

## Discipleship Pointers for Different Ages/Seasons

### **Babies (0-1 years old)**

Cognitive Level: Developing basic physical, emotional, mental skills .

Discipleship Pointers:

- **Pray for & over your child.**

Pray for their future salvation, obedience to the Lord, their future marriage and family, to be used by God as a missionary wherever God sends them.

- **Start reading the Bible (& other books) to them.**

Knowing how this helps you discipline this routine and helps them at the cognitive level at this age.

- **Continue a routine of church attendance with them.**

They will start being around their future Christian community/friends/youth group and getting you adjusted to church life as a family.

### **Toddlers (2-3 years old)**

Cognitive Level: Big emotional development, starting to say words & talk, everything they have learned/experienced so far will develop into their THINKING. Starting to understand big, important concepts like time, opposites (ex. Big/small, day/night, good/bad) & can even start understand general spiritual concepts. Discipline really starts taking place.

Discipleship Pointers:

- **Start a weekly family devotion time.**

- This can include an age appropriate Bible reading. I use "My First Hands-On Bible" It goes through bible stories with something interactive for them to do that has to do with the story every few paragraphs and it always ends with a few questions, a connection from the story to Jesus and a quick prayer. My twins LOVE it. I wish I knew about it when Liam & Olivia was their age.

- After you can pick out a song or two that you all can sing and dance to. We do kids bible songs on youtube like "Jesus loves me this I know", "Jesus loves the little children" , "Go tell it on the mountain", RIZERS scripture songs/videos, etc.,

- **Pray over them at night when tucking them in bed.**

Pray specific things for them each night that they know God wants in their life. Salvation, Following God no matter what, If His will a future marriage and family that will keep Jesus at the center.

- **Starting to spend intentional one on one time with each of your children.**

This can be once a week or once a month. This is a discipline you'll want to start so it can develop into something God can really use in a powerful way later.

### **Pre-K (4-5 years old)**

Cognitive Level: Now your child is starting to really understand and APPLY the things they are learning. They are building friendships with other kids/siblings, asking lots of questions and can start to apply the spiritual things they are learning and even the Gospel message. Starting to understand the consequences from discipline.

Discipleship Pointers:

- **Continue / Start weekly Family Devotion Time**

They are really starting to comprehend and understand God's Word and the songs you are singing at this time. I recommend starting Jesus Storybook Bible for the devotion time at this age. They love stories/reading at this age and it's one of the absolute best, most well-written, Jesus pointing Bibles for this age (and beyond). Ask questions about the story and see how they can apply certain things. At this age, I let them pick out a worship song and I'll pick out a worship song to all sing. We all pray as well instead of just the one leading it. I also use the Voice of Martyrs app so they can start praying for Christians in other countries and for the Gospel to go out in hard to reach places.

- **Start Memorizing Scripture / Catechisms**

This can be ones they're being encouraged to memorize at church or from you. Teach them how God tells us we're to store His word in our hearts and how He can use it at all times in our life. As they start learning catechisms, they are starting to understand big concepts about Christianity for God to use and apply later as they start getting plugged into church and reading God's Word for themselves. I recommend the app "New City Catechisms". This can even be a part of your weekly devotion time.

- **Use intentional one on one time to start sharing the Gospel with them.**

Use this time to make memories, show your love for them and how important they are to you. Build into their value and worth in your eyes and most importantly God's. Ask how you can pray for them, what they love/don't like about certain things. Get as deep as possible but have fun. This is daddy-daughter dates, "man-time" for me and my children. However, the most important part is really getting them to know and understand the Gospel message. Share it. Use what they say in these convos to point out how we're sinners and how Jesus saves us, specifically mentioning the Cross, the resurrection and repentance & faith. I use the ABC's to help them remember the Gospel at this age but always make sure they know the "C" is not just "Confession" but repentance as well.

- **Show them how the family PRIORITIZES church.**

We have an absolutely amazing children ministry and use what I believe one of the best curriculums around. Start asking them what they learned. Value what they bring home. Questions are included in many of the parent worksheets that they bring home. Show them how important church is. Ask them about friends or people they maybe are sad over at church. Always mention church the day before, maybe picking out clothes, mentioning it in your prayers. Show them that the place where other Christians gather to hear God's Word, to worship all united as one is not only important but a necessity and how much you love it and look forward to it. This is your kids future youth group. They will most likely come to know Christ here or at home. Make it a big part of the week on Sundays and Wednesdays. One of the greatest joys as a dad is how much my kids love church. Seriously. I know, sadly that may not last, but I know for many where it didn't last, there was a good chance that it was never intentionally prioritized and valued from the beginning. Instead they viewed their parents just did it as a routine. Create a culture within your home where it's not a check off the list but a privilege in this country and a desire/joy.

### **Elementary (6-12 years old)**

Cognitive Level: This age group is referred as the concrete operational period. It's when children are beginning to apply logic and reason to concrete events. They also are starting to question concrete things they learned in the past. They are starting to reason more accurately. Problem solving has increased. They can start to understand different viewpoints. They can read, listen, view and retain. Big emotions come out in this stage and not only is receiving the Gospel crucial but true discipleship starts here.

Discipleship Pointers:

- **Continue Weekly Family Devotion Time.**

At this time (depending on the different age levels of children involved) we're going through a Bible story in a Scripture translation they can be able to read on their own. I like NLT for this age level. You can now find curriculum or our church can help you with a scope & sequence. I try to align with what I'll be preaching on on Sunday morning or something I want them to learn from the Bible. I let my older kids help lead in it, helping read, and again all picking out our own worship songs. Parents sing! Even if it's cheesy church songs. Let them hear you sing loud praises to Jesus. What a great model that can be for church later. I do all of the same stuff but ask a little tougher application questions to older kids. Continue memorization of Scripture/Catechisms.

- **Designate “Personal Devotion” time for them.**

Help them start reading the Bible for themselves. Even if it's not an every day thing but start them with 5-10 mins where they can read the Bible for themselves. If you use the intentional “one-on-one” time you started and do it with them at first they will look at it as special. You can do it first thing they wake up, at breakfast, before bed, during siblings nap, doesn't matter. Just instill a designated time they start reading the Bible and make sure they can know that you can ask them anything. There's good kids devotions at Lifeway. My oldest daughter reads a few chapters of NLT when she goes to bed and a princess devotional. My son is starting the Action Comic Bible.

- **Start bringing them to “Life Stuff” .**

You don't have to take them to EVERYTHING. But every once in a while, let them sit on a discipleship you have, let them help you with grocery shopping, work on the car, etc. Really start letting them live life with you. Let them see what you do, how you interact with others, and how your faith is not separate from church or what you do with them and how you love that they are a part of your life.

- **Build Relationships with your child's CPC Church Leaders.**

Let them be a co-partner in discipleship by sharing concerns or encouragement with them. They can champion and instill things you're trying to teach at home. This can start something with them they'll need for future discipleship as teens with leaders co-partnering with you in discipleship.

- **Lead your family ON MISSION.**

Start really encouraging your kids to bring friends to church and pray for lost friends at school. Have those friends over as you and your child is praying for them. Create a culture within your home where the whole family is thinking how can we share what have in your Jesus, with others. Exemplify this talking to your spouse and them about who you are reaching but also use their sports, hobbies and school as an opportunity to share Jesus with people and invite them to church. Take advantage of special church events and days with this.

- **If married, show them how you much you love/value your spouse.**

Part of discipleship is being a witness to what a future Christ-centered marriage should look like for them in the future and what to look for in Jesus loving spouse. Know marriage or family is a perfect family but show them what repentance looks like and sacrificial love/biblical submission looks like. And they really start connecting dots, noticing things at this age. This is where they start learning about other child's parents' divorces, start worrying when their parents are fighting, etc. Show them why Jesus created marriage and family in the first place and give them HOPE in this area for the future!