple of Jesus Christ studies His teachings and sticks to them.

Jesus Christ Himself instructed, “Learn from Me,” and He promised benefits to those who do so ([Matthew 11:29](#)). Can we really learn something without regularly applying it in our lives? We have to study God’s Word daily and incorporate its lessons into our lives to be true adherents ([John 8:31](#)). As parents, we recognize this takes on another level of importance when we see our children watching our examples and copying us.

Bible literacy

So, we understand the need for continuing biblical education, who our Boss actually is, and what being a disciple means. Next we need to consider our reading comprehension level.



Education and literacy are interwoven concepts—not just in the ability to read, but also in the ability to comprehend and recall what we’re reading.

As an adult, He was highly educated, to the point of the astonishment of the authorities of the time.

Our mentor Jesus Christ frequently quoted Scripture (at that time, the Old Testament) as He taught His disciples. In teaching, He often began with “It is written” or “You have heard it said,” the latter referencing scriptures His disciples would have heard read aloud at synagogue meetings. Even as a child, He amazed the scribes with His comprehension and retention of Scripture (Luke 2:46-47). As an adult, He was highly educated, to the point of the astonishment of the authorities of the time (John 7:15).

Jesus Christ was exceptionally biblically literate. And no wonder! It’s no coincidence that He is also called the Word of God: He narrated the book (John 1:1, 14; 2 Timothy 3:16).

In addition to Jesus Christ’s example of literacy, the writers of the New Testament frequently quoted the Old Testament. Paul, who had been a Pharisee prior to his conversion, definitely knew the law. Some of the New Testament writers had not originally been trained as scribes but clearly received additional literary education. Peter, for example, was a former fisherman and expertly quoted the relevant passages of Joel and the Psalms during his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2). This would have required the power of the Holy Spirit, of course, and also the action of continuing education in the Scriptures.

To be “ready to give a defense” to refute untruths our children will encounter, we must understand our Bibles and God’s purpose for us.



The entire Bible is replete with examples of servants of God who were biblically literate. The minister Timothy had been taught Scripture from childhood (2 Timothy 3:14-15). The Bereans were commended for studying the Scriptures every day (Acts 17:10-11). King David said God’s law was his meditation all day long (Psalm 119:97). The ancient Israelite kings were instructed to write their own copies of the law in order to learn (Deuteronomy 17:18-19). The prophet Ezra was described as a “skilled scribe in the Law” (Ezra 7:6). Moses, in addition to receiving an education from the most influential civilization of the world at the time (Acts 7:22), was a Levite and was well-versed in God’s statutes and laws (Exodus 2:1, 10; 18:16). And these are just some examples throughout Scripture.

As parents encouraging our children to learn, we recognize the value of literacy in achieving a solid education. Increasing our biblical literacy, and inspiring our children to do the same, is even more valuable. To be ready to teach our children “in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2), we need to know Scripture. To be “ready to give a defense” to refute untruths our children will encounter, we must understand our Bibles and God’s purpose for us (1 Peter 3:15).



Getting to a level of mastery involves rigorous training now. Teachers can't continually be learning the same basics repeatedly.

Becoming teachers

As you teach your children concepts that you have learned since childhood and on into adulthood, you probably spend time considering the best way to present the information to your child. As a result, you gain even more understanding. There is certainly something highly beneficial for the teacher in deciding how to present new material to the learner.

For example, you might gain a deeper appreciation of childhood development phases and the miraculous creation of the human brain as you help your newborn grow from infancy into preschool age. You might develop more patience and self-control yourself as you instruct your grade-schooler or preteen about these important character traits. And you might gain a deeper understanding of foundational biblical concepts as you answer your teen's questions about baptism and other fundamental truths.

We can look at our experiences as parents as opportunities to continue learning, growing and maturing as Christians.

The ability to teach effectively is a gift from God, designed to benefit more than just our individual families ([Ephesians 4:11-16](#)). At some point in the future, God's purpose for us is to become teachers and leaders of many in the Millennium ([Isaiah 30:20-21](#); [Revelation 20:6](#)). Getting to this level of mastery involves rigorous training now. Teachers can't continually be learning the same basics repeatedly ([Hebrews 5:12-6:2](#)). We can look at our experiences as parents as opportunities to continue learning, growing and maturing as Christians.

Our learning experiences now are shaping us into becoming "the new man" or "the new woman" ([Ephesians 4:20-24](#)). This in turn makes us more effective teachers of our children. The more we learn and apply, the better we can teach.

SPECIFIC IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE EDUCATION

In addition to regular Bible study, here is a sampling of ideas on how to increase spiritual education in your home:

Read books that reinforce the authority of the Bible or books that can inspire or assist you in becoming a more mature Christian.

When you watch television, try watching more **documentaries and nonfiction** programming, especially films or series that help you reflect on the miracle of God's creation, the validity of Scripture, the historical context of the Bible, and so on.

Decide on a **Bible reading program** and stick to it. If you "fall off the wagon," get right back on.

Use the resources from this **parenting manual**. The articles and lessons are designed to assist you.

Use the resources from **LifeHopeandTruth.com**. Try reading and studying at least one article per week.

Use the resources from **FoundationInstitute.org**. FI Online offers several in-depth college-level classes that stream directly to your online device.

Study **church booklets**, perhaps devoting one week per chapter.

Have a **study theme** each week. For broader subjects, try a theme for each month.

Use **Bible resources** like commentaries and study Bibles.

Research the **historical context** of a biblical passage or book.



A living book

Fortunately for us, our textbook the Bible is a living book, teaching us continually. Unlike a favorite book we might read a few times and enjoy but not necessarily gain anything new from, the Bible continues to teach us lessons throughout our lives as we gain experiences and mature spiritually.

Think of reading Scripture as being directly instructed by Jesus Christ Himself, like a perfectly tailored tutoring session.

How often have you noticed a passage in Scripture capturing your attention in a way it hadn't previously? This occurs because the "word of God is living and powerful" ([Hebrews 4:12](#)). Again, it's no coincidence that Jesus Christ is also called the Word of God. Think of reading Scripture as being directly instructed by Jesus Christ Himself—a one-on-one tutoring session, perfectly tailored to your current skill set and educational level.



God's version of continuing education is intended to fully equip us in this life and lead us forward into eternity.

All Scripture is designed to be profitable for us, leading us to a more fulfilling and complete life ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)). There is a reason that everything in the Bible was recorded and preserved for us today. We have everything we need to know how to live a life devoted to God and accomplish His will in our lives. And the content to study is abundant, with additional layers of meaning presenting themselves as we continue to learn. Studying the Bible is interactive and enriching. This is vastly different than "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" ([2 Timothy 3:7](#)) or "of making many books there is no end" ([Ecclesiastes 12:12](#)).

Humanity's version of continuing education, while interesting, provides only a partial, temporary benefit. God's version of continuing education is intended to fully equip us in this life and lead us forward into eternity.