



**AGE 12**

*The Branch Years*



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# AGE 12

## *A Snapshot of Life*

All teenagers develop differently, but some characteristics are the same. Below are some developmental changes that may be present during these years as your child grows physically, emotionally, and spiritually during the age of 12 to 13 years. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should give you some insight into what to expect.

### **Physical Development**

Having begun puberty, children will likely compare themselves to other children by their physical attributes. Girls will likely start experimenting with using makeup. Boys, too, are conscious of height and strength. While there is a capability for high energy levels, there is also a need for lots of rest.

### **Relational Development**

Children will still likely want to show independence from parents. Social media is a huge avenue for them to stay connected to one another. Children often struggle with understanding proper boundaries both through social media and surfing the Internet.

### **Spiritual Development**

Spiritually, children can find their identity in their social media profiles and determine their worth based off of the feedback they receive online. Both girls and boys (but mostly boys) will likely be tempted with pornography by now.

# 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.

## Parenting Tool: *Boundaries*

Parents are strongly encouraged to plan out proper boundaries for their child when he or she is between the ages of 12–13. The book of Proverbs captures the thoughts of a father as he gives instruction to his son. In Proverbs 5, the wise father warns his son about the dangers of an adulterous mistress, who is vividly described as one whose lips are forbidden and whose speech is smoother than oil. Going to this mistress, the father says, is costly, for her feet go down to death and she does not ponder the path of life. In this way, the wise father affirms the use of boundaries. Proverbs 5:8 says, “Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house.”

The ability to establish proper boundaries is the result of living a disciplined life. While boundaries may clearly define a line not to be crossed, discipline provides the strength to adhere to those boundaries. At the close of the chapter in Proverbs, the wise father explains that for the one who ignores proper boundaries, “He shall die for lack of instruction” (Proverbs 5:23).

Part of a parent’s role is to set proper boundaries for his or her child. As your child grows in spiritual maturity, these boundaries may be adjusted, allowing your child greater freedom and responsibility in decision-making. It is very important that the entire family understands that boundaries do not change people, only Christ changes people. Boundaries are an expression of discipline that help us to pursue Christ and to avoid pitfalls. Boundaries alone will have no lasting impact if one is not simultaneously seeking after the Lord. As the Legacy Principle explains, it is essential that you, as the parents, seek after the Lord and discipline yourselves to abide by the same boundaries that you set for your kids.

The following list of items presents some areas where boundaries may need to be set by a parent. Prayerfully and thoughtfully consider the questions on this list to determine where and how boundaries should be implemented. It’s a good idea to talk through these issues with your kids before these issues even come to the forefront.

- **Online access:** How much online access does my preteen have to sexual content, violence, and language?
- **Social media usage:** Who is my child allowed to follow on Twitter and Instagram? What kinds of pictures is he or she allowed to post of him or

herself? How much time is my child allowed to spend on social media?

- **Entertainment ratings:** What ratings of movies, music, and video games are appropriate for my preteen?
- **Social activity:** How much time should my preteen spend with friends, alone, and family?
- **Physical activity:** How many sports/extra-curricular activities should my preteen participate in? How much rest does he or she need?

## Tips for Setting Proper Boundaries

**1. Talk to preteens beforehand.** Communicate the need for boundaries. Let them ask questions for why the boundaries are set where they are.

**2. Consider placing yourself under similar boundaries.** Ask your preteen to join you in something that you are already doing.

**3. Place appropriate trust in your preteen.** Wait, can and should you really trust your preteen? Maybe the best way to answer this question is to say yes and no. We can have confidence in our preteens because we know that God's Spirit lives in believers and thus empowers our preteens to resist temptation and say no to ungodliness if they are believers. However, we must also be cautious not to trust our preteens so much that we neglect setting boundaries, as preteens are typically very impressionable and prone to temptation. An important question to ask is, "At this stage of his/her life, how much maturity does my preteen possess?"

One important consideration to weigh as you set boundaries for your preteen is the sinful nature of the fallen world in which we live. Whether or not you trust your preteen, you have to consider if you trust the world your preteen lives in. Satan is extremely active to expose preteens to temptation in a variety of ways, from online content to movies. Think of it this way: you may think your teen is ready to drive, but that doesn't necessarily mean you'd give him a Ferrari for his first car. It may even be that you trust him to drive a Ferrari safely, but you don't trust the peer pressure that he will have from friends to drive too fast or to do daredevil things with the car. Likewise, parents need to evaluate the maturity level of each preteen as well as

consider the amount of peer pressure he or she will receive from outsiders.

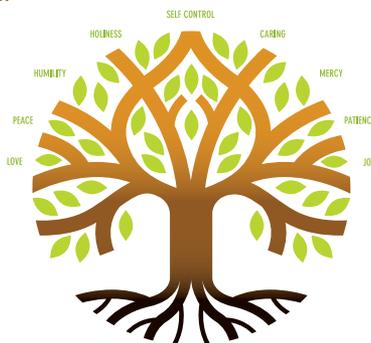
**4. Remember and explain that boundaries do not change us—only Jesus does.** Make clear in your family that boundaries are only helpful when they redirect us toward Jesus.

**5. Clarify what is to be avoided and what is appropriate.** How much violence is appropriate for my child to be exposed to in console or app games? What is my child allowed to post on social media? Is posting a swimsuit selfie OK? What type of people is my preteen allowed to follow on Twitter or Instagram? How much time a day can he or she spend on his or her cell phone? How much sexual content is allowed?

**6. Clarify the consequences.** We can clarify consequences in two ways: first, we can explain the disciplinary steps that we will take as parents; second, we can explain the slippery slope that can result such as pornography, cyber bullying, and the danger of sexual predators, etc.

**7. Understand and expect your preteen to be tempted to push these boundaries.** No adult or parent is perfect. We all have temptations, and so will your preteen.

**8. Be prepared to respond to your preteen's disobedience.** If he or she does push beyond the boundaries, allow your preteen the opportunity to confess the wrong. Offer forgiveness, and point to Christ. Reinforce your love for your preteen. Carry through with the consequences already clearly stated.



**While boundaries may clearly define a line not to be crossed, discipline provides the strength to adhere to those boundaries.**

# *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.

# Sexuality

- *“Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress?”—Proverbs 5:18–20*
- *“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”—Matthew 5:8*

Think about the verses above, and use the following reflective questions below to bless your child in the journey of purity and future love.

1. In what ways is my child already showing signs of purity?

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2. In what ways do I hope my child will display purity?

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3. What challenge will my child likely be facing this year in regard to his or her purity?

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4. How will I commit to helping my child face this challenge?

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5. When will be the best time to give my child this blessing?

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6. Is there a "meaningful marker" that I can give to my child to make the blessing memorable?

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# *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 Ruth

## READ

o Ruth 1:1-6, 19-22

o After conquering the Promised Land, the book of Judges says the people of Israel did not heed the warnings of Moses and Joshua, but rebelled against God and served other gods. The story of Ruth took place in this time, and we see how God rightly judged His people with a famine in the land. Elimelech, Naomi and their sons responded by leaving Israel and going to Moab (the enemies of Israel). Here the sons married Moabite women (Ruth and Orpah). When Naomi's husband and sons died, she decided to return home to Bethlehem, and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, chose to go with her.

o Ruth 2:1-3, 8-13

o After arriving in Bethlehem Ruth went to gather grain in the harvest field of a man named Boaz and found great favor with him. Verse 3 says that she "happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz." This text was written from Ruth's small perspective. As far as she was concerned, she randomly picked a spot in the field. But, God was at work and led her to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz. God's sovereignty was on display!

o Ruth 2:18-20

o See? It was no coincidence! God's sovereign plan was being worked out. In the law of Israel, there was a principle called the 'kinsman redeemer'. When a woman was widowed, it was the responsibility of the nearest unmarried man in her husband's family to take her as his bride so she would not become destitute.

o Ruth 4:7-17

o Ruth, a Moabite, was the great-grandmother of David. How did a cursed Moabite get into the line of the Messiah? Because God provided for her a redeemer. Boaz is a picture of our kinsman redeemer. We, too, were destitute when the Lord bought us for Himself and made us His own beloved bride. Hebrews 9:12 says, "He bought eternal redemption." Through this

incredible story, we see God's kindness on display as He remained faithful to a stubborn and undeserving people. He used unlikely recipients of His grace to maintain the line of promise, which eventually brought the Savior.

*The Bottom Line: God lavishes His kindness on His people and is sovereignly in control of our redemption.*

### **Questions:**

- How have you seen the sovereign hand of God at work in the intricate details of your life?
- Kindness is a huge theme throughout the book of Ruth. In what ways have you experienced the Lord's kindness?
- How can you be active in sharing the story of redemption with those God has sovereignly placed in your life?

### **PRAY**

o Confession is our personal acknowledgement of the sin in our lives. God tells us in His word to confess our sin to Him and to turn from it. Confession is vital in the life of every believer as they seek to be more like Christ. Read some passages from scripture about this listed below.

### **Biblical Basis for Confession:**

Proverbs 28:13; Romans 10:10; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9

Take an opportunity for those gathered with you in worship to spend time in silent confession to God.

o Pray for the nation of China

- Pray for those who have been imprisoned and persecuted for their faith.
- Pray for the church in China to be further established in the Scriptures.
- Pray for the 259 people groups who do not have the Gospel.
- Ask the Lord to work in the hearts of the government leaders.
- It is illegal to work in China as a Christian missionary. Pray for missionaries in China to be able to remain there while they spread the Gospel and strengthen the church.

*Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk*

### **MEMORIZE**

o 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."

## 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 Gather some pictures of your family and of different families from magazines. Show the pictures of families to your preschooler. Talk to them about how all families are different. Example: Some families have brothers, sisters, mommies, and daddies. Others may just have a mommy with one child and aunts, uncles, or grandparents. Explain how families show love by caring for each other. Can you think of some ways mommy or daddy show our love to you? We provide you with things you need like a home, food, and clothes.

o Ruth and Naomi needed someone to care for them with a home, food, and clothing. Their husbands had died, and they needed a family. God had a plan for them, and He knew what they needed. God was good to them. He sent Ruth and Naomi to a new place called Bethlehem and told Boaz to take care of them. Boaz did what God wanted him to. He gave them food and a home. He married Ruth and became her husband, and they had a son and a family of their own.

o We are all part of a bigger family: God's family. God is our Heavenly Father and He loves and provides for us, too. Can you think of some things that God provides or gives us to show His love?

### Children (Grades 1-5)

o Ruth's husband has died. She is alone and has no one to take care of her. Ruth is also a Moabite, and considered to be under a curse. But God was kind and loving to her. He had an amazing plan to save her and to spread this blessing of salvation over the whole world.

o Ruth met Boaz, they married, and had a son named Obed. Later Obed had a son, Jesse. Jesse had a son, David, who became king of Israel. Boaz and Ruth's son, Obed, was the grandfather of King David! Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, was also one of Boaz and Ruth's descendants. Ruth was important in Jesus' heritage. She was a great-great-great and more greats—grandmother to Jesus! God used her to fulfill His promise that Jesus would be born in King David's family!

o Read aloud Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 1:30-33. Chart on a piece of paper the line of Christ from Matthew 1:1-17. Ask: Where is Ruth in this lineage? What an amazing, powerful God we serve! He used a lonely, “cursed” widow to carry on the family line of the Savior of the world.

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

o In Ruth 1:16-17, Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi led her to follow Naomi wherever she would go. In chapter 2:3, we read, “So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz”. There are times when divine appointments happen in each of our lives. In reality there are no coincidences in life. God is always working out His intentional plans in our lives for His glory.

o Share with your family a time in your life when you didn’t see God’s hand and something appeared to just happen, but now as you look back you see God’s sovereignty in that situation.

o In this sovereign meeting between Boaz and Ruth, Ruth found favor in Boaz’s eyes. Boaz met all the qualifications necessary to redeem Ruth and buy her freedom back from slavery. This is a clear picture of what Christ did for us. He freed us from slavery to sin by purchasing us with His own blood. Jesus is our Kinsman Redeemer.

o There were some key people and moments involved in Ruth’s life that led her to meet her kinsman redeemer. What are some key moments in your life that led to you being introduced to Christ and your salvation?

o Just as God used these people and encounters in Ruth and Boaz’s lives, He uses us to introduce people to the Kinsman Redeemer – Jesus Christ! Who are the people in your life that need Christ the Savior? Let’s pray specifically for God to bring opportunities for us to introduce them to Christ.

# *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.



# What If My Child Wants to Attend Another Church with His or Her Friends?

If your child wants to attend another church with his or her friends, here are several questions and ideas to keep in mind:

## **1. How do the teachings of the other church compare to my church?**

Is the other church aligned with what my church believes and teaches? Are there differences in the major foundational beliefs (doctrine of trinity, of Christ, salvation, etc.)? Are there differences in the some of the minor beliefs (the Lord's supper, baptism, church structure)? As a parent, are you able to explain or defend both the major and the minor beliefs?

## **2. God is the head of the church at large; he is also the head of the local church.**

Ephesians 5:22–23 depicts marriage between a man and women as a picture of the church. The idea that a husband is to be the head of his wife is rooted in the truth that “Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.” When Paul mentions the church here, he is not referring to a local church, but the church at large.

Interestingly, Christ is also seen as the head of a local church. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul addresses a local congregation who is sinning in their use of spiritual gifts. They are arrogantly claiming that one spiritual gift is more significant than another. Paul corrects their misunderstanding by use of an analogy of the body. “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ...Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” Paul’s use of the term “body of Christ” is in reference to a local church. The implication for us is that God is the Lord of not just our church but also other local Bible-believing churches. God is working not just in Immanuel Baptist Church but in other local congregations as well.

### **3. Bible-believing churches should not compete against one another, but rather they should complement one another.**

In 2 Corinthians 8:1–5, Paul is commending what the Macedonian churches were doing in order to complement other local churches. Using the example of the Macedonian churches, Paul hopes to spur on the Corinthian church to give a financial offering. He says, “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” 2 Corinthians 9:2 continues the same line of thought, “For I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.”

Here is an important conclusion: if your child is being spurred on by another local church then it is not wrong, but rather a good thing.

### **4. Understand that going to church entails giving in addition to receiving.**

Each member has a significant role for service in his or her local church. As stated earlier in 1 Corinthians 12, Christ is the head of each local Bible-believing church. As each local church is like a body with different member parts, so, too, your child is a member or part of Immanuel Baptist Church. Being a member of Immanuel is not just about receiving but also about serving in Immanuel. As a parent, you do your child and church a favor by emphasizing to them that they have a significant place of service at Immanuel, if they attend the church. 1 Corinthians 12:14–15, 21–22 explains, “For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.”

## **5. If your child is a member of Immanuel, is your child fulfilling his/her member roles?**

Our church's biblical mission is to "be and build committed, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ, who worship, connect, grow, and go." Within this mission statement, the dual ideas of receiving and giving are present—we are to be disciplined and we are to build disciples. It is unprofitable for Immanuel or another local church if a person comes and does not fulfill his covenant to membership. It is neither profitable for the believer who does not commit himself entirely to his fellow believers at his local church.

In Scripture, we see that God is head of both the church at large and also over each local Bible-believing church. Therefore, it is a good thing when another local congregation spurs on your child. We should gladly participate and rejoice at the work God is doing in other Bible-believing churches.

The major thought to consider when deciding if your child should attend another church is this: "Is my child finding their place of service in the church? Is my child able to learn and come to fulfill his/her role as a member in such a way that honors the Lord?"

There is no all-encompassing answer that can be given for each family and each child. We pray that you will have wisdom and discernment as your disciple your child to be connected to the church.



A rectangular title card with a light beige background and a decorative border of small green dots. The text is written in a cursive, orange-brown font.

# *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:

## *Dealing with Bullying*

Bullying can come in many forms. Complicating a parent's perception, boys and girls bully in different ways. Boys tend to be more blunt and physical, whereas girls take on snobby glares and sarcastic compliments. Whether it is through face-to-face interaction, gossip behind one's back, or cyber bullying through social media, there is, fortunately, a biblical response to bullying.

There are two methods to dealing with bullying, depending on if the bully is a confessing believer or if the bully is a nonbeliever.

### **When the bully confesses to be a believer**

Help your child reflect on the following verses in the event that the bully confesses to be a believer:

- *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”*  
— Matthew 18:15–17

- *“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”*— Luke 17:3-4

If your child feels as if he or she is being sinned against, then the first step for him or her (not you) is to confront the bully. Your child is not to confront in a physically threatening or revengeful way, but to confront in hopes that he or she might “gain the brother” back into fellowship. After the confrontation, if the person repents, then your child must forgive.

If the individual does not repent, then your child is allowed to bring two or three others with him or her to confront the bully a second time. Having the others come along adds witnesses and safeguards your child in several ways. First, the witnesses protect your child from the bully. Second, this

measure allows the bully to understand his or her actions better now that multiple people are in agreement about the actions.

If the individual still does not repent, then you as a parent may bring church leadership in to help in the confrontation effort.

If the individual still refuses to repent, that person is asked to leave the church. In order for this person to leave the church, the pastors must be involved. Even at this point in the process, the hope is that the bully will still come to repentance. 1 Corinthians 5:5, in speaking about an immoral brother, instructs, "Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Here is the belief that even by asking a person to leave the church is not outside the realm in which God can bring a person back to Himself.

One final note for dealing with a bully who claims to be a Christian: the bullying situation among believers should stay among believers.

1 Corinthians 6:1–4 says, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?"

### **When the bully is not a professing believer**

Help your child reflect on the following verses in the event that the bully is not a believer:

- *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what*

reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” —Matthew 5:38–48

- “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: ‘There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’”

“Then the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’” — Luke 18:1–8

- “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay’ says the Lord. Therefore

‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;  
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”  
—Romans 12:17–21

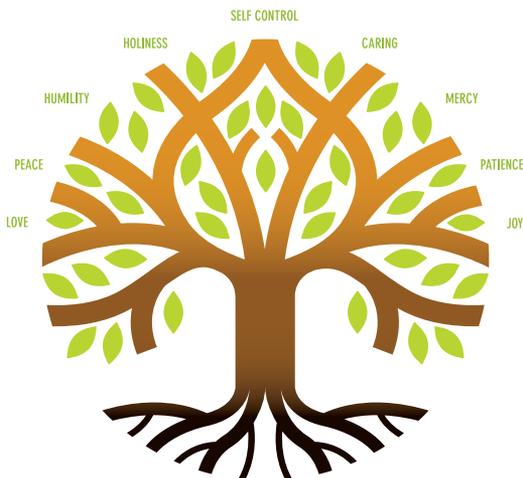
- “And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” — 1 Peter 3:13–17

It is easy to assume that when our children are being bullied the greatest goal is to stop the bullying; however, in the case of a bully who is a nonbeliever, remember that a good testimony about Jesus is the utmost goal. We are to act in a way that would be honorable in the sight of all.

Understand that the Lord hears us when we pray and that He promises justice in His timing. Our Heavenly Father is not like an unrighteous judge who is unaware of our adversaries. When we pray to Him, we can confidently believe that He will bring us justice.

We do not repay evil for evil, but rather we repay evil with good. Repaying evil with good shows that believers are different from unbelievers. As believers, our task is to be different from the unbelievers. Even unbelievers can love those who love them. What reward should we expect for doing what unbelievers do?

Like the widow in Luke 18, believers are given permission to tell proper authorities about bullying when it occurs. If bullying takes place in school, your child is allowed to tell a teacher or principal. On a sports team, he or she is allowed to tell the coach.



**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.**