



**AGE 10**

*The Trunk Years*



**HOME**  
*22.6*

# AGE 10

## *A Snapshot of Life*

All children develop differently, but some characteristics are the same. Below are some developmental changes that may be present this year as your child grows physically, emotionally, and spiritually during age ten. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should give you some insight into what to expect and how to parent your child through this stage of life.

### **At 10 years of age, your child**

- Is maturing physically and may have rapid weight increase (girls typically mature ahead of boys).
- Is highly selective in friendships and may have one best friend.
- May be concerned with styles or fads.
- Is better able to see things from another's perspective, which facilitates empathy.
- Tests levels of independence.
- Likes privacy.
- Argues logically.
- May stress over academic challenges.
- Begins to accept responsibility for his or her own failures and mistakes.
- Is sensitive to and able to resolve issues of fairness.

### *Parenting Tip*

Your child still wants your encouragement but will rarely ask for it. In this tenth year of life, teasing and gossiping become mounting social pressures, which, coupled with your child's desire to "fit in," can lead to a compromise of values. The combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual shifts your child is encountering at this age make it even more important for you to talk to your child and help him or her see how he or she is designed differently, on purpose.

# Parent Dedication

## What is Parent Dedication?

Parent dedication is giving a strong spiritual legacy to your children. The Legacy Principle, the Likelihood Principle, and the Lenses Principle are crucial to your child's spiritual growth. In the parent dedication section you'll find tools to help you grow as a parent. **The Legacy Principle** states that the scriptures tell us that what we do today directly influences the multi-generational cycle of family traits, beliefs and actions – for good or bad (Exodus 20:5-6, Psalm 78:5-8). So passing a strong faith to our children begins by having a strong faith ourselves, modeling the gospel in our marriages and in how we relate to those closest to us. Some of us need to break negative cycles that may have started with our own upbringing in order to launch a new and improved legacy for the next generation. **The Likelihood Principle** states that the good news is this: in the context of healthy relationships, children tend to embrace the values of their parents. Proverbs 22:6 tells us that when children learn right from wrong at home under the nurturing, loving training of parents, they tend to adopt mom and dad's beliefs. While there are no guarantees because every child has a free will, kids are far more likely to embrace their parent's faith if they enjoy their parent's company! That's a big part of the reason parents are warned not to "provoke your children to wrath" but rather "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Bottom line – a strong relationship with mom and dad is key to a strong Christian faith. **The Lenses Principle** says Jesus taught that our enemy's primary weapon is deception – getting us to believe and live according to lies rather than truth (John 8:44). And when someone is deceived, he or she does not know it! Our children are growing up in a culture that bombards them with lies. An hour or two per week at church is no match for the hundreds of hours spent with media, school, and friends. Nor can it compete with a child's fallen nature that often wants to rebel against what is good, true and beautiful. It is the job of parents to equip children with the corrective "lenses" of truth so they can better navigate the deceptive roads of life.

**As the primary disciple-maker of your children, your spiritual growth is very important. You cannot pass along to your children what you don't have yourself. Spend time each day in God's Word. Take time to pray and to listen to what His Holy Spirit has to say to you. You are important to Him.**



## **Parenting Tool: *Love Languages***

Since children are beginning to test their levels of independence and may become more private, there may not be as many opportunities to connect with your child like there have been in the past. Therefore, it is important that you show your child love in the way that he or she feels most loved.

We talk about love a lot. We often say things like, "I love ice cream," or, "I love to read," but what is love, biblical love? It's so much more than we can fathom. It's sacrificial love. It's not about us. It's always about someone else. Love began with God. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love Him because He first loved us." God expressed that love by sending His Son to die on the cross for our sins. We all know the verse, John 3:16, which says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." We are also familiar with the verses in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, which describes the supernatural love that we are called to have for one another: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

It is important for us to model this biblical love. Our children need us to love them this way.

In Gary Chapman's book *The Five Love Languages*, Chapman suggests that there are five main ways, or "languages," in which we show love and receive love. Below is a description of each of the five love languages along with examples of specific ways you can show love to your children:

1. **Words of Affirmation:** In this language, people need to hear compliments to be "stroked" by the words of others.
2. **Quality Time:** People who hear love by Quality Time know they are loved when people spend time with them—by listening, walking, talking, and/or going on trips.
3. **Physical Touch:** People who hear love in this way need to be touched; they receive love in hugs, back rubs, and by sitting close together.
4. **Receiving Gifts:** People who receive love in this language need to receive thoughtful and personal gifts; the gifts need not be expensive.
5. **Acts of Service:** With this love language, people hear love through others giving them acts of service such as making the bed, cleaning the bathroom, or doing a chore that they dislike.

Although we may appreciate all the love languages, there is usually one or two that are the main languages in which we receive love. Try "speaking" these languages to your children and see which ones they respond to best. Also, watch how they show love to others, as this is usually a clue to their main love language. For example, if your child is constantly doing little things for others, it is safe to try to use the Acts of Service language. If you have a child who wants to come jump in your lap and cuddle, Physical Touch is likely his or her principle love language. Be observant and pay attention to how your child best responds to love.

Ideas for speaking your child's love language:

- If your child has Words of Affirmation as his primary love language, criticism cuts deep. If you need to correct him or her, be specific as to what you want him or her to change, but make sure you include positive and loving words. Compliment your children often; find opportunities to say positive things to them and about them to others.
- For those children who hear love through Quality Time, there is no other alternative to spending time together. Go on a walk, to the gym, or on a car

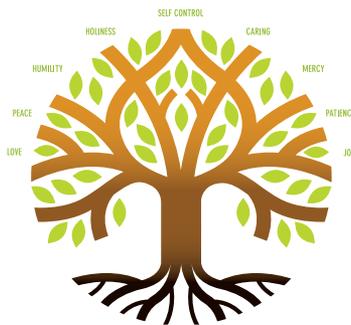
ride. When she asks you to take her somewhere or come see something she has been working on, make the effort to fully engage.

- Children who receive love through Physical Touch will appreciate cuddle time. You might do this while telling a story, singing songs together, or just sitting close and watching a movie or playing a game. Boys who appreciate physical touch will enjoy a little wrestling match. When they get a little older, the same physical approaches may not work or may be uncomfortable. However, an occasional hug, a touch on the shoulder or arm, or a pat on the back will be appropriate.

- If your child receives love through Receiving Gifts, consider writing the occasional card, leaving a balloon bouquet at a school locker, or putting a treat in your child's school backpack. Make sure you express your love verbally or in writing along with the gift. Though gifts can be overdone and thus become meaningless, occasional and personal gifts will create good loving experiences for your child who receives love through gifts.

- Children who have Acts of Service as a love language will best appreciate you doing little things for them. If your child dislikes doing the dishes, get up and do the dishes, and tell your child that you love him or her while you do them. If your son or daughter has a special interest, learn more about it so you can participate with him or her. Anything that is a sacrifice of time on your part will be a loving message.

Finding and learning to speak love in your children's primary love language will go a long way to helping them feel that you love them and that they are a priority in your life. Learn what makes your child feel loved, and then watch your relationship with him or her grow as you practice that specific love language.



**“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” —1 Corinthians 13:13**

# Blessing Your Children

## How do I bless my children?

There is power in a blessing. The Hebrew word for blessing is used over 640 times in the Old Testament alone. Do you know the very first thing God did after creating us? In Genesis 1:27–28 we read, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them...” We were made for blessing! Based on examples in the Bible, there are five basic elements that make up a biblical blessing:

**1. Meaningful Touch** Meaningful touch has many beneficial effects. The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth, personal acceptance, and affirmation—even physical health! For anyone who wishes to see the blessing grow and develop in a child, touch is an integral part of the blessing. As Mark 10:13–16 says, “Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.”

**2. A Spoken Message** Words have an incredible power to build us up or tear us down emotionally. This is particularly true when those words are coming from our parents. Therefore, the blessing hinges on a spoken message. Your child desperately needs to hear a spoken blessing from you. As parents, we must be keenly aware of the power of the spoken word and also be aware of how powerful the absence of spoken words can be. Both people and relationships suffer in the absence of words of blessing, or those spoken words of love, encouragement, and support. Proverbs 16:24 reminds us, “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones...”

**3. Expression of High Value** To “value” something means to attach great importance to it. This is at the very heart of the concept of blessing. Anytime we bless someone, we are attaching high value to him or her. Our children need to hear that they are someone who has great worth apart from his or her performance. As Ephesians 4:29 reminds us, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

**4. Picture of a Special Future** Communicating a special future to a child is another important part of giving the blessing. Children are filled with the potential to be all God intends them to be. Picturing a special future for your children can help bring out the best in their lives. It gives them a positive direction to strive toward and surrounds them with hope. When a child feels in his or her heart that the future is hopeful and something to look forward to, it can greatly affect his or her attitude toward life. We can see this very thing in our relationship with the Lord. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “‘For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,’ says the Lord, ‘thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”

**5. An Active Commitment** The first four elements listed above are the building blocks of the blessing, but the mortar that holds them together is an active commitment—the fifth element. This element of the blessing describes the responsibility that goes with the blessing. Parents need to rely on the Lord to give them the strength and staying power to confirm their children’s blessing. You have God’s Word through the Scriptures as a guide, plus the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Words alone cannot communicate the blessing; they need to be backed with a commitment to do everything possible to help the one blessed to be successful. Isaiah 40:31 encourages us, “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

For more information on the biblical blessing, see *The Gift of the Blessing* by Gary Smalley and John Trent, PhD.

# Ways to Bless Your Child

Use the following Scripture, or any Scripture you choose, to pray over your child daily. This can be at night before he or she goes to bed, in the morning as you wake him or her up, in the car on the way to school, or any time in between:

*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.”*

— 1 Thessalonians 5:16-21

Write a blessing for your child based on the blessing elements of “expression of high value,” “picture of a special future,” and “an active commitment,” as described in the “Blessing Your Children” section.

## 1. Words of love and acceptance

Name qualities about your child that you admire; focus on who your child is, rather than what he or she does. For example, compliment your child on how he/she exhibits one of these characteristics: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, mercy, and humility.

## 2. Acknowledgement of a special future

Tell your child ways you see how God can use him or her in the future. For example, you might say, “God has given you such a sensitive heart. I wouldn’t be surprised if you end up helping a great many people when you grow older.”

## 3. Reaffirmation of your commitment

Be sure your child knows you are on his or her team and are supportive. You might say something like, “Don’t forget I am here to support you, pray for you, and encourage you to be all God intends for you to be.”

## 4. Give a written blessing

Give your child a written blessing at a special dinner or one-on-one time. Be sure to keep the written blessing in your child’s blessing box.

## 5. One-on-one time

Plan one-on-one time with your child, in which you can include the five elements of blessing. Some suggestions for one-on-one time with your

10-year-old include:

- Taking your daughter on a double date with another father and daughter she is friends with.
- Shopping for something special for mom.
- Going geocaching (look it up if you're not familiar with it).
- Checking your child out of school and taking him or her to lunch.
- Lying down in the grass and gazing at the stars.
- Finding the best pie place in town and going for a slice.
- Getting all dressed up and going out to a fancy dinner.
- Signing up to walk or run for a cause.
- Taking your child to see a college or high school athletic team play.
- Skipping rocks along a lake.

## *What's a Blessing Box?*

In Genesis 1:27–28 God's Word says, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them..." We were all made for blessing! Written words can place unconditional love and acceptance into the heart of a child. One idea for sharing blessings with your children is to have a "blessing box," or a special box where you can store written blessings and encouraging words for your child as they develop. Several ideas for written blessings include Scripture passages you claim for your child, words of affirmation, descriptions of accomplishments, desires for the future, prayers, or whatever God puts on your heart. Continue to store these blessings in the special box throughout your child's life. Think of what a treasure it will be in your child's adult life to have this blessing box!

# *Family Time*

## What is Family Time?

The idea of family worship is both attractive and intimidating. The thought of beginning a new pattern of worship in the home can be overwhelming for those just beginning. This guide includes answers to basic questions that we hope will equip you to lead your family in worship.

### **What does the Bible say about growing together in Christ as a family?**

The importance of the family in discipleship is prominent throughout the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:5-7; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15). Husbands are primarily responsible for the spiritual leadership of their wives (Ephesians 5:22-33). Parents, especially fathers, are primarily responsible for the spiritual growth of their children (Ephesians 6:1-3). These are huge responsibilities, but God has promised to provide everything we need to lead our families well, according to His design. As leaders in our home, the critical thing to remember is that God's Word must be written upon our hearts. Our faith in Christ and reliance on His Word should be authentic, tangible, and transparent.

### **What are the benefits of family worship?**

- Family worship brings glory to God. It is a visible reminder for all in the home that God is worthy of our time, attention, and affection.
- Family worship produces joy in the home. Jesus will bring joy to families who worship and grow together. The love of Christ will be more evident in a family where worship is central.
- Family worship effects change in the world. As families read, pray, study, sing, and grow together, they join from their homes in what God is doing across the nations, while influencing each other's lives for generations to come.

## What should we do during family worship?

Keep it simple. Consider the following elements as you worship together:

**READ**—Read a portion of the Bible together. Don't worry if you've already read it in your time alone with God. Reading a chapter a second time will only reinforce what God is teaching you. If children are present and able to read, allow them to do so. Of course, you'll want to explain difficult words and concepts (but don't worry too much if you can't explain everything!).

**DISCUSS**—After reading the Bible together, work through a simple process of examining what has been read, much like you do in your own time alone with God. Give everyone a chance to discuss the passage and consider how it applies to everyday life. Ideally, you will lead by example and share with your family what you learned in your time alone with God and the difference it has made.

**PRAY**—Consider praying through the key points of the Bible passage that you have just read and discussed. Ask God to change your hearts, minds, lives, and family accordingly. This specific prayer can lead to a more general time of prayer that uses the letters P-R-A-Y as a guide:

Praise—Worship God for who He is.

Repent—Confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.

Ask—Intercede for particular needs in your life and other's lives.

Yield—Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever He leads you.

Try to include everyone as you pray, even if this is on a rotating basis. Additionally, you may want to keep a prayer journal that enables you to keep track of prayer requests and God's answers to those requests.

**SING**—Sing or listen to music together as a family. If someone in the family has musical gifts, that person may lead some simple songs. If no one in your family is musical, you can sing along with music from a CD or DVD and discuss what the songs mean.

**MEMORIZE**—Choose key verses or passages to memorize. You may want to work on a verse or passage for a week or a month. Either way, be sure to work together, taking time to understand what you are memorizing. Periodically, set aside time to review verses over the course of the year.

# Frequently Asked Questions About Family Worship

## 1. What if a father or mother is not a Christian?

The commands regarding family discipleship in the Bible assume believing parents. Of course, this is not always the case. In those instances where the father is not a follower of Christ, the mother will need to take the initiative for leading family worship in a non-offensive and non-threatening way. In the case of a mother not being a follower of Christ, the father should lead with compassion and sensitivity.

## 2. What about a single parent family?

In this case, the responsibility falls to the single parent. This, along with the many other duties that single parents have, may present a significant challenge. However, God will supply great grace and everything we need to raise and strengthen our children in the faith.

## 3. What about children?

The dynamic of family worship will vary considerably depending upon the ages of the children involved. The goal for every child in the family is not the same. With young children, focus on the importance of knowing God, respecting the Bible, and worshiping as a family. With older children, dig into Scripture more, ask good questions, and discuss how the Bible relates to life and how a relationship with Christ changes us every day.

## 4. How do I keep things interesting if the ages of my children vary widely?

Regardless of age, include children in planning, reading, singing, teaching, and praying as much as possible and as much as maturity will allow. Make sure to keep things simple, and don't be afraid to keep it short; listen well, and be aware of what is happening in each child's heart and life.

## 5. What time of day is best for family worship?

Timing is far less important than consistency. Some families prefer to worship as the day begins. For others, evening may work best. Many families prefer to adjoin family worship to the evening meal since everyone may be present at that time.



Deuteronomy 6:7 says,  
"You shall teach [God's words] diligently  
to your children, and shall talk of them  
when you sit in your house, and when you  
walk by the way, and when you lie down,  
and when you rise up."

Concentrated time in family worship  
can serve as a catalyst and support for  
"as you go, as you sit, as you walk"  
conversations and applications of God's  
Word within our families. Encouraging  
and challenging our spouses and children  
in Christian faith happens best in the  
context of real, everyday life. Family  
worship builds consistency into our family  
routines and opens up many opportunities  
and possibilities within our family  
relationships.



# A Family Time from Joshua 1-2

## READ

o Joshua 1-2

o As the mantle of leadership in the Old Testament passed from Moses to Joshua, God gave Joshua a series of firm promises on which to stand as he would lead the people of God. Amidst all the difficulties and trials he would face, God told Joshua to be strong and courageous, for God would be with Him every step of the journey ahead. We are also introduced to Rahab, the prostitute and the great-great-grandmother of King David. She took in the spies Joshua sent and offered them hiding and protection from the king of Jericho and his men. In exchange for this act of grace, she asked that her family be preserved once the Israelites took the city. Her request was granted and, in God's sovereignty, she became part of the line of King David and, ultimately, Jesus.

*The Bottom Line: God promises to be with His people today, strengthening them and giving them courage in the most difficult of times and circumstances.*

## Questions:

- What does it mean to be courageous?
- Who was courageous in this story?
- How did God bless those who trusted in His leadership in their lives?
- How can you courageously obey God?

## PRAY

o Praise is an act of worship through prayer in which we express our adoration of and love for God. It is rejoicing in who God is and the salvation He gives us through Christ. We recognize the many facets of His character and the work He has done in our lives. It is giving thanks for the blessings He has given us. When we praise God, we give glory, honor and thanks to Him.

## Biblical Basis for Praise:

Deuteronomy 10:21; 1 Chronicles 16:8-13; Psalm 150; Romans 15:8-11;

Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:9

Take some time for each of those gathered with you to lift up praises to the Lord.

o C.A.R.: The Central African Republic was a French colony prior to its independence in 1960. Since its independence, the nation has been plagued with corruption, misrule, and several political upheavals. The C.A.R. is among one of the poorest countries in the world despite being a land rich in agriculture, water, and mineral resources. It is said that 67% of the population lives on less than 1 dollar a day. As a result of political and national turmoil, an estimated 300,000 Central Africans have been forced to flee their homes: 198,000 have been internally displaced while the other 102,000 have fled to neighboring countries. However, the C.A.R. has seen some economic growth in recent years with a more stable government situation. The C.A.R. has also received an increase in humanitarian and development aid in recent years.

o Pray for the Central African Republic

- Pray for God to draw the Central Africans to Himself during this time of difficulty.
- Ask God to provide food and education for the families in need.
- Pray for our Central African brothers and sisters in Christ to find their hope in Christ.
- Pray that the Lord will continue to grow and strengthen His church in C.A.R.
- Pray for God to impact the peoples of C.A.R. through His church.
- Ask God to bless those who are trying to bring help to the people of C.A.R.

*Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk*

## MEMORIZE

o Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

## SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions to help their children discover the truths of God's Word and worship Him together.

## **Preschool (Birth-Kindergarten)**

o Begin by asking your preschooler this question: Do you know what courage is? Courage is doing something even though it may be hard and you may be afraid.

o An example of courage might be learning to ride a bike. Everyone starts out with training wheels on their bike so they don't fall off and get hurt. It is scary and takes courage to learn to ride your bike without training wheels. When you start to pedal with just two wheels, the bike will wobble and you may crash and even get hurt.

o Do you trust and believe that Mommy/Daddy will be there to help you if you fall while you are learning to ride your bike? Right, we promise to be with you and help you when you are afraid. Guess what? There is someone who is stronger than Mommy and Daddy. He is God. God promises His people today that He will be with us and help us to have courage, even when we are scared. Just like God promised the Hebrew people that He would give them the land of Canaan, He promises to be with us today.

## **Children (Grades 1-5)**

o Read the memory verse for this week again.

o Activity: Practice praying scripture, God's word is alive and active. As we memorize the verses each week, help your children understand this is our conversation with God. He speaks to us in His word and we pray to Him in response. Lord, I confess to you that I am frightened about (fill in the blank) I am discouraged about (fill in the blank). Lord you have commanded me to be strong and courageous and not be frightened or dismayed. You tell me this because you know that you are with me wherever I go, and nothing is bigger than you.

## **Students (Grades 6-12)**

o Imagine you are riding a four-wheeler through the woods with some friends. You are leading the pack and you come upon a log in the trail that you cannot move on your own. What would you do? How might you go about moving it?

o In life there are things we may face that are too difficult for us to handle on our own. Have you ever experienced something like that? Describe that time to your family. Be sure to include the outcome of the situation.

o In this week's passage, we see people facing situations they could not get through on their own. How did having the presence of God with them affect the outcome? God has promised that He will always be with us in every moment of life. How could knowing God's presence and strength is always with you change the way you face difficult times in life?

# *Church Community*

## What is Church Community?

With so many young people leaving the church after they are under the leadership of their parents, it is important that we teach the necessity of the church. Scripture says that the church is the Bride of Christ and He has given the church these four responsibilities: worship God, connect with others, grow in God's Word, and go tell the world about Christ. It is important that our children understand the heart behind what the church is meant to be and that our children allow Christ to transform their hearts to serve Him through His church.

We go to church to worship our God who has saved each of us and given us a personal relationship with Him. We go to church to come together to celebrate our Heavenly Father by giving Him our worship. Our children should see families living their lives side-by-side, sharing experiences, caring for each other, being open with one another, and praying together. Our children should know that the church is a place where they can grow in their faith and gain the knowledge that will help them grow closer to the Lord and live a more abundant life. In other words, our children should know the church is a place where we can be transformed. Finally, the church leads us to the point where we must open our eyes and our hearts to step out and follow the nudging of the Holy Spirit to reach the world around us.



# Can You Be a Christian and Not Attend Church?

Some Christians have no choice. They are trapped in a hospital bed or working in an isolated area where no church exists, and God is certainly sufficient to care for their needs. You can still get to heaven if you can't go to church. But even though it's technically possible to live the Christian life in isolation, it's certainly not God's plan.

When you become a Christian, you are called into a relationship with God, but 1 John 1:3 makes it clear that we enter a fellowship that goes two ways—with God and with other Christians. As the text instructs us, “that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

The New Testament never divides Christians into the church members and the non-church members. All the way through, it assumes that everybody participates in his or her local assembly. It gives no samples of Christians who belong to the “universal church” but have no link with a local church. Wherever Christians are within range of each other in the New Testament, they meet. Every time in the book of Acts when the apostle Paul comes to a town where there are no Christians, he wins a few converts and immediately organizes them into a small group—a little church.

Acts 20:7 reveals the practice of the early church: “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” For Christians in every location, regular gathering was a part of life.

It's illogical to say that you are merely part of the worldwide, universal church, yet refuse to gather with the segment of that universal church that exists in your geographic area. It would be like claiming you have a car when the right fender is in Phoenix, the engine is in Tucson, and the wheels are in Paradise Valley! You don't have a car—you have the beginning of the inventory for a junkyard. In the same way that a car can't function unless all the pieces are put together, neither can the church. The church must be together to carry out many of its purposes. Here are some irreplaceable elements of the Christian life that cannot be practiced when you live in

isolation from the church:

## **Use of Spiritual Gifts**

1 Corinthians 12 makes it clear that God has given spiritual gifts to every Christian. And verse 7 states unmistakably that these abilities are not provided to make you feel good; they are abilities to minister that should be used for the common good! First Peter 4:10 commands us to use spiritual gifts to help each other. The same passage makes it clear that we meet with other Christians so they can use their gifts to strengthen us. God's gift of a preacher or teacher is wasted if no one comes to hear the preacher speak.

## **Mutual Ministry**

The church is depicted as a body in 1 Corinthians 12, and Paul explains that each part of the body exists to meet the needs of other body parts. In the same way, God intends each of us to meet the needs of other believers, using our strengths to help in their areas of weakness. First Corinthians 12:21 expresses it this way: "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you." In the same way, neither can a Christian today claim to be self-sufficient without the body. The New Testament is full of "one another" commands. We are to comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18), build up one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11), confess our sins to one another (James 5:16), pray for one another (James 5:16), and many more. How can we obey these directives if we stay away from the gathering of believers?

## **Accountability**

God designed the church as a place where believers could watch out for one another, as a shepherd guards the sheep (1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17). A Christian who answers only to himself can easily rationalize sinful attitudes or actions; regular contact with other Christians can keep us "sharp."

Church attendance is important if we are to grow into mature disciples of Jesus who worship God, connect with others, grow in God's Word, and go take the Gospel to our world.

# Discipling As You Go

## What is Discipling As You Go?

Deuteronomy 6 is clear in its instructions to parents: constantly, as you live your life, be an example and train your children to follow the Lord. As parents, it is important for us to live a consistent life of faith in front of our children. As things happen in life, we should use those events to train our children, not only in right and wrong, but also in how to make decisions to live the abundant life that Christ has for us. We should model and explain how God's truth should be the standard of how we live our lives. In other words, even from the beginning, we should teach wisdom rather than the facts of "do's and don'ts." Faith is much easier caught than taught. Parents should always help their children see life's decisions through the lenses of our faith.

---

## Parenting Tools: *Family Dinner*

Most American families are starved for time to spend together, and dinner may be the only time of the day when we can reconnect, leaving behind our individual pursuits like playing video games, emailing, and doing homework. Dinner is a time to relax, recharge, laugh, tell stories, catch up on the day's ups and downs, and develop a sense of family identity.

Research has confirmed what parents have known for a long time: sharing a family meal is good for the spirit, the brain, and the health of all family members. Recent studies link regular family dinners with many behaviors that parents pray for: lower rates of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and

depression, as well as higher grade-point averages and self-esteem. Studies also indicate that dinner conversation is a stronger vocabulary-booster than reading, and the stories told around the kitchen table help our children build resilience. The icing on the cake is that regular family meals also lower the rates of obesity and eating disorders in children and adolescents. What else can families do to foster strong bonds in addition to family dinners? Consider some other family-building activities that take about 1 hour per day and present some of the same benefits as eating dinner together.

### **Strategies for families with younger kids**

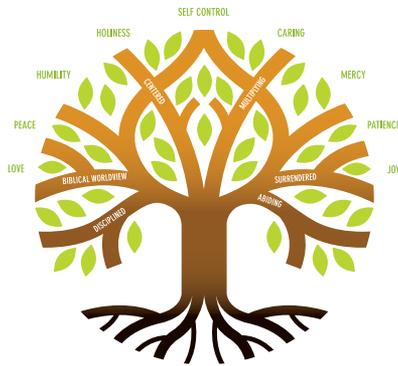
- Make clear that “meal sitting” is different from “school sitting.” So, for example, everyone might wear PJs, or you might play music during the meal. Make dinner fun!
- Make dinner last longer. Give your kids ice pops made with fresh juice after they’ve eaten their meals. This will allow for more time for everyone to be together during dinner.
- Let your child help. Invite your child to stir a pot, crumble the cheese, set the timer, or choose a menu from two choices offered. Having a hand in making the meal creates pride of ownership, and that may make you child stay at the table longer.
- Avoid having a revolving door at the dinner table. If your child wants to leave the table, allow this only once or twice. After two departures, the child should know that dinnertime is over. This is different from forcing a child to sit, but takes away any positive reinforcement derived from leaving the table.
- Present each part of the meal as a course. For example, you might present veggies as an appetizer, pasta with pesto sauce as the main course, and orange slices for dessert. Maybe your child can help clear and bring on each course so that you are harnessing a child’s activity in the service of the meal. For example, you might ask, “While you’re up, would you get the water pitcher?”

### **Strategies for families with preteens/teens**

- Agree that dinner will be off limits for discussing conflicts. Don’t talk about homework, whose turn it is to take out the trash, a recent D on a math quiz, or how late the curfew should be on Friday night.

- Offer to make a new meal based on your child’s interests. If your son is studying South African history or Indian literature, search for recipes from that country.
- Invite your child to make a course or part of the meal. Direct your child to make something fairly simple (but special and dramatic) that will elicit oohs and ahhs from the rest of the family. Popovers, banana flambé, and fruit smoothies all do the trick.
- Create a weekly dinner ritual when your kids’ friends are invited to dinner or to dessert. For example, on a tired Sunday night, friends could be invited to come over and make sundaes.
- Ask your teen to choose music for you to listen to during dinner. This will also give you something to talk about that is likely of great interest to your child.

Having dinner together gives you another opportunity to talk with your children and grow as a family.



**“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And 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.” —Deuteronomy 6:5–7**