



AGE 15

The Branch Years



HOME
22.6

AGE 15

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 15 to 16 years. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should give you some insight into what to expect.

Physical Development

At 15, teens have a heightened sensitivity to appearance and its social value. Girls and most boys have fully developed into their adult bodies. Sexual desire is further awakened, and the temptation to be sexually active is common.

Emotional Development

Teens desire to control more aspects of their lives. They test authority, question rules, and begin to develop impulsive behaviors with friends and peers. Acceptance from others is paramount for teens during this stage.

Relational Development

Fifteen-year-olds may spend less time with family and more time with peers. They have a strong desire for conformity with peers and begin integrating both physical and emotional intimacy into relationships. There is a temptation to “have fun now” and be responsible later.

Spiritual Development

Teens can handle the responsibility of most service positions in the church. They have a greater ability to identify right and wrong. Teens’ faith and church involvement become less centered on who is there and more centered on their own decisions. They desire to know their own giftedness and begin using their gifts for the Kingdom.

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: *Share, Show, Do*

Think back to all of the experiences your teen has had by now. Think about all of the things he or she has observed, heard, and done.

By now, teens have likely been tempted in various degrees of sexual temptation. They have seen their friends test the authority of their parents and may have even done the same themselves. They have likely been more impulsive in their behavior and oblivious to the consequences. They are keenly aware of how their peers see them. They are masters of observation.

Much like the preschool years, your child's teenage years consist of hearing, seeing, and doing things based on what he or she absorbs from the people and experiences around them. What are your teens hearing, seeing, and watching you do?

"I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand." Maybe you have heard this famous quote by Confucius before. Paul writes something similar to the church in Philippi: "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:9). Your teens are watching you intently. They are looking to see how authentic you are. They observe how you treat your spouse and other people. They are looking to see if your relationship with Christ and faith go beyond Sunday morning. They look to you to validate their own faith.

Consider taking Paul's advice as you practice imitation-worthy behavior with your kids:

1. Share

Do not be ashamed to declare the hope that Christ has put in you (Romans 1:16), not just to the lost but—most importantly—to your own family. Share the hope that you have in Christ Jesus. Be verbal and consistent. Paul asks the church in Rome, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Romans 10:14. Remember that sharing the goodness of our great God with your child is your primary responsibility.

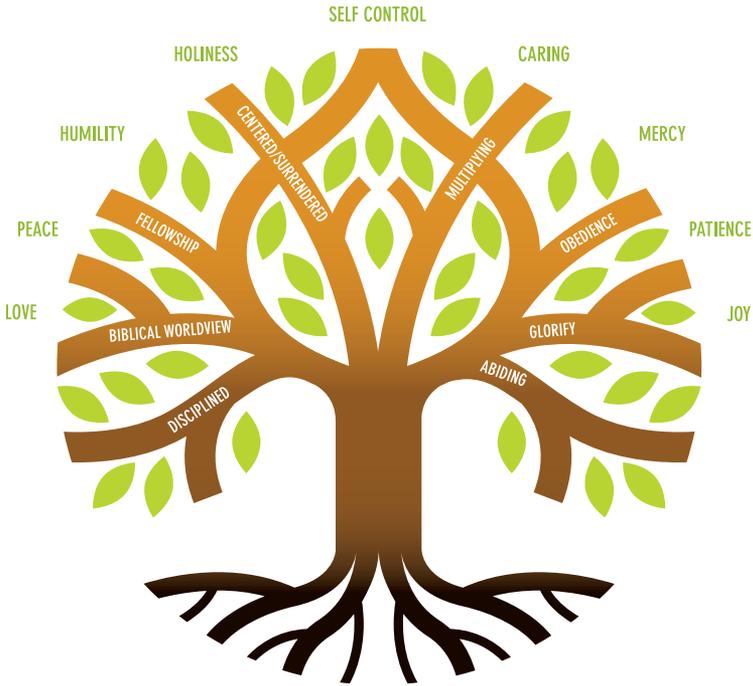
2. Show

Be careful not to just talk about Jesus. Be Jesus to your child. In the creation story, it is clear that God created man to be His image bearer (Genesis 1–3). You are to be the image bearer of Christ in your home. Paul tells the church in Philippi that they had learned and received because they had heard and seen Christ Jesus in him.

3. Do

Sharing and showing go a long way in promoting the spiritual development of your child. However, the most important thing you can do is “practice these things” with your child.

Consider taking your child with you when you share with another group of people about what God is doing in your life. Maybe even allow your child to share as well. Be sure to take your child with you as you serve in the local community. Expect him or her not to just observe but to rub elbows and serve alongside you.



“The things which you learned
and received and heard and saw in me,
these do, and the God of peace will
be with you.”

Philippians 4:9



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.

Bless Your Child's Openness to the Reproof and Discipline of the Father, for It Produces the Fruit of Righteousness

"Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole." —Job 5:17–18

"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

*'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.'*

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."
—Hebrews 12:5–11

1. In what ways is my child already accepting God's discipline for the purpose of producing righteousness in him or her?

Tell your child...

(Child's Name), I know how difficult it is to be disciplined by God, but it is very refreshing to see that when God disciplined you

with _____, you did not blame Him or get angry, but you accepted it and grew from it.

2. In what ways do I hope my child would be more open to the reproof and discipline of God?

Tell your child...

(Child's Name), I hope that in the future you will continue to be open to God's discipline, so that _____

3. What challenge will my child likely face this year regarding God's reproof or discipline?

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 my child to make this 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 Psalm 9

READ

o Psalm 9 is a triumphant song of thanksgiving for vindication written by David. In the Psalm, David praised the Lord for manifesting His righteousness in judging wicked nations and for being a true and eternal Judge in whom the afflicted may trust. He then prayed that God would give him further cause for praise by seeing his own affliction and removing it.

o Psalm 9:1-2

o David resolved to praise the Lord wholeheartedly, to tell of His wonderful deeds, to be joyful in God, and sing to Him. The word “wonderful deeds” is used frequently to describe God’s works in the Psalms and literally refers to “things extraordinary or surpassing.”

Question: What are some “wonderful deeds” God has done for which you are thankful and want to praise Him?

o Psalm 9:3-9

o The cause for David’s praise is recorded in these verses. The Lord has manifested His righteousness by protecting God’s people from the evil schemes of the wicked. Notice how David gives God the credit for his enemies’ defeat in verses 4-6.

Question: In what ways do you often take credit for your successes in life? Who should receive credit for all of these things?

o Psalm 9:11-20

o In view of God’s past deliverances, David now calls on God to respond to his affliction and give him reason to praise. In danger of dying, he calls on God to “lift (him) up from the gates of death” (v. 13). If delivered, he would then “tell of all Your praises” (v. 14). David then proceeds in verses 15-18 to celebrate how God defends the poor by defeating their oppressors.

Question: What truths about God’s character are most clearly seen in

these verses? What affliction are you currently experiencing?

The Bottom Line: God is just and His wonderful deeds are to be praised!

PRAY

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

Biblical Basis for Praise:

Deuteronomy 10:21; 1 Chronicles 16:8-13; Psalm 150; Romans 15:8-11; Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:9

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

o Pray for the nation of Cuba.

- Pray for God to sustain the rapid growth of the church in Cuba and for the gospel to be proclaimed.
- With the vast growth in the number of believers and poverty of the people, many Christians are left without a copy of Scripture. Pray for God to supply His Word to believers in Cuba.
- Ask God to establish the Cuban church in His Word so they can stand strong in the faith.
- For years the Cuban government has put many restrictions on Christians, therefore pray for God to move in the hearts of the government leaders for His name's sake.

Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk

MEMORIZE

o Psalm 10:12 "Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted."

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, gather a small reward; this could be stickers, candy, etc. Next, choose a simple chore like dusting the furniture. Explain to your child there is a small job that needs to be done and that you have set aside a reward for anyone who helps with the job. Ask the child or children if they would like to help. Explain the chore and pass out the supplies needed to complete the job. After the job is done bring everyone together. Reward one child (or adult if there is only one child) with more stickers/prizes than the others. An example might be: give one child 10 stickers and the other child only 1 or 2. Now ask your children if they think this is a fair or just reward for the chore we did? No, probably not! One of us was rewarded more for our hard work than the other. Didn't we all do the same chore? Shouldn't we all receive the same reward? Yes, that would be the "just" or "fair" thing to do.

o The good news is, that even though we don't always know what is "just", "right" or "fair", God does! God is always just and right. Ask your children if God were distributing today's reward, how would He do that? What is fair? He would give an equal share to each person, so now you can redistribute the reward so each child has the same reward. God's plan is always better than ours. Let's praise God and thank Him for being our just and rightful God!

Children (Grades 1-5)

o As a family, write your own Psalm of thanksgiving and praise to God for His "wonderful deeds". Give thanks for your successes and achievements in life and for your salvation that ultimately lifts you from the gates of death. Think of some words that describe God's character and include them in your psalm. Don't be shy or intimidated! Allow every member to participate and don't "edit" it to make it "pretty." This should be heartfelt and spontaneous! Feel free to incorporate some verses from Psalm 9.

Students (Grades 6-12)

o Psalm 9:1-2

What are some wonderful things in your life for which you are thankful? From this past year, or this past week? Spend some time sharing with your family the amazing things you are grateful for recently.

o Psalm 9:3-9

David credits God for His triumph over his enemies. In what ways do we take credit for victories, successes and achievements in life? Do we give Him credit for our scholastic achievements? Athletic achievements? Take

some time to give thanks to God for your achievements great and small. Also, thank Him for the many unique talents and gifts He has given you as a teenager. Then, spend some time confessing these things we have taken the credit for.

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.



How Do I Help My Child Find a Place in the Church?

You have seen the discouraging stats of our teenagers leaving the church in droves. In most cases, these teens will never return again. One of the main reasons for this mass exodus is that young people no longer value the church, likely because they either abdicated or never found and fulfilled their place in it. By helping your children find their place in the church, you can help them value it and hopefully stay connected for years to come.

The Scripture repeatedly teaches the importance of its members. The tasks set before the church is not to be performed by the few, but by the masses. Your child, regardless of age, has been specially gifted to fulfill a specific role within the church.

Before we share some ways to help your children find their place, consider the following foundational truths to help build a case for your child finding and fulfilling his or her place in the church.

Every member of the church is uniquely gifted

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.”

—1 Corinthians 12:4–6

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”—1 Peter 4:10-11

When Jesus Christ comes into a person’s life as Lord and Savior, that person begins the journey of sanctification, or becoming like Jesus. The old is gone and the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Think back to when your child gave his or her life to Jesus. Instantaneously, your child was gifted with the Helper—the Holy Spirit. Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, believers realize their unique giftedness. Some are prophetic, others are phenomenal teachers, and others show mercy

without hesitation. Spiritual gifts are not based on physical or mental ability, but on the Creator's plan and the Holy Spirit's power. Instill in your children the reality that God has uniquely gifted them. Their passions are not their own but have been placed there for a reason beyond self-gratification.

There is a place for everyone in the church

"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 if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

But now indeed there are many members, yet one 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. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."

—1 Corinthians 12:14–27

Not only is every member of the church uniquely gifted, but everyone has a place within the church to use those gifts. A church with a bunch of eyes may be able to see everything, but if it does not have any hands, it is not equipped to handle what it sees. Some are gifted to become hands and others to become feet. If your child has realized his or her gifts, be ready for God to reveal the place to put those gifts to work. Your child's place may change as his or her passions progress and new gifts are developed, but he or she will always have a place in the church.

There is a purpose for everyone in the church

"...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," —Ephesians 4:12

God is not focused on busy work just to keep us from sinning or turning away from Him. He is a God of purpose. Our purpose is not just to fill a number on a stat sheet or give a tithe to help maintain ministry efforts. The Scripture teaches that the work of the ministry is to be done by the church, not just a select few of the church or the staff. You and your child's purposes in the church are to do the ministry and build up the body of Christ! It's one thing to realize your gifts, and it's another thing to acknowledge your place. Purpose is where your gifts and your place meet.

So, what are some practical tips for helping your children find their places?

1. Model service in the church

Are you currently filling your place in the church? Have you shared with your child how you have arrived at your current place? Share with your child what is most fulfilling.

2. Take a passions/abilities assessment

Check out some of the resources available from PLACE Ministries.

3. Take a spiritual gifts assessment

Check out some of the resources available from PLACE Ministries.

4. Know the places of ministry in the church

Your church is in constant need of members of the body to step up and take their place. If you are unaware of open ministry opportunities, contact the church staff.

5. Experiment

Encourage your child to experiment in a couple of different ministry areas. All of the assessments mentioned earlier are great tools, but sometimes they come up a little short. It may be that your child needs to experiment in a couple of different ministries to see where they might fit. Do not be afraid to experiment. Be sure to let the appropriate staff member or leader know your child's intention up front.

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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: *Building Trustworthiness in Your Child*

1. Build trustworthiness in your child to help him or her grow into a faithful servant in God's kingdom

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have

abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” —Matthew 25:14–30

As parents, one of your goals is that you would raise trustworthy children. Building trustworthiness in your children is ultimately about them growing into faithful servants in God’s kingdom. Yet, more than the goal that your children are able to perform simple tasks at home within a deadline, the ultimate goal is that they are joyfully trustworthy and watchful with the kingdom of God. As parents, our goal is not simply to prepare our children to be faithful in earthly matters, but in matters of the eternal kingdom.

2. Build trust in your child by testing with little things first, according to ability

*“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.”
—Matthew 25:14–15*

*“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.’”
—Matthew 25:21*

Trustworthiness is not something that you can verbally teach or simply model and then expect your child to get. A child develops trustworthiness by being given the opportunity to show it. In other words, trustworthiness is learned by trial and error. To build trust in your teens, you must be willing to give opportunities for your children to prove themselves.

As you give your children opportunities to prove trustworthiness, take into account their abilities. Ask yourself questions such as what are my child’s passions? What are his strengths? What are her weaknesses? When is a good deadline? How much responsibility can she handle? Is it within his ability to succeed? In order to teach your child trustworthiness, parents should carefully think through these questions, as avoiding these considerations may lead parents to give their child an opportunity that is out of line with the abilities. When a child is given an opportunity that exceeds his or her ability, it cannot only be frustrating to the child, but the demonstration can fail to teach trustworthiness.

After taking into account your child's abilities, start with something small. In the same way as the biblical example, allow your children to prove themselves faithful in the little things before they advance to being trusted with the bigger things. For example, you can teach your child to be trustworthy with a toy car, so that one day he or she might be trusted with a real car. In an exercise such as this, remember to focus on the kingdom of God and the ultimate aim of teaching your child to be trustworthy. Keep in mind that beyond just teaching your child how to keep a car (toy or real) clean, accounted for, and safely maintained, it is your job to explain how cars—both toys and real ones—are resources meant to be used for the kingdom of God. Teach your child to be trustworthy in kingdom matters, whether that means helping your 5-year-old share a toy car or demonstrating to your 15-year-old how you can use your car to offer rides to others.

3. Measure your child's faithfulness by his or her urgency and watchfulness

"Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them."

—Matthew 25: 16–17, 19

Since we are viewing trustworthiness ultimately in the context of the kingdom of God, our earthly tasks should be a reflection of our heavenly tasks. As believers in God's kingdom, we know our Master will return at any moment, and we are expected to approach our faithfulness with a sense of urgency and watchfulness. Trustworthiness does not procrastinate but quickly pursues our Master's task because we do not know when He might return. Procrastination in earthly tasks may reflect a heart that will tend to procrastinate in heavenly tasks.

If parents are wise in giving appropriate opportunities to their children that they can accomplish, then measuring each child's faithfulness is not based so much on whether the task is completed successfully, but rather on if the child had a sense of urgency as he or she completed it.

4. Reward your child's faithfulness with more responsibility and your joy

"So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" —Matthew 25:20–23

Rewards that result from being trustworthy are not given as gifts, but rather they are earned. Help your child understand this truth. Explain to your children that with their faithfulness in the little things, they can be trusted with greater responsibility. Notice that the master in Jesus' parable rewarded his servants with the same response regardless of if they had earned five talents or two. The master says, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."

Rejoice in the faithfulness of your children in the little things. Do as the master in the parable did, and reward them with greater responsibility each time, as doing so ensures that their motives are right. Rather than bribing your children into being responsible with rewards that are not associated with more responsibility, reward your children the way that our heavenly Father will reward His faithful servants.



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