



**AGE 16**

*The Branch Years*



**HOME**  
*22.6*

# AGE 16

## *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 16 to 17 years. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should give you some insight into what to expect.*

### **Physical Development**

At 16, stress is a very real, physical struggle as teens work, perform in school, and prepare for the future.

### **Emotional Development**

Teens desire to control more aspects of their lives. They are less likely to respond to adult lectures because they feel they know better what is going on than the adult does. Teens exhibit more impulsive behaviors.

### **Relational Development**

Teens may spend less time with family and more time with peers. They seek friends who share beliefs, values, and interests. Their relationships with parents become more of a support system. Teens begin to feel more freedom to express themselves as individuals.

### **Spiritual Development**

Teens continue planning and preparing for the future. They develop role models who inspire them either toward or away from faith. Teens also have a greater interest in serving others and in making a difference in the world. They begin to think more about the impact they have made on their peers, student ministry, school, and the world. This either spurs them on to do more or give up and move on.

# 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: *Exhortation*

By now, you know how unique your child is. God has blessed you with this magnificent gift! Can you believe it? Your child is starting to come into his or her own with regard to school, extra-curricular activities, and friendships. Teens at this age are beginning to search for meaning in life, rather than just soaking it up. If your child has not already, he or she will soon desire to give back. Teens long to use the unique gifts, abilities, and opportunities that God has given them for something that transcends themselves.

The cool thing is that God, knowing this, created such an outlet for us to give back—the church! Paul writes in both 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:4–8 about the uniqueness of the body of Christ. Our gifts are not to be bottled up; they are to be used for the glory of God. Whether our gift is prophecy, preaching, exhortation, or hospitality, all of these are to be used to spread the fame of Christ Jesus and uplift the church. As we read in Acts 20:35, “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Recent statistics continue to paint a dismal picture for our children’s future involvement in church. These statistics reveal an ever-declining level of church involvement and faith development for individuals in their twenties, even of those who were once very involved teens in church.

Could it be that the reason for this absent generation is that these teens never found their place in the church? Could it be that this absent generation was never shown how to find their place in the church? Could it be that the parents of these individuals never found their place in the church either? As our Legacy Principle describes, it is nearly impossible to encourage someone to find his or her place in God’s work if you have not found and fulfilled your place.

You can exhort and encourage your child to find and practice spiritual gifts in the church in the following ways:

## **1. Exhort your children to know their gifts**

Has your child ever completed a spiritual gifts assessment? Have you? PLACE Ministries considers it vital for every individual to know his or her part in God’s great story and plan. Consider leading your child through a PLACE

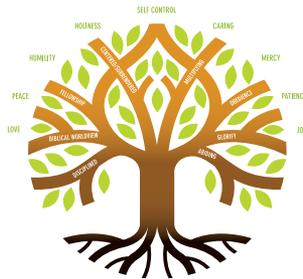
assessment. Maybe even conduct one on each member in your family, and compare the results. Use the results as a tool to further encourage and affirm one another. The PLACE assessment will help you in Personality Discovery, Learning Spiritual Gifts, Abilities Awareness, Connecting Passion with Ministry, and Experiences of Life.

## 2. Exhort your children to find their place in the church to use their gifts

As mentioned earlier, Scripture (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:4–8) expresses the uniqueness of those who make up God’s church. You and your child are both uniquely gifted. Rest assured that God knows your giftedness. He has prepared a place for you in His church. Join your child on the quest to find his or her place in God’s fellowship. Help your child to realize how the gifts might be used in various capacities. Expose your child to different ministry opportunities.

## 3. Exhort your children to fill their place in the church

- 1 John 3:18, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”
- James 1:22, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”



**God has uniquely crafted your child for His purposes. However, fulfillment does not come in knowing one’s place or even finding one’s place. Fulfillment rests in knowing that one has filled his or her place in the church. When you and your child are filling the duties that your gifts and abilities have been crafted to do, you feel a much deeper connection to the body of Christ that leads to a long-term commitment.**

# *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 Hearing of the Word of God and His/Her Ability to Do What it Says

*"But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" —Luke 11:28*

*"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." —James 1:22–25*

1. In what ways is my child already displaying his or her ability to hear and do the Word of God?

---

---

## **Tell your child...**

*(Child's Name), I am so encouraged by how you listen to God's Word by \_\_\_\_\_ and do what it says by \_\_\_\_\_.*

2. In what ways do I hope my child will be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer?

---

---

## **Tell your child...**

*(Child's Name), I hope that in the future you will continue to hear the Word of God through \_\_\_\_\_ and do things like \_\_\_\_\_ that are taught throughout the Scriptures.*

3. What challenge will my child likely face this year regarding hearing the Word of God and doing what it says?

---

---

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 23

## READ

o Psalm 23:14

o Verse 1: David used the picture of a shepherd to recall the blessings he enjoyed from the Lord. The metaphor was a natural one for David, the shepherd-king. The prophecy regarding the coming Messiah used the same metaphor (Isaiah 40:11), and Jesus identified Himself as the expected "Good Shepherd" (John 10:14). Elsewhere, He is called the "Great Shepherd" (Hebrews 13:20) and "Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4).

o Verse 2-3: David describes the things that his Lord/Shepherd has provided and therefore he will never lack. The emphasis of verses two and three is on the "rest" which the Shepherd provides for His sheep. The expression "lie down in green pastures" (v. 2) speaks of rest after having been fed. And the words "still waters" literally mean "waters of rest." Verse three reminds us that as a shepherd leads his flock, so also God guides His people. Guidance is one of the key tasks of the shepherd. Not only does He lead his sheep to places of peace and rest (v. 2), but He also leads them along the right paths. We can be confident that we will never lack God's leading in our life and that He will always lead us along the proper path. He does this "for His name's sake," for reputation as a Good Shepherd.

o Verse 4: In verse four, we notice that even though God was David's shepherd, this did not keep him from many trials and tribulations. He was sought without cause by king Saul, who became jealous of David's success. The "paths of righteousness" are not always peaceful paths. However, the picture of the "rod" and the "staff" are the shepherd's instruments of protection for his sheep from their enemies. Therefore, while God may not always use His power to keep us out of trials, His presence and His power will always be with us in the midst of our trials. David was comforted by the Lord's presence and protection. As believers we are never in situations the Lord is not aware of, because He never leaves or forsakes His people.

o Verse: 5-6: The scene changes to a banquet hall where a gracious host provides lavish hospitality. Under this imagery, David rejoices in the Lord's provision. According to the ancient law of hospitality, once a

traveler is received into the shepherd's tent, and especially once his host has spread food before him, he is guaranteed immunity from enemies who may be attempting to overtake him. No greater security or comfort could be obtained by a traveler in the ancient Near East than to be offered the hospitality of a home. It was understood that this was a provision of shelter and food, but even more, it was a guarantee of protection from harm. David realized that the Lord's loyal love would go with him everywhere throughout his entire life.

*Bottom Line: Our God is the Great Shepherd, therefore we can find great peace in His care.*

### **Questions:**

- How have you experienced the Lord's provision in your own life?
- In what specific ways does God provide peace and rest?
- What are your biggest causes of fear? In light of this psalm, how should you respond to these?

### **PRAY**

o Intercession means praying for others' spiritual and physical needs. God tells us in His Word to pray for others. If you desire to read some passages from Scripture about this, some are listed below.

### **Biblical Basis for Intercession:**

1 Corinthians 10:3-5; Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 6:18-21; 1 Timothy 2:1-8  
Take an opportunity for those gathered with you in worship to mention specific prayer needs of others. Pray for each one of these requests specifically.

- o Pray for the nation of Egypt
  - Christians are treated like second-class citizens. Pray for God to sustain believers as they face persecution.
  - Almost 14.2 million people live on less than \$1/day. Ask God to provide for them for His name's sake.
  - Pray for the church in Egypt to be strengthened in God's Word.
  - Pray the Gospel will be spread to all the 28 people groups in Egypt, all of which are considered unreached.

*Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk*

### **MEMORIZE**

- o Memorize Psalm 23.

## 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 picture of a sheep or a toy or stuffed sheep. Ask your child, "Do you know who takes care of sheep?" Explain to your child that a shepherd is the person who watches over sheep. Shepherds make sure the sheep are fed, safe and cared for everyday. The shepherd knows the sheep by name and the sheep trust him and follow him. God is like a shepherd and we are like His sheep. He loves us, watches over us, and cares for us just like the shepherd watches over his sheep. He knows us by name and we trust Him to provide for us everyday.

o The game under the "Children" section would also work well for preschoolers.

### Children (Grades 1-5)

o To illustrate the LORD as our Shepherd, play a game of 'Follow The Shepherd (Leader).'

o Have your child(ren) line up and follow behind you. Ask them to copy everything you do. Have fun with this—turn around, jump up and down, zigzag, tap the wall, tickle them, lay down and rest, pretend to eat, etc. Make sure they do everything you do.

o After playing this game for a few minutes, ask them these questions:

- Who was the Shepherd?
- Did you follow the Shepherd well?
- Did the Shepherd tell you everything you needed to do?
- Did the Shepherd ask you to do anything he didn't do himself?

o After these questions, you may want to summarize the truths you are trying to emphasize with your children. God desires to lead us like a Shepherd. We are His sheep (Ps. 100:3). As His sheep, we should follow and obey the LORD, our Shepherd. We can follow the LORD, our Shepherd, with complete trust. God wouldn't ask us to do anything He isn't willing to do Himself (Phil. 2:5-10).

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

o Lambs tend to find someone and follow them. They have no idea where they are being led, but they move from one leader to another and go wherever they are led. They are willing to follow whoever catches their attention. How are we sometimes like those lambs? What are some influences/influencers you are tempted to follow?

o What are some of the consequences of following a 'false shepherd', someone or something other than God?

o Why is it that God can call himself the Good or Great Shepherd? Why should we follow Him and His paths for us? How do we know we can trust his leadership?

# *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 Stay Connected to the Church?

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Now think back to the good old days. Think back to the days spent making mud pies or dreaming of your future wedding. Think back to those games of chase-around-the-playground, those slumber parties, and summer vacations with your “second family.” Though the memories are still there, it is likely that many of the relationships you had with those people have changed. Some have gotten stronger, while others have dwindled to next to nothing.

If he or she hasn’t already, your child will soon experience these same changes in his or her own relationships, and not just in human relationships. Your child’s relationship with the Bride of Christ—the church—will also undergo some hardships. School, sports, work, and friendships may all be used by Satan to lead your child (and maybe even you) away from the church. However, the list below outlines four things that will better prepare children to handle these ploys by Satan.

To combat Satan’s ploys and stay connected to church,

## **1. Kids need to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ**

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”*

*—2 Corinthians 5:17*

The reality is most of our churches today are populated with people who have tagged their faith to a person, an event, or even a church. However, faith in anything other than Jesus Christ is like a house built on the sand, waiting to be washed away. If your child has a relationship with a group of Christian friends, that’s great; but that is not enough to keep him or her tethered to the church. If you make your children attend church with you every time the doors open, once again, that is good and all, but a relationship to a schedule will not keep them connected. Your child can only become a new creation if he or she has a relationship with Jesus Christ. Without a relationship with Jesus Christ, it is impossible to have a true desire to be a part of God’s church.

## **2. Kids need to be equipped rather than entertained**

*“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”  
—Ephesians 4:11 – 12*

Too often, is the church more focused on keeping people comfortable and happy rather than equipped and enabled. Likewise, we often want to be entertained or catered to rather than challenged. The work of the church is not for the staff alone. God’s Word says that ministry is the work of the people. It is the responsibility of the staff to equip the people to do the work of the ministry. If your child is not equipped to be a part of the church, he or she will never be equipped to stay connected to the church when Satan throws out his traps. Your church staff is there not to replace you, but to come alongside you as you equip your child to be as much like Jesus as he or she can.

## **3. Kids need to have high, realistic expectations set for them**

“Well, they are out sowing their wild oats,” you may have heard this old saying about certain teenagers. The translation for this saying is that the teens are participating in activities such as underage drinking, pre-marital sex, or unwise decisions. Normally when that phrase is used, it is spoken in such a way that conveys that the speaker is not surprised that the teenager went off and did those things. In other words, the speaker suggests that the teenager was relatively expected to make those unwise decisions.

However, rarely do teenagers fall short of the expectations set upon them. It is uncommon to see a teenager who does not go out of his or her way to strive to meet set expectations. With this in mind, raise the bar spiritually for your children. Expect them to look like Jesus rather than the world. Expect them to be visible, engaged members in the church. Expect them to use their gifts for the advancement of the Kingdom.

## **4. Kids need to have parents who talk about Jesus**

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” —Proverbs 22:6*

*“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie*

*down, and when you rise up.” —Deuteronomy 6:7*

Think back to the last time you had a conversation about Jesus outside of the church. Now, think about the last time you had a conversation about Jesus inside the church.

When was the last time you talked with your child or your spouse about Jesus? ...Not just talked about the Sunday school lesson or about whether or not they liked the music or sermon—but about Jesus?

Do not be afraid to talk to your children about Jesus. You are the most influential person in their lives. We talk most often about the things that are most important to us, good or bad. If you claim that Jesus is important to you, then do not be timid in talking about Jesus with your spouse and your children. The more you talk about Jesus, the more likely your children will talk about Jesus. The more you talk about Jesus and the more your children see Jesus in you, the more they will want Jesus to be important to them.

Now that you understand some of the things your children must have in order for them to resist Satan’s traps to disconnect them from the church, consider these steps to further prepare your child to stay connected to the church.

### **1. Model connectivity to the church body**

Model what it means to be connected to the church. Be present at church. Make church a priority in your own life, your marriage, and your family. Center other activities (practices, study groups, etc.) around your church involvement. Do not see the church as interruption to your life but as a key part of it.

### **2. Get involved in Kingdom work**

Strive to be an active participant rather than a mere member. Get involved in God’s work that the church is doing. Strive to be a sponge that soaks up the teaching of God’s Word for the purpose of being “wrung out” into the life of another. Be active in engaging your neighbors with Jesus and inviting them to church. Pray earnestly that God might open doors for you, your child—maybe your entire family—to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth through the church.

### **3. Surround your child with other significant adults**

God has gifted you with your child. Yes, you are to be the primary discipler

of your child, but Scripture never said you are to do it alone. Research says that it takes seven significant adult relationships (not including mom and dad) to affect spiritual change in the life of a teenager. Be intentional in surrounding your child with other adults within the church who will significantly invest in your child spiritually.

#### **4. Own the church**

Take the church personally. Rejoice when new believers come to Christ. Take responsibility when the church misses an opportunity to impact the community. Take the blame as a vital member of the church rather than shifting it to someone else. Use personal statements like “my church...” and “our church...” to help remind your child of the importance and privilege of being a part of a 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:

## *Helping Your Family Recognize Their Mission Field*

Every person on the planet has four sets of relationships. We all have family members (biological relationships), neighbors (geographical relationships), workmates or classmates (vocational relationships), and friends (volitional relationships). Often, when we think of being “missionaries” or fulfilling the Great Commission, we think of serving those less fortunate in our community or traveling a long distance to show kindness to and share with others who may not have the same level of access to the Gospel as we do in our culture. Yet, recognizing my mission field is actually a much more simple (and intimate) process.

### **What does Jesus say about knowing my mission field?**

In a way, Jesus teaches clearly His plan for recognizing our personal mission field by explaining the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told the disciples that the empowerment that comes through this Spirit would be given to them for a specific reason: to be his “witnesses” in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This command to be “witnesses” was given not only to these select few, but also by all of His disciples by extension – including us.

By commanding us to be His witnesses “in Jerusalem,” He is telling us more than just where to go; He is telling us to whom we should go! The geographic idea is to be a witness to those living nearby, but the cultural idea behind His command is that we are to share with anyone we meet who may be “like us.” Someone who is “like us” usually means a person that is from the same part of the world as me, speaks the same language I speak, and has many of the same customs I have. This is where those four sets of relationships come into play. Recognizing my mission field means first of all knowing and caring about the spiritual condition of many of my family members, neighbors, colleagues, and friends.

### **Is that all? Where else might I have a mission field?**

Jesus also said to be His witnesses in Judea and Samaria. What did He mean by that? This refers to people who are living in areas further away from us, but with whom we have some degree of familiarity and connection.

People that are in “my Judea” may live in the same city, state, or country as me, and even speak the same language I speak, but have customs and traditions that are very different from mine. An example may be people from different ethnic groups in my city and state. Our geography and language may be the same, but our values and worldviews are very different. What about Samaria? Those who are in “my Samaria” may share the same city, state, or country as me, but communicate in different languages and have an entirely different set of values, customs, and assumptions about the world. An example may be Native Americans residing on a protected reservation in my state or country, but whose language, worldview, customs, and culture are very different than mine.

The graph below shows the differences of this Acts 1:8 command.



<b>Acts 1:8 Area</b>	<b>Our Geography</b>	<b>Our Language</b>	<b>Our Culture</b>
Jerusalem	Same	Same	Same
Judea	Same	Same	Different
Samaria	Same	Different	Different
Ends of Earth	Different	Different	Different



### **Does that mean I do not need to be concerned with those living far away?**

Jesus was very clear that people living in near and far-away countries, communicating in different languages, and possessing an entirely different culture are also in my mission field. He even told the disciples to “make disciples of all nations” before He ascended back into heaven. In fact, 96% of the world’s population that does not know Jesus lives outside the borders of the United States. This is why He tells us to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth! His desire is that all people come to know Him as Lord and Savior, which includes everyone from Little Rock to Las Vegas; from Lima to Liberia; and from London to Lebanon. To truly have the heart of God, you must have more than just a heart for your neighbor, but also a heart for the nations.

### **So what does Jesus want me to do?**

A man by the name of William Carey said, “to know the will of God, all you

need is a Bible and a map.” Right now, as you are reading this devotion, 9 out of 10 people on the planet have no relationship with Jesus and have never experienced His forgiveness, grace, and love. He has placed your mission field all around you and has told you to be witnesses to all people and make disciples of all nations.

### Start Now, Here is how...

The good news is this: you can get started right away!

1. Take a moment and write down the names of 10 of your closest family members, neighbors, workmates, classmates, and friends.
2. Put a small cross next to the names of those who already have a relationship with Jesus.
3. Draw a circle around the names of those who do not, as far as you know, have a relationship with Him.
4. Pray for each one by name and ask the Lord to give you the courage to bring these people one step closer to Him in the next few weeks. You can do so by showing genuine friendship and concern. The Lord will use you to make a difference in people’s lives if you will allow Him to do so – one smile, one hug, and one conversation at a time.



**“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” -Acts 1:8**

**H**  **ME**  
*22.6*