

DISCIPLING YOUR KIDS
Raising Champions for Christ – Week 3
By Andy Manning
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The title of this sermon is “Discipling Your Kids.”

This is week 3 of our sermon series called “Raising Champions for Christ.”

The big idea of this sermon series is that if we raise our kids to succeed in athletics, academics, or the arts, but they go to hell, then we have failed them. We must train our kids first and foremost to be a spiritual success.

In week 1 we learned the purpose of parenting: Your purpose as a parent is to train your child to live for the glory of God and the salvation of men.

In week 2 we learned about snatching our children from the fire. We talked about how to lead our children to become Christians; to accept Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

Today we are going to learn about discipling your kids.

The goal is not merely to get our kids to heaven, but to raise them to live for God all of their lives; to serve God; to be useful and fruitful for God; to join the army of God and make a difference for Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:4 “Fathers, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Notice the parent’s Biblical mandate. Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Let me point **FOUR COMMANDS FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS.**

ONE: DO NOT PUSH YOUR KIDS AWAY FROM CHRIST.

“Don’t stir up anger in your children.”

Do not unjustly anger or frustrate or aggravate or discourage your children.

Why? Because if you call yourself a Christian and then stir up anger in your children, they are less likely to adopt the faith.

Do not do anything that would distract your kids from Jesus; anything that would make Jesus less appealing to them.

You are commanded to be salt to your kids. Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth.... (Mt 5:13).” What does salt do? It makes people thirsty. Your job is to make your kids thirsty for Jesus. Do not do anything to make Jesus taste bad to your kids.

TWO: BRING YOUR KIDS UP IN THE TRAINING OF THE LORD.

Sometimes this word is translated “discipline.” The idea is to teach them how to live for the Lord. The focus is on their behavior and attitude. Train them how to behave like fully-devoted Christ-followers.

Again, the goal is not merely your child’s salvation, but your child’s spiritual maturity. The goal is to raise your child to be a fully-devoted, fully-engaged soldier for Jesus Christ.

THREE: BRING YOUR KIDS UP IN THE INSTRUCTION OF THE LORD.

Teach them what to believe as fully-devoted Christians. Teach them the Bible. Teach them how to think Biblically. How to see all of life from a Biblical worldview. Teach them the Bible stories. The Bible doctrines. Teach them not only what to believe, but why they should believe it.

The focus here is on your child’s beliefs and opinions and convictions.

FOUR: TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE DISCIPLESHIP OF YOUR CHILDREN.

The command here is directed at the parents. It says, “Fathers...”

It does not mean that mothers do not have to disciple their kids, just as it does not mean that it is permissible for mothers to stir up anger in their children.

It says “Fathers” because they are the leaders of the family, and the mothers are to follow their leadership.

It also likely says “Fathers” because fathers are prone to delegate all of the child-rearing duties to mothers, when God would have fathers to be directly involved in the discipleship of their children.

The idea here is that parents must disciple their kids. It is fine to get the assistance of the church and the Christian school, but you must not delegate your role as spiritual coach. You must take an active part. You must personally disciple them. You must personally teach them.

But Christian parents in America are not doing a good job at discipling their kids. In fact, they are failing miserably. A study by Barna Research found that 61 percent of kids who attended church during their teen years are spiritually disengaged in college. They no longer read their Bible, pray, or go to church.

To spell this out for you, more than 6 out of 10 “Christian” kids leave the faith after high school.

This means that if you have two children, then one of them will leave the faith. If you have three children, then two of them will leave the faith. If you only have one child, then there’s a 61-percent chance that they will leave the faith.

Most Christian parents do not understand how serious this is. Imagine if 60 percent of high school graduates did not know how to read. The president would declare a state of emergency and Congress would pass a new trillion-dollar education bill.

But sixty-one percent of Christian kids are leaving the faith after high school, and we just go on with business as usual. I hope you can agree with me that 60 percent is unacceptable. I have six children. It is unacceptable to me that according the statistics, four of them will leave the faith after high school.

And I'm only talking about leaving the faith.

Of the one-third who continue in the church, how many of them are effective soldiers for Jesus Christ?

How many of them are making a difference for Christ?

The goal is not just that our kids will not leave the church, but that they will grow up to live for the glory of God and the salvation of men.

So let's learn how to disciple our kids.

WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Some of you may be unfamiliar with the term "discipleship."

In the Bible followers of Jesus were called disciples. A disciple is a follower and learner of Jesus.

Discipleship is training your children to be fully-devoted disciples of Jesus.

Think about Jesus' twelve disciples. Jesus chose twelve men to be with Him every waking moment for three years. Why? To train them to carry on His mission. That's discipleship.

To disciple your kids is to make every effort and seize every opportunity to train your children to carry on the mission of Jesus for the rest of their lives.

Jesus has called all of us to the task of discipleship – making disciples.

Listen to His final words to His followers right before His ascension. This is called the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19-20 “19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

THREE GOALS OF HOME DISCIPLESHIP

I like to call the task of discipling your kids “home discipleship,” because you are discipling your kids at home rather than dropping them off to be disciplined by someone else.

What are the goals of home discipleship? Let’s get specific about what we need to accomplish in the discipleship of our children.

ONE: WORSHIPING CHRIST.

The first goal of discipleship is to train them to make church participation a priority.

Every week you bring your children to church. But will they continue to participate in church when they grow up and you can’t force them to come anymore? That’s the goal.

The goal is that they would choose to participate in church for the rest of their lives. That they would feel a deep conviction that they are supposed to participate in church; that they are commanded to participate in church; that they need to participate in church; that participating in church is good for them.

Notice that I’m using the word “participation” rather than “attendance.” The goal is not to train your kids to attend church, but to participate in church. To be active, committed, fully-functioning members of the church. To be weekly

attenders, not just once a month, or twice a year. To be tithers, not just tippers. To be volunteers and contributors, not just consumers. To be leaders in the church, not just spectators.

Why is church participation so important? **Because your kids need it, and they are needed.** That's what your children must understand.

On the one hand, we need church. We cannot be healthy Christians without active church participation. **Hebrews 10:24-25** "24 And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works, 25 not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

Trying to be a successful Christian without church participation is like Drew Brees trying to win a football game without the rest of his team. Christianity is a team sport.

If church is not a priority in your child's life, then God will not be a priority in their life.

We need church participation just as a plant needs regular water and sunlight. We cannot be healthy and grow without it.

On the other hand, the church needs us. Each of us is needed.

God has ordained that every Christian has an essential role, an important job to perform in the life of the church.

Every member is called to be a minister – to serve in the church in some way.

The Bible compares the church to a body. The church is the body of Christ. Just as each body part must do its job for the body to function at the highest level. Every Christian must fulfill their role in the church for it to be fully effective at its mission.

TWO: WALKING WITH CHRIST.

The second goal of home discipleship is to train your kids to have an intimate, passionate relationship with Jesus Christ. To train them to become mature Christians.

This is how the Bible describes Noah. “Noah walked with God (Gen 6:9).”

What is spiritual maturity? Becoming like Christ, loving God and others more and more.

First, your goal is to train your kids to become like Christ. Ephesians 5:1

“Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children.”

Train them to become like Christ in their character – how they feel, their conduct – how they behave, and their convictions – what they believe.

Second, your goal is to train them to love God. Jesus said that the greatest commandment in the Bible is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk 12:30). Your goal is to train your children not just to know about God, not just to believe in God, but to love God. To have a passionate, intimate relationship with Him.

Third, your goal is to train your kids to love others. This is the second most important command in the Bible. Love your neighbor as yourself (Mk 12:31). Train your kids to love people with their words, their attitude, and their actions.

THREE: WORKING FOR CHRIST.

Train your kids to live for the salvation of men. To devote their lives to God’s service.

2 Timothy 2:21 (ERV) “The Lord wants to use you for special purposes.” God wants to use your child for His glory.

2 Corinthians 5:15 “And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised.” Christ died for your children so that they would live for Him, not just believe in Him.

Romans 12:11 (NLT) Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.” God has called your children to serve Him. Many Christians are of the opinion that the pastor serves God, and they just watch. God has called all Christians to serve Him every waking moment of their lives.

1 Corinthians 15:58 “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

The goal of home discipleship is to train your children to excel in the Lord’s work. To be really good, really effective, really fruitful as they serve the Lord.

This doesn’t mean that your kids need to grow up to be in full-time ministry. Every Christian is called to serve God every waking moment of their lives.

How? First, God wants your children to serve Him **by contributing to the church**. Second, God wants your children to serve Him **by meeting the needs of other church members**. Third, God wants your children to serve Him **by being a witness**. Your children need to learn how to share their faith, and how to defend the faith – how to answer the questions of skeptics. Fourth, God wants your children to serve Him **by teaching their own children about God**. Your goal must be multi-generational faithfulness; that your kids will be committed to discipling their kids when they grow up.

These are the three goals of home discipleship: To raise adults who are worshipping Christ, walking with Christ, and working for Christ. Now let’s talk about how.

THE THREE LEGS OF HOME DISCIPLESHIP

Think of home discipleship as a three-legged stool. For the stool to stand upright and support any weight, it needs all three legs, and all three legs have to be strong. All three of these aspects of home discipleship are essential to effectively disciple your kids.

ONE: SET AN EXAMPLE. You must practice what you preach; you must walk your talk.

I once heard someone say, “I can’t hear a word you are saying because your actions are speaking too loud.”

Actions speak louder than words. If your works do not back up your words, then your mouth becomes mute. In fact, hypocrisy is one of the ways to stir up anger in your children and push them away from Christ.

To disciple your kids, you need to earn their trust. You must be believable. Nothing destroys trust more than hypocrisy.

To disciple your kids, you need to earn their respect. You need to be someone that they want to follow; that they want to please; that they want to learn from. Nothing destroys respect more than hypocrisy.

To disciple someone is to pass on the faith to them. But you cannot pass on what you do not possess. You cannot give away what you do not have.

Peter instructed pastors to set an example. **1 Peter 5:2-3** “2 Shepherd God’s flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but willingly, as God would have you; not out of greed for money but eagerly; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

In other words, the Bible strongly emphasizes to pastors that if you want to effectively disciple your congregation, you must not only teach them, but set an example for them. And it is the same with discipling your kids. You must set an example for them.

Setting an example is not just about keeping your kid's respect. It is also the best teaching method. Christianity is more caught than taught. Your children need more than a lesson to hear; they need a life to see. They need more than an explanation; they need a demonstration.

You must set the example of the kind of Christian you want your children to be. If you want them to be worshiping Christ, walking with Christ, and working for Christ, then you have to do those things first. If you want them to make church a priority, then you need to make it a priority. If you want them to tithe, then you need to tithe. If you want them to have a godly mouth, then you need to have a godly mouth. If you want them to have a Biblical marriage, then you need to have a Biblical marriage. If you want them to disciple their kids, then you need to disciple them. If you want them to be obedient to God, then you must be obedient to God. If you want them to read their Bible and pray, then you need to read your Bible and pray.

J.C. Ryle said, "Train them by the influence of your own example. Instruction, advice, and directions will profit little unless they are backed up by the pattern of your own life. Your children will never believe you are in earnest when you really want them to obey you, as long as your actions contradict your counsel."

TWO: BRING THEM TO CHURCH.

You must be like Joshua. **Joshua 24:15** "As for me and my family, we will worship the Lord."

If you want to disciple your kids, then you need to bring them to church every time we gather.

If church is not a priority for your family, then God will not be a priority for your family.

If you let work, and sports, and school, and hunting, and fishing, and other things interfere with church, then your children will learn that church is not a priority. It is not essential. They will learn that church is not something that they have to do,

or something they should do, but something that is good to do when they have time; when they can fit in their schedule; when they feel like it; if there's nothing more important, or nothing more fun to do.

I was blessed to be raised in a home where church was a priority. Our lives revolved around church. We did not miss church. I never even missed church because I was sick. I was not allowed to spend the night with friends on Saturday night, because I had to go to church on Sunday with my family. We went to church at least three times a week, sometimes four. We went to church on Sunday morning for Sunday school at 9:45-10:45, and then for worship at 11-12. Then we went to church on Sunday evening at 4 PM for Bible Drill, and 5 PM for choir, and then 6 PM for worship. And then we went on Wednesday night at 5:15 for a meal, and then at 6-7 PM for worship. And I learned that church is a priority.

I've heard some parents say that they don't want to force their kids to go to church because they don't want to force religion on them. Forcing your kids to go to church is not the same as forcing them to believe in God. You cannot force your kids to believe in God and to love God. But you must teach them the importance of believing in God and loving God. You must teach them who God is. You must teach them how to believe in and love God.

You force your kids to brush their teeth, and to go to school, and to do their chores, and to learn good manners, because those things are good for them. Church is good for them; more than all the things I just mentioned. Bring them to church.

Why bring them to church? **First, you will teach them that church is a priority, and you will get them in the habit of going to church every Sunday.** By the time your kids grow up, missing church should make them feel really weird.

Second, remember that your child needs the church, and the church needs your child. Your child cannot thrive as a Christian without the church. We need each other. Your child needs the life of the church to live for Christ. And the church needs your child. Your child has much to offer the church, even as a kid. When you allow your child to miss church, you are depriving the church of a blessing.

Third, bringing your kids to church helps you to disciple them.

At Church Acadiana we are a family-integrated church. Instead of segregating and separating families according to age group, we keep families together, and in fact keep all the generations together.

The young ones get to benefit from the maturity of the adults, and the adults get to benefit from the energy of youth.

Doing church with your kids gives you two discipleship opportunities.

First, you can model your faith. You can show them how to do church. You can show them how to tithe; how to sing worship songs; how to listen to a sermon; how to fellowship with other believers; how to pray in a corporate setting; how to behave in church.

Second, you can observe their faith. You cannot effectively disciple your kids if you do not coach them. When I teach my kids how to play the guitar, I have to watch them do it so that I can give them feedback. When you do church with your kids you get to observe their behavior in church. Are they engaged? Are they paying attention? Are they taking notes? Are they misbehaving? Are they singing? Are they participating in corporate prayer? Are they staying awake? Are they drawing pictures? And then after church you can test their comprehension.

THREE: TEACH THEM AT HOME.

The third leg of home discipleship is that you must teach your kids at home.

This is biblical. **Ephesians 6:4** “Fathers, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

It is not enough to bring your kids to church. You must teach them at home.

How do you teach your kids at home?

One: The curriculum. Teach them to understand, believe, and obey the Bible. When they are very little, start out with Bible storybooks. Then you can advance to reading straight from the Bible. And you can also read good Christian books to them.

Two: Commit to a time. Some of you are still wondering, “But what do I teach them? What do I read to them? What are we supposed to do?” The most important factor in home discipleship is to commit to a regular time when you are going to disciple them. If you are committed to sitting down with your kids on a regular basis for the purpose of teaching them to understand, believe, and obey the Bible, then the “how” will work itself. Gradually you will figure out the needs of your children; and you will figure out how to teach them. But just like anything else, such as diet and exercise, you must commit to it; you must do it consistently, not sporadically.

Let me explain how I teach my kids.

Three nights a week, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, right after supper, we have “Bible Time,” as we call it.

Our primary curriculum is the Home Discipleship Catechism that I’ve written. It has 51 concise definitions of the essential Bible doctrines, along with 51 chapters that explain each definition.

For example, the first question is, “What is the Holy Bible?” The answer is, “The Bible is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.”

So here’s my plan. First, we do catechism – about ten questions each night. I call out the questions, and they recite the answers from memory. My kids have had all 51 questions memorized for several years now.

Second, we sing a praise song. If you do know not many praise songs, all you have to do is to take the choruses of the praise songs that we sing on Sunday morning and sing those. You don't even need to sing the entire song.

Third, we pray. I ask one of the kids to lead us in a short prayer.

Fourth, I teach the lesson. On Monday, I read to them a chapter from the Home Discipleship Catechism, taking one of the questions in-depth. Then on the other two nights, we do something different. Sometimes we will read through a Bible storybook; sometimes a good Christian book; and sometimes we will read straight from the Bible. And that's it.

CONCLUSION

I heard a story a few years ago about a couple who tried for years to have a baby, and the wife finally got pregnant. But then the doctor gave her some bad news. She had cancer. The doctor said she had two choices, but she needed to decide as soon as possible. One, she could take chemotherapy and possibly be cured, but that might leave the child disabled or even dead. Two, she could avoid chemotherapy and focus on saving the child. The next morning, the mother waked into the living room where the baby's crib was still sitting on its box in the living room, and she said, "I will do it for you, baby." She decides to avoid chemotherapy to save her child. Nine months later, a healthy baby is born, but when the most mothers leave to take their babies home, she was wheeled down the hall into the chemotherapy room.

Every parent would be willing to sacrifice their life for their children. They will do anything for them. But are you willing to live your life for them by discipling them? By training them up to live for the glory of God and the salvation of men? Your children probably won't need you to die for them, but they do need you to disciple them.

There is nothing more important than the discipleship of your children. Nothing even comes close.

No amount of money, or time, or energy is too much to invest in their discipleship.

You can overdo it with their athletics, and academics, and with their other pursuits, but you can't overdo discipleship.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Ephesians 6:4. What is God's command to parents in this verse?
2. What does it mean to "stir up anger in your children," and why is this important for Christian parents?
3. What are some ways that parents "stir up anger" in their children?
4. What does it mean to bring your children up in the "training/discipline" of the Lord?
5. What does it mean to bring your children up in the "instruction" of the Lord?
6. Why is Ephesians 6:4 directed at "Fathers" and not mothers?
7. Read Matthew 28:19-20. What is meant by the term discipleship?
8. To disciple your kids you must focus on the three goals of discipleship: To raise kids who are worshiping Christ, walking with Christ, and working for Christ. The first goal – worshiping Christ – is to train your children to make church participation a priority. Why is this important? What can parents do to train their children to make church participation a priority?
9. The second goal of home discipleship – walking with Christ – is to train your kids to have an intimate, passionate relationship with Jesus Christ. What does this kind of relationship look like? How can parents help their children to develop this kind of walk with God?
10. The third goal of home discipleship – working for Christ – is to train your kids to live for the salvation of men; to devote their lives to God's service. How can parents train their kids to do this?
11. To disciple your kids you must know the three legs of home discipleship: Set an example, bring them to church, and teach them at home. A) Which of these three do think is the most important? Explain. B) Which of these three are you the strongest at? Explain. C) Which of these three are you the weakest at? Explain.