



AGE 8

The Trunk Years



HOME
22.6

AGE 8

A Snapshot of Life

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

At 8 years of age, your child

- Will test limits.
- Defines him or herself based on attributes or achievements.
- Places high importance on friendships and may have very close friends.
- Is becoming less dependent on you as a parent and more dependent on peers.
- Is moving out of the egocentric stage and is beginning to consider others.
- Asks big spiritual questions and tends to have big ideas.
- Wants to know the reasons for things.
- May not be interested in family table conversations; wants to get to other business.
- Has more secrets.

Parenting Tip

As your child begins to ask big spiritual and relational questions, this is your time to establish that you, as the parent, are the person to come to for information and Truth. Answer all questions truthfully and clearly, even the questions that make your squirm. If you do not know the answer, be honest with your child; find out the answer, and get back to him or her. If you prove to answer honestly and provide the information your child is looking for, he or she will continue to come back to you through the preteen and teen years.

Parent Dedication

What is Parent Dedication?

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



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



Parenting Tool: *Forgiveness*

At 8-years-old, kids are moving out of the egocentric stage and are beginning to consider others. They begin to place a high importance on friendships and may begin developing very close friendships. This is an opportune time to focus on teaching forgiveness.

Forgiveness requires children to set their pride aside and lower their defenses. Forgiveness can be a challenge for kids this age, even for an offense that seems as trivial as name-calling. As parents, we have to teach our children forgiveness. We can go straight to the Word for guidance and direction. Who better for our kids to learn a lesson in forgiveness from than God himself? 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Use this verse to remind your kids that in the same way that Jesus forgave our sins though we didn't deserve it, we can learn to forgive others with God's help. You can help teach your children forgiveness by talking through the following questions and learning from Jesus' example of forgiveness:

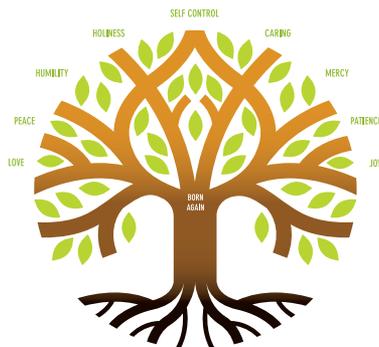
- **Who should we forgive?** We should forgive anyone who hurts us. Explain to your kids how we are encouraged by Scripture to forgive others by following the Lord's example. The story of Jesus hanging on the cross, forgiving those around Him is a great story to read through with your children (you can find this story in Luke 23). If Jesus could forgive those who had hurt Him so deeply, then can't we forgive the one who pushed us on the playground last week or called us a name?
- **How many times should we forgive?** "Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'"

Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven,'" says Matthew 18:21–22. Explain to your child that forgiveness is a reoccurring action in our lifetime. We will have to forgive minor and major offenses from strangers as well as those closest to us throughout our lives. If a child can learn forgiveness at a young age, he or she will be more likely to live a life full of healthy relationships.

• **What if we choose not to forgive?** Children also need to know the consequences of choosing not to forgive someone. They need to be made aware of the damage their unforgiveness can do, not only to their relationship with the offender, but also with God. Be sure to explain how unforgiveness directly affects our relationship with God. As we hold on to anger and hurt, those heavy emotions make it difficult for us to feel the Holy Spirit's nudges and hear God's voice in our lives. Unforgiveness leads to bitterness, and bitterness can take a toll on the physical body as well as emotional state. Explain and model how unforgiveness is not from God. Reflect on Ephesians 4:32, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

Show your child through your own life how wonderful forgiving one another can be. If you have a small spat with your spouse or one of your children, show your children how when you forgive, it has a very liberating effect, mending hurts and bringing you closer to the other person.

All offenses are not the same, and some are much harder to forgive than others. Learning to forgive is an ongoing lesson for children and adults, but teaching children the importance of forgiveness while they are young will set them on the right path and provide a foundation of teaching opportunities and healthy relationships in the future.



1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Use this verse to remind your kids that in the same way that Jesus forgave our sins though we didn't deserve it, we can learn to forgive others with God's help.

Blessing Your Children

How do I bless my children?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ways to Bless Your Child

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

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”
— 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

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

1. Words of love and acceptance

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

2. Acknowledgement of a special future

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

3. Reaffirmation of your commitment

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

4. Give a Written Blessing

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

5. One-on-one time

Plan one-on-one time with your child, in which you can include the five

elements of blessing. Some suggestions for one-on-one time with your 8-year-old include:

- Having a chat at a coffee shop
- Having a picnic in the park
- Flying a kite
- Taking him or her lunch at school
- Lying down and gazing at the stars
- Going for a drive, cranking up the music your child likes, and singing it loud; call it a carty (car-party)
- Getting all dressed up and going out to a fancy dinner
- Going miniature golfing
- Visiting the zoo
- Skipping rocks along a lake

What's a Blessing Box?

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

Family Time

What is Family Time?

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

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

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

What are the benefits of family worship?

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

What should we do during family worship?

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

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

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

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

Praise—Worship God for who He is.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Frequently Asked Questions About Family Worship

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

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

2. What about a single parent family?

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

3. What about children?

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



A Family Time from Numbers 13

READ

o As the Israelites came closer to the Promised Land, they sent a group of spies ahead of them to bring a report back about the land they were about to enter.

o Numbers 13:25-14:38

o We learn many lessons through this story, each of them teaching valuable truths about God, man, and, ultimately, our need for Christ. We see the people of God who have witnessed so many miraculous deeds yet still fail to trust in God. We see bold and courageous servants of God, like Caleb and Joshua, who trusted in God completely and wanted to go into the Promised Land. We see Moses interceding on behalf of the children of Israel, begging God to not deal too harshly with them. In the end, we see both the justice and faithfulness of God—punishing those who didn't trust in His plans and blessing those who did trust Him.

The Bottom Line: As God's people, we are faced with the choice of trusting Him each day, and He beckons us to put courageous faith in Him.

Questions:

- Do you believe that God dealt mercifully with the Israelites?
- Why do you think it was hard for them to follow God's direction?
- Why did God punish the leaders of Israel more harshly than the rest?
- Can you think of times in your life when it has been difficult to trust God?
- How does this text point to and show us our need for Christ?

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. If you desire to read some passages from scripture about this,

some are 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 Bhutan

- Ask God to soften the hearts of the King of Bhutan and the other governmental leaders.
- Pray those who travel to other countries will come to love Jesus and bring the Gospel back to their home.
- Ask God to strengthen the few believers in Bhutan and to build up the church for His name's sake.
- Pray for God to show the people of Bhutan their need for Christ.

Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk

MEMORIZE

o Numbers 6:24-26 "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

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 blindfold and a few objects placed around the room. (Example: shoes or toys)

o Tell your child we are learning how God wants us to trust Him even when we don't know what is going to happen. Trusting God means obeying God and believing that He will take care of us. Say, "I'm going to put this blindfold over your eyes and we are going to take a walk together around the room. I will hold your hand and guide you so you will know where to go and what to do. Do you believe and trust that I will watch out for you? Now

let's try it."

o Place the blindfold on your child and guide them around the room. When you come to an obstacle, like the pair of shoes, have your child stop and tell them, "There's a pair of shoes in front of you. You will need to step over the shoes so that you won't trip and fall!" Repeat this process with the other objects.

o When you are finished, remove the blindfold and ask your child, "Did you follow my instructions and step over the objects? Did you fall down? No, because I helped you and you followed my directions. You trusted me to help you move around the room even though you couldn't see where you were going!" God wants us to trust Him, too. God wants us to follow Him and His rules. Just like I showed you how to move around the room, God will always show you the right way. We can always trust God!

Children (Grades 1-5)

o For this activity you will need to create a simple obstacle course in your living room. The obstacle course should be built in such a way that your blindfolded child may walk through it from end to end, but would need step-by-step guidance on your part to pass through without running into anything. Slide couches over, bring in kitchen chairs, or anything else readily available which can be safely used to construct the obstacle course.

o Once the course has been set up, select one of your children to walk through. Place a blindfold on your child and guide them to the start of the course. Now tell your child that you will no longer be physically guiding them. Stand in a place where you can see the entire course and call out instructions to your child to guide them safely through the course. Begin leading them by calling out instructions such as "take one step forward," "turn to your right," etc.

o Once your child makes it through the entire course safely, have them remove the blindfold. Ask how they were able to make it through the obstacle course when they could not see anything. (By listening to and obeying your instruction.) Explain that although they could not see, you could see and you knew exactly what steps they needed to take in order for them to complete their task successfully. Ask your child what would have happened if they had not listened to your voice while navigating the obstacle course. (Although it was difficult to navigate the obstacle course, it would have been even more difficult without your guidance.)

o Lead your child to understand that just as you saw the big picture and all of your instruction was for their good, so is God's instruction to us. It may have been scary not being able to see in the obstacle course, but all of your guidance was for their good. We are called to trust God each day, placing courageous faith in Him. God's people in Numbers 13-14 failed to place their trust in God, even though He had performed many wonderful miraculous deeds in front of them. Next time you are faced with a choice to trust God or not, remember just as mom and dad knew best in the obstacle course, so God always knows best. He knows all things, He loves His people deeply, and He is altogether wise and good and true! Because God is mighty and loving, His people are able to place radical, courageous faith in Him.

Students (Grades 6-12)

- o Read Numbers 14:8-10 again. Notice how Joshua and Caleb go against the crowd and say they can conquer the land because the Lord is with them. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to go against the crowd, even if it risked your friends' criticism?
- o Is there a difference between the faith that most Christians live by and the courageous faith exhibited by Joshua and Caleb? How so?
- o Which character in the story do you best identify with? Discuss. (Moses, Joshua and Caleb, the 10 spies, the grumbling Israelites)

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.

Why Should My 8-Year-Old Attend Sunday School?

Although there is nothing more important than parents' influence in their child's spiritual life, the relationships your child builds in Sunday school with his or her teachers and peers are also very important. Below are ten reasons why your child should attend Sunday school:

1. Age-targeted teaching: Where else can your kids get biblical instruction that meets them at their developmental level? Sunday school provides a place of spiritual growth designed to meet your child at his or her individual grade level.

2. Friendship: In Sunday school, your children will build positive friendships with their peers as they discover God's Word together. These Sunday school friends will become a great support and encouragement to your children as they grow in their faith together throughout their preteen and teen years.

3. Fun: Sunday school is not Disney Land, but teachers work hard to teach the Bible in ways that are relevant and fun for kids.

4. Spiritual mentors: A dedicated teacher can be a Christian role model who both supports your work as a parent and helps inspire the faith of your child.

5. Systematic Bible teaching: The curriculum of Immanuel Baptist Church is designed to give a broad foundation, so children will understand how all the parts of Scripture point to Christ and how it applies to their lives.

6. Prayer support from teachers: Teachers at Immanuel Baptist Church consistently pray for your child's faith to grow. Coming to Sunday school gives another occasion for God to answer those requests.

7. Exposure to Christian teaching: If you're already coming for worship, just come a little earlier or stay a little later. Did you know that simple change will equal over 600 hours of additional Christian teaching before your child graduates? That's a big reward for a small investment!

8. The right message: Making Sunday school a priority shows your kids that God's Word really does matter more than sleep, the lake, sports, dance, etc.

9. Best gift ever: There's absolutely nothing more valuable than your child's relationship with Jesus. Bringing your children to Sunday school, in addition to discipleship at home, will equip your children to grow in God's Word and in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Is the Church Relevant Today?

Does the 1st century church meet the needs of man today?

To answer this question, we must ask and answer some other pertinent questions (when we mention “church,” think of The Church, all people who trust and follow Jesus, not just the congregation you attend).

Has man changed?

Is modern man any different from ancient man? Let us compare the two. For one thing, man’s nature is always the same. His physical nature is unaltered. He is made of the same material and has the same physical needs as the man in Jesus’ day, the same hungers, thirsts, and impulses. No one is asking for new air or new sunshine today. Man’s moral and spiritual nature is unchanged. He has the same desires, inclinations, and tendencies. If the primitive church met the needs of primitive man, who had the same nature as modern man, will not church meet man’s same needs today?

Has the world changed?

Are we living in a different world than the people of ancient times? It may look different, but the world is the same at heart. Men continue to steal and kill for gain. The same motive that moved the ancient world still motivates the present world. It is still true that “the love of money is the root of all [kinds of] evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). There is no evil that does not spring from covetousness or greed. Indeed, the world is still the same.

Has the nature of sin changed?

Modern man has invented no new sins. Drunkenness goes back to the days of Noah. Murder reared its ugly head in the twilight of time when Cain killed Abel. The eternal triangle with its emphasis on sex is not just a phenomenon of present day politics; it appeared in the palace of the beloved King David. Sin, which has plagued man from the dawn of creation, has never changed. If the Christian religion dealt successfully with unchangeable sin 2,000 years ago, it will do the same today.

Has the penalty for sin changed?

Paul declared in Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Death, or eternal separation from the presence of God, is still the penalty for man’s sins. If the church could offer the solution for man’s need for God in New Testament times, can’t the church still do so today?

Has man's helplessness to overcome sin changed?

After the Industrial Revolution, many thinkers around the world predicted the introduction of a golden age, in which there would be no crime, poverty, panic, depression, or wars. History reveals that the "golden age" never occurred. These problems not only exist in our highly enlightened and cultured world, but they have increased in intensity. Modern man's basic needs are the same as those of ancient man. Again, if the church of the first century could help man find the solution to overcome sin, isn't the church still able to do that today?

So, what is man's purpose?

God said, "Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him" (Isaiah 43:7). Man was made for the glory, praise, honor, and worship of God. The New Testament reveals that God's purpose is fulfilled in the church. In Ephesians 1:7-12, Paul declares that "in Christ" God "purposed" that "we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ." To be "in Christ" is to be in His church. Peter tells the church, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Our purpose, then, is to express the nature and life of God in this world through praise and glorification of His name. This is the highest and holiest purpose for life. The church supplies our true purpose.

Conclusion: is the church relevant today?

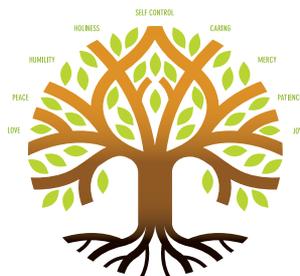
Therefore, because all these things are unchanged, we conclude that the church is relevant to man. In the body of Christ we can be shaped and molded into the kind of people God wants us to be. When we enter the church, by choosing to trust and follow Jesus, our blackened past is cleansed in the precious blood of Christ and we remain clean as long as we walk "in the light" (1 John 1:7). In the church, a new life emerges, a life with real purpose. Each day brings to us an exciting adventure. In the church, we experience a true sense of belonging in a great fellowship with the best of heaven and earth.

Since the above is true, why do we ask, "Is the church relevant today?" Could it be that man is simply not relating to God's way? How do you make water relevant to man? You drink it. How do you make food relevant to man? You eat it. How do you make Jesus relevant to man? You accept Him, submit to Him, and follow Him. How do you make the church relevant to man? You accept it exactly as Christ and His apostles established it and become a vital and active member of it.

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.



Philippians 4:6–7 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Parenting Tools:

Dealing with Disappointment

Discipling your child as they face disappointments in life can be a challenge, but as Romans 5:3-5 reminds us, "...but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." In other words, our faith in God's love gives us deliverance from disappointment!

Whether it's a field trip that gets rained out or the event in which your child is not invited to a classmate's party, life is full of disappointments, great and small. As much as we'd like to spare our kids from letdowns, we can't—and that's a good thing. "When children learn at an early age that they have the tools to get over a disappointing situation, they'll be able to rely on that throughout childhood and even as adults," says Robert Brooks, PhD and co-author of *Raising Resilient Children*. "If you bend over backwards to shield them from disappointment, you're keeping them from developing some important skills."

These disappointing moments in your children's lives provide the right time for you to point them to their Heavenly Father. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Disappointments in life are a great opportunity for us to teach our children to lift their burdens to the Lord, be thankful for all the good we have in our lives, and not focus on our disappointment. Then, the peace of God is our promise. Like many other things in life, our children must practice this with our leadership and guidance.

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