



AGE 13

The Branch Years



HOME
22.6

AGE 13

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.

When your child is 13-years-old, you will notice

Physical Development

- Height differences between boys and girls level out
- Sexual desires begin to awaken

Relational Development

- Teens become very concerned about appearance and their public reputation
- Teens are tempted to be involved in as many extra-curricular activities as possible

Spiritual Development

- Teens begin to ask the question “why?” in regard to spiritual matters
- Teens can move from searching for an identity to feeling like they have established somewhat of their identity
- Teens’ beliefs begin to transition from being their parents’ to their own

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:

Communicating & Teaching

Between the ages of 13–14, parents may find it difficult to communicate with their child. Teens typically have already attempted to distance themselves from parents, as they want to express independence. Although sometimes frustrating, parents should not be discouraged. God has established parent communication in order to help children become reproducing disciples. You can read about the parent's role in communication with their children in Deuteronomy 6. Additionally, it is helpful to remember the Legacy Principle.

In order to best teach our kids, we must be teachable ourselves. Jesus presented this idea when he told his disciples, "A disciple is not above his teacher...it is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher..." He also told them, "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops" (Matthew 10:24–27).

The goal of communicating with your teen

"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"

–Deuteronomy 6:5–6

As you talk with your child, always remember what your goal is as a parent. Communicate in such a way that helps your child to love the Lord with everything in him or her. This goal should be the goal of all our communication, not just opportunities we think of as the "special teaching moments." Ephesians 4:28 states this well when it says, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."

It is easy as parents to have dreams for our child that he or she becomes wealthy, enrolls into a great college, or becomes a star athlete. We may want a lot of good things for our children, but we have to be careful that we don't miss the only true thing that God wants for them. Do your best to communicate to your children that their greatest need and ultimate purpose is that they love the Lord with all their heart, mind, and strength.

How to communicate with your teen

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart... You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” —Deuteronomy 6:6, 8–9

As a parent, you are the primary teacher. There is no other person who can be as good of a teacher to your kids as you can. Embrace the privilege to spiritually lead your kids by teaching them the commandments of the Lord. Teaching occurs in your words and actions, as well as in ways that you stage your home.

The book of Proverbs provides the perfect example of how to teach your kids. In the book, a father is passing along wisdom to his son. Proverbs is a handy resource that provides endless ways to teach your children about wisdom, truth, and communication. Check out some of the places in Proverbs where communication pertains to the following topics:

- Promises (3:13–18, 4:10–12)
- Warnings (6:12–15)
- Heart focus (1:7, 3:5, 4:23, 14:30, 16:1)
- Memorable advice (13:4, 12:19)
- Reasonable advice (12:15)
- Guidance for the young (3:1–2)
- Examples of a better life (17:1, 19:1)
- Real life examples of overcoming temptation (1:10–15)
- Analogies, metaphors (6:6)
- Example of the way of wisdom (4:10–11)

When and where to communicate with your teen

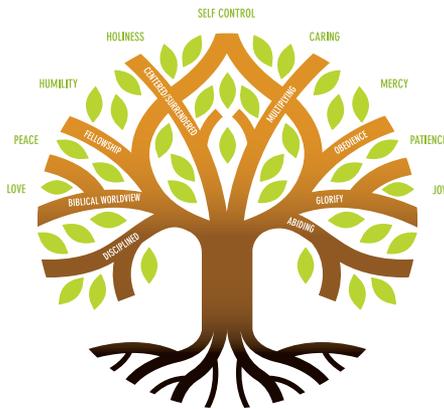
*“...And shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”
—Deuteronomy 6:7*

Sometimes teaching moments can be predetermined and arranged by parents, but other times teaching moments are sporadic and happen randomly. In order for teaching moments to happen, quality time with your kids needs to happen beforehand. Spend time with your kids—sit with them, walk with them, be with them in the mornings and evenings as they lie down and as they rise.

How to answer your teen's questions

"When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son: 'We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us'"
—Deuteronomy 6:20–25

In light of the development of your children at this age, it is common for students to ask "why?" Teens are beginning to make the transition from their faith being their parents' to being their own. As parents, you can foresee this transition and be prepared to answer some of life's toughest questions. Remember, parents are their child's primary teacher. It is your responsibility to seek to learn answers to life's toughest questions.



We may want a lot of good things for our children, but we have to be careful that we don't miss the only true thing that God wants for them. Do your best to communicate to your children that their greatest need and ultimate purpose is that they love the Lord with all their heart, mind, and strength.

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.

Listening & Finding Wisdom

Bless your children that they will listen to instruction and find wisdom when they seek for it. As Proverbs 3:13 reminds us, "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding."

Proverbs 8:32–36 says, "Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; All those who hate me love death."

Use the following questions as a guide to help you understand how you might share the blessing of wisdom with your child. Prayerfully and honestly reflect on the questions so that you can think about ways to encourage and bless your child's pursuit of wisdom.

1. In what ways does my child already listen and search for wisdom?

2. In what ways do I hope my child will listen and search for wisdom?

3. What challenge will my child likely be facing this year in regards to listening and searching for wisdom?

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

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

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



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 1 Samuel 16 & 17

READ

o 1 Samuel 16:113

o After Saul failed to serve the Lord faithfully as king of Israel, God sent the prophet Samuel to anoint a new king, David. The Lord often surprises us with those whom He chooses to use. Bethlehem was a rather unexpected location from which the future king would come. It was a small, rural town easily overlooked. In addition, David was the youngest of eight sons. Culturally, the youngest son received the least attention. As such, Jesse initially overlooked David. The combination of David's location and life-stage built a strong case against him being God's man. However, the Lord does not evaluate people according to earthly criteria; rather, He examines the heart. In David, He saw a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). Perhaps no other story in 1 Samuel displays what such a heart looks like as well as the story of David confronting Goliath.

o 1 Samuel 17:1-11; 26; 32-37; 41-50

o God's people found themselves in a dangerous situation. They exhibited faithlessness as fear before their enemies and dismay filled their lives. No one was willing to confront the intimidating warrior, Goliath, until David arrived. God used David's actions to demonstrate that He is greater than Goliath. The man after God's own heart fought for the hearts of God's people (v. 32). He was moved to action by a desire for all to know the Lord (v. 46). Being fueled by the Lord, he was filled with confidence. By slaying Israel's enemy with a sling and a stone, David surprised the people and secured their confidence in the Lord, transforming them from cowards to conquerors (vv. 52-53).

o Although we tend to read this story identifying with David, perhaps it is more appropriate for us to assume the posture of Israel. Like Israel, we exhibit faithlessness as fear, dismay and doubt of God's power and goodness fill our lives when circumstances become difficult. We can't overcome the intimidating onslaught of sin, Satan, and death. Thus, we need the Lord's anointed King to arrive and act on our behalf. That's exactly what we have in the Gospel. The surprising Son of David, Jesus Christ, defeats sin, Satan, and death through His life, death, and resurrection. King Jesus delivers us and secures our confidence in the Lord, replacing fear

and dismay with faith and praise. For we are made more than conquerors through Him who loves us (Rom. 8:31-39).

The Bottom Line: The surprising Son of David delivers God's people from the dangerous enemies of sin, Satan, and death enabling us to live confident lives of faith and praise.

Questions:

- How does reading this story from Israel's perspective rather than David's affect your faith?
- In what ways is King Jesus a surprising deliverer?
- In what ways has King Jesus captured your heart?
- How does the Gospel enable you to live a confident life of faith and praise?
- How does knowing that the "battle is the Lord's" (v. 47) encourage your effort to make disciples of all nations?

PRAY

o Petition is praying for your own personal needs. While this is not the sole focus of our prayer lives, it is appropriate to pray for the needs and desires of your heart. We are to pray for our needs in times of sickness, sorrow, trial and joy, so that ultimately we learn to seek God's will in our lives. Through prayers of petition, we come to a deeper understanding of God's sovereignty over all things, whether they happen the way we would like or not. It is about submitting to His will and trusting that He will guard us in Christ Jesus. Read some passages from scripture about this listed below.

Biblical Basis for Petition:

Philippians 4:6; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:13-15

Take an opportunity for those gathered with you in worship to mention specific personal prayer needs they may have. Pray for each one of these requests specifically.

- o Pray for the nation of Columbia
 - Pray for Christian government leaders to honor Christ.
 - Pray for God to bring peace from the violence from the drug trade.
 - Ask God to strengthen new believers in His Word.
 - Pray for the 620,000 unreached people to hear the Gospel.

Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk

MEMORIZE

o 1 Samuel 16:7 “But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

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 Before you begin, grab a spool of thread. Have your child stand up so you can wrap one strand of thread around their body. Have the child break the thread by holding out their arms. Now, do a few more strands of thread, explain how it becomes more difficult to break the thread if we have more strands around us.

o Explain to your child that the strands of thread represent sin or bad choices we make in our lives. Have the children call out sins that they may struggle with (example: not obeying parents, arguing with siblings, not sharing).

o We can’t overcome or break the sin. Only God can break sin. God loves us so much that He sent his only son, Jesus, to save us and to rescue us from our sin and bad choices.

Children (Grades 1-5)

o Gather five sheets of paper and a coffee mug. Hand the five sheets of paper to your child(ren) and have them crumple each sheet of paper into a small ball. Explain to them that just as David defeated the giant Goliath by flinging a small stone at him, they will now have the chance to slay a giant by throwing their paper wads into a coffee mug. Stand roughly 10 feet away from your child(ren) and hold the coffee mug out with the open end facing them. Allow them to throw the wads until they are able to land one inside the cup; invite them to step closer to you, if needed.

o Explain to your children that although it is exciting to think of ourselves being used by God to do something as great and amazing as defeating a massive giant, we really have more in common with the children of Israel

on the sidelines. The Israelites were terrified of Goliath, he was a horrible and towering giant, and he had spent nearly his entire life training to be a warrior. No one in Israel's army was strong enough or brave enough to face him. Goliath mocked the God of Israel and no one was able to stop him. It was a truly sad day for God's people.

o God did not leave His people defeated! He sent His servant David to defeat the giant. God did through David what the Israelites could not do for themselves. Even though they didn't help in the fight in any way, they got to share in the victory. (v.52) In the same way, God sent His servant Jesus to win a battle that we were helpless to win ourselves. We were powerless to defeat the horrible giants of sin and death and separation from God. God used Jesus to defeat our enemy on the cross, and if we trust in Jesus, the victory that He won is applied to us. We can express our love and praise for God in a deeper way knowing what a great victory He has won for us.

Students (Grades 6-12)

o One of the key points we see this week is that David was a surprising choice for king. From outward appearances, he looked unfit to be a leader. To demonstrate how looks may be deceiving, bake a cake or cookies, substituting salt for the sugar or unsweetened chocolate for chocolate chips. There is no need to bake a large amount of this because your family obviously will not eat much of it! Be excited about how good this snack will be as you serve it. Once your family tastes the cookie and realizes that it is not what they expected, begin your discussion using the following questions.

o When thinking about the characteristics of a new king, what do you think the people were looking for? What was it about David that made him an unlikely candidate to fill this position?

o In what ways was Jesus an unlikely savior? How does His sacrifice on our behalf change our lives?

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 Distinguishes Us as Baptists?

The goal of this brief article is to share some Baptist distinctives; that is, to explain what distinguishes Baptist theology from other Protestant denominations. The goal is not necessarily to share the entirety of our core beliefs (matters like who God is, doctrine of Scripture, the divinity of Christ, and salvation) but to share the aspects of Baptist theology that make it a unique denomination. The Baptist distinctives are as follows:

Centrality of God's Word

- *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." —2 Timothy 3:16–17*
- *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." —2 Peter 1:20–21*

Baptists believe that God's word is authoritative and sufficient for faith and practice. It is authoritative since it is God breathed and written by men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is completely sufficient in that it is able to take the man of God and equip him for every good work. Thus, Baptists distinguish themselves from Catholics and some Pentecostals. Catholics claim an authority in church tradition and in the Pope that is equal to Scripture. Often times, some Pentecostals may value prompting from the Holy Spirit as equal to the authority of Scripture. We believe, however, that Scripture alone is inerrant and infallible. We believe that the Holy Spirit will only prompt believers to be aligned with what God has already revealed in Scripture.

Church membership for believers only

- *"For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ*

Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”
—Ephesians 2:18–22

- *“Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened... I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.*

For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore ‘put away from yourselves the evil person.’”
—1 Corinthians 5:6–7, 9–13

Church membership is when a person joins a church’s congregation, making a covenant to agree on biblical doctrine, submit to the biblical leadership of pastors, and use abilities and gifts to biblically serve others in the church. Baptist belief is that the church membership should be made up of believers only. In Christ alone, believers have been made one and are a dwelling place for God. It is easy to assume that a person cannot fulfill the role of a church member without first believing in Christ. Because of this belief, Baptist churches withhold church membership from unbelievers.

Practically, some of the ways this belief applies is that we do not allow for children to become members until they become believers themselves. Also, each person who becomes a member of our church makes a public confession of his or her belief in Jesus. This distinctive helps ensure the purity of the church and allows the church to engage in church discipline if necessary.

Ordinances of the Lord’s Supper and baptism

- *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried*

with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” —Romans 6:3–4

- *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”
— 1 Corinthians 11:23–26*

The word “ordinance” derives from the idea that Jesus has ordained an activity in the church. Baptists believe that there are two ordinances: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptists call these activities ordinances as opposed to “sacraments.” Some Protestant denominations call these two ceremonies sacraments and their belief of them is that these ceremonies dispense the grace of God as people partake in them. Baptists, however, do not believe that baptism and the Lord’s Supper dispense God’s grace, but rather Baptists believe these ceremonies are a symbolic picture of God’s grace already having been dispensed when a person believes in Christ. In seeking to avoid confusion between the terms and differences of belief about these ceremonies, Baptists have called these ceremonies ordinances.

Because Baptists conclude that these events are not dispensing God’s grace but are rather symbolic of what has already taken place in the life of a believer, we believe that only believers get to partake of the ordinances. Baptism is an ordinance that a person does after he or she believes in Jesus. Likewise, partaking of the Lord’s Supper is done after a person believes. In baptism, when a person is immersed fully in the water and comes out, it symbolizes that he or she has died with Christ and is raised to newness of life. In the Lord’s Supper, when a person eats the bread and drinks the cup, he or she proclaims remembrance that Christ has died for our sins.

Practically, some of the ways these beliefs apply is that Baptists do not baptize infants. Baptism is a one-time event taking place after a person’s conversion. The Lord’s Supper is done repeatedly and is available only to those who believe in Christ.

Priesthood of believers

- *“I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” —John 14:18–20*
- *“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” —1 Peter 2:5*

The term priesthood of believers refers to the ability of each believer to approach God personally. Believers do not need a human mediator to go before them in order to pray or confess their sins. In the Old Testament, Israelites would have to go through a priest who would offer animal sacrifices on their behalf. But in the New Testament, Jesus has become our once-and-for-all sacrifice, replacing and fulfilling what the Old Testament sacrifices were meant to accomplish. In light of Christ, Baptists believe that each believer has direct access to God. John 14:18–20 shares that God has not left us as orphans but rather, just as Jesus was in the Father, we, too, get to be in Christ. By implication, if Jesus is in His Father, and we are in Christ, then we have direct access to the Father.

Cooperation of autonomous churches

- *“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.” —Ephesians 5:23*
- *“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.” —1 Corinthians 12:12, 27*
- *“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.” —2 Corinthians 8:1–4*

Baptists believe in the church at large and also local churches. We believe that the Bible speaks about all believers making up one church, and yet there is also a sense where the Bible speaks about local, individual churches. Baptists believe that each local church is autonomous or self-governing. Practically, this means that each church elects their own pastors, elders, or deacons and manages their resources as they see fit.

Meanwhile, while Baptist churches are autonomous, they also realize the importance of cooperation. There is a strong idea that we can do more together than if we were completely independent. Because of this, our church is part of the Southern Baptist Convention. By pooling our resources together and cooperating with other like-minded churches, Southern Baptists are able to send more missionaries and advance the kingdom of God in a greater way than if we were independent of each other.



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: *Lust & Pornography*

Recent statistics tell us that the average age for a child to look at porn for the first time is by age 11. For some of you, this age is shocking. But should we be that surprised? Wherever there is the capacity for Internet—computers, iPads, smart phones, iPod touches, handheld gaming consoles, and gaming systems like Xbox or the Wii—there is the capacity for pornography. Sadly, it is not really a question of if your child will look at porn, but when. What is a biblical response to when your child is caught using porn or confesses to using it?

Often times, parents are tempted to say that their child cannot help it. We may wonder how with a mixture of hormones, curiosity, and advertisement propaganda we can really expect our children to be able to withstand the temptation to lust. However, we believe that while temptation is certain for your child, the Holy Spirit resides in believers and gives them everything they need to say No to ungodliness (2 Peter 1:3). Perhaps more than any other temptation that your children will face, they need you to help to them understand the biblical strategies of battling the sin of lust. Below are six strategies you can use when you discover your child is struggling with lust or pornography.

1. Be gentle and keep watch over yourself

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” —Galatians 6:1

The Legacy Principle explains that parents cannot lead their children unless they keep watch over their own hearts. In addition to living out the Legacy Principle, parents can show gentleness by listening and learning about their child’s situation. Parents might consider questions such as is this the first time my child has looked at porn? What did he or she see? How was pornography accessed? Was it my child’s fault? In the same way that Christ sympathizes with our weaknesses, we should strive to sympathize with the weaknesses of our children. Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

2. Address the heart issue(s)

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

—Matthew 5:27–28

The sin of lust is often attached to other sins as well. Feelings of loneliness, inferiority, and misunderstanding about intimacy and God's purpose for things like sex and anger are often times excuses, which catalyze lust. Beyond the behavior of your child, look to his or her heart. God desires for all aspects of our lives to be surrendered to Him, not just one aspect.

3. Point to the faithfulness and justice of God to forgive us of our sins when we confess

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." —1 John 1:9

Rather than guiltting your child into repentance, the goal is to convince him or her that God's grace is sufficient for sin. Grace is a better motivator than guilt. Remind your child that God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sin.

4. Teach your child the biblical concept of renewing the mind

"That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

—Ephesians 4:22–24

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." —Romans 12:2

As believers, we have been made alive to Christ, and thus our identity and perception of life has been redefined from the way that we used to think about the world. We previously lived in darkened understanding, futility in our minds, and in ignorance of truth (Ephesians 4:17–18). But now, in light of Christ, we are able to hear and learn about the truth that is in Jesus. As Ephesians 4 states, we are to put off sin, renew our minds, and put on righteousness.

You can use the four steps below to teach your child how to renew the mind:

1. Pause and think in the midst of temptation
2. Identify the deceptive, faulty lies about sex and pornography that we tend to embrace
3. Return to the biblical teaching and promises that God gives in regards to purity
4. Make a personal decision to place faith in what God says about lust and purity

5. Together, work towards removing the cause of sin

“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” —Matthew 5:29–30

Jesus’ words show that it is costly to defeat the sin of lust, as it entails the giving up of something as valuable as an “eye.” In this day and age, the “eye” could be represented by Internet use, social media avenues, or private browsing. Explain to your child that whatever they have to give up for the sake of purity, the pursuit of holiness in the area of lust will reap benefits. Use tools such as Covenant Eyes or 3X Watch to help come alongside your son or daughter in the pursuit of purity.

6. Bless and remind your child of where purity leads and where lust leads

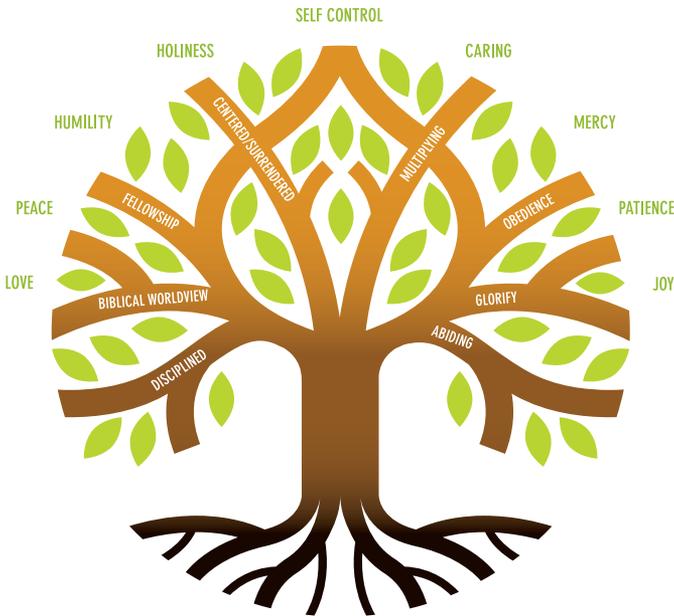
“Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a seductress?” —Proverbs 5:18–20

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” —Matthew 5:8

7. Discipline your child

“And say: ‘How I have hated instruction, And my heart despised correction! His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, And he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.’ —Proverbs 5: 12, 22–23

Throughout Proverbs 5, a wise Father warns his son against adultery. The father foresees a time when the son, if he hates his father's discipline or experiences a lack of it, will experience folly and ruin. Discipline is a redemptive act of love from the parent to assure that the child understands and experiences that there are consequences for sin. Discipline promotes a healthy fear of God aligned with a healthy understanding of His grace.



Sadly, it is not really a question of if your child will look at porn, but when. We believe that while temptation is certain for your child, the Holy Spirit resides in believers and gives them everything they need to say "No" to ungodliness (2 Peter 1:3).