

Family Discipleship: From Biblical Origin to Practical Application

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Family discipleship has its origins in the first family of Adam and Eve. The picture is blurred at first. We only gain glimpses of struggles and successes in the stories of families. The picture of family discipleship in the Bible zooms into clearer focus with the book of Deuteronomy and on into the New Testament. Scripture provides a collage of family discipleship through different genres, families, and audiences. Although the phrase *family discipleship* is not seen in Scripture, God reveals his desire for parents to be the primary disciple makers in passing a biblical faith to succeeding generations. The Bible provides enough focused truth and wisdom to enable parents to disciple their children.¹ The author defines family discipleship as a father and mother intentionally investing in children's spiritual growth by utilizing the Bible and prayer to teach the gospel through faith interactions during the family's normal daily life.

Family Discipleship in the Old Testament

God's Word reveals much about family discipleship in the 39 books of the Old Testament.² God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. Marriage between a man and a woman was the desire of God's heart for the multiplication of humanity and the spiritual formation of the next generation. Family discipleship in the first family was not perfect, as seen in the outcome of their children. All families have struggled with sin and imperfect homes since the fall.

The apparent lack of family discipleship created an environment in which most families drifted away from God and faith was not passed to the next generation. In the midst of a wicked society, Noah found favor with God and was considered a righteous and blameless man who walked with God. God chose to preserve Noah's family while they were building the ark. They experienced a time of family worship after the flood subsided.³

God consistently calls people to rise up, walk by faith, and impact multiple generations. The call of Abram in Genesis 12 promised he would be a blessing to all the families of the earth. However, this promise appeared to be hopeless

for years. God provided more encouragement to Abram in Genesis 17 with the promise of Isaac's birth. God presented his vision for Abraham to be involved in multigenerational discipleship in Genesis 18:19 "For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."⁴ God's direction for family discipleship comes into clearer focus in this passage.

The journey of the Israelites is one of growing in faith as they share stories of God's work in delivering them from slavery in Egypt. Moses gave instruction to the Israelites in Exodus 12:26-27 regarding observing the Passover and the process for teaching children during the observation. Family discipleship sharpens as parents repetitiously teach about God's work in the past. Exodus 13 includes additional teaching opportunities in the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the consecration of the firstborn.

Deuteronomy continues the journey of growing the Israelites' faith in God as they wander in the desert. The last book of the Pentateuch contains numerous texts about passing along one's faith to the next generation than any other book of the Law.⁵ Deuteronomy is a series of sermons that Moses delivered to the Israelites before he passed off the scene. Afterward, Joshua assumed responsibility for leading the people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Moses felt the weight of emphasizing the parents' roles in disciplining their children as they prepared to embark on a new journey.

One of the focal texts on family discipleship in the Old Testament is Deuteronomy 6:4-9. The immediate context in Deuteronomy 5 includes the Ten Commandments, which were first given in Exodus 20. This review of the Law emphasized the key commandments that parents were to share with the next generation. Deuteronomy 6 is similarly repeated in Deuteronomy 11 with some similarities to Proverbs 6. This text is known as the "Shema" because of the first word in the text, which means "to hear."

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them 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. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Parents must first grasp an understanding of who God is and grow in a love relationship with Him. We must embrace the God of one's faith and His commands

before we can pass along the truth of that faith to the next generation. The commands of God are understood by parents and applied in their own personal life, enabling them to pass along those truths in a relevant way.⁶

Moses commands parents to convey these commands throughout the natural rhythms of a normal day.⁷ One's relationship with God should permeate every aspect of life. Parents should know God's commands and walk with God in such a way that it is a natural overflow of that relationship. They are then able to engage in faith interactions about God's commands with children during normal routines of life (traveling, eating, waking up, going to sleep). They should talk about them when they walk along the road and when they sit at home, when they get up, and before they go to sleep. Deuteronomy 6:20-25 reveals that when a son asks a question the father is encouraged to share the story of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt – a story that is retold yearly during the celebration of the Passover.⁸ Throughout the Old Testament Israelites celebrated different feasts and holidays that revolved around God working in some significant way throughout their past. As they celebrated these holidays, they retold stories about God's work.

After Moses' death, Joshua's reign of leadership over the Israelites began as he led the nation across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. As he did so, he stressed the importance of passing along the stories of one's faith to the next generation. The crossing of the Jordan became another story that would retell God's work in stopping up the Jordan, enabling the people to walk across on dry ground. The experience was reminiscent of crossing the Red Sea in Israel's escape from Egypt. A twelve-stone memorial was erected that would prompt children to question their parents. Parents would share the story about God's miraculous work. The book of Joshua concludes with Joshua's challenge for the Israelites to decide whom they will serve. He proclaimed that he and his family would serve the Lord.⁹

In Judges, a generation arose that did not know the Lord because families had failed to disciple their children. Throughout Israel's leadership until the eventual fall of Jerusalem, the nation and its families flourished under godly leaders and floundered under ungodly leaders.¹⁰

The Psalms provide much encouragement toward family discipleship. Psalm 71:17-18 gives insight into an aging person's view of passing the faith to the next generation. Psalm 78:1-8, a psalm of Asaph, emphasizes the importance of teaching the next generation about the words and works of God so they do not repeat the mistakes of the generations past. In Psalm 145:4, David declares, "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts." He had experienced God's wonderful works and also knew of His acts from previous generations. A part of discipling the next generation was to share stories of God at work in the past.¹¹ The consistent retelling of God's acts solidified the next generation's faith.

Proverbs contains more wisdom and practical application for family discipleship than any other book in the Bible.¹² The main emphasis is a father sharing wisdom with his son. Proverbs also includes references to mothers, illustrating the importance of mothers being engaged in family discipleship.¹³ Family discipleship is a team effort involving both fathers and mothers.

Proverbs 4:1-4 illustrates the wisdom of a grandfather passing commands to the father who passes the commands along to the son. Family discipleship involved extended family and multiple generations. Proverbs 6:20-22 reminds us of Deuteronomy 6 and 11 regarding the importance of parents sharing God's commands that guide children during the normal rhythms of life.

Proverbs 22:6 is perhaps the most familiar and most often quoted passage regarding family discipleship: "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." The use of Proverbs enables parents to impart a fear of God in their children, enabling them to walk the path of wisdom and to avoid the path of folly.

Very little attention is given to family discipleship in the prophetic books because the prophets were concerned with calling God's people to repentance. Without a relationship with God, it is impossible to disciple the next generation effectively. Two key verses are worth mentioning: Joel 1:3 and Malachi 4:6. Joel emphasizes one generation sharing with future generations. Malachi emphasizes fathers turning their hearts to their children and children turning their hearts to their fathers. The Old Testament began with an emphasis on marriage and family, but humanity quickly degenerated with the catastrophic repercussions of the fall. The Old Testament ends with an emphasis on marriage and family, reflecting God's desire for healthy relationships within the home and with Him.¹⁴ The need for biblical family discipleship is crucial for future generations to grow and flourish.

Family Discipleship in the New Testament

The Old Testament ended with a plea for fathers to turn their hearts to their children. The New Testament continues to sharpen the picture of family discipleship, beginning with the birth of Jesus. The primary purpose of the gospels was to tell the story of the Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son, who came to die on the cross and rise victoriously to fulfill God's plan for the redemption for mankind. The gospels reveal how Jesus discipled his followers as part of His vision for believers to make disciples of all nations. The gospel of Luke provides a vivid picture as Joseph and Mary obeyed Scriptures and incorporated biblical truth, customs, and rituals into their family life.¹⁵ Jesus did not specifically discuss family discipleship, but he did model and stress discipleship with his disciples.

Making disciples is imperative for all believers to fulfill the Great Commission. Families have the best opportunities to disciple their children because of the amount of time they spend with them. However, discipleship should not be limited to the

home. A true picture of family discipleship leads the family and family members to fulfill the Great Commission and make a kingdom impact through evangelism and discipleship. It begins in the home before moving into the community and around the world.

Luke shared in the book of Acts about the spread of the gospel and the growth of the early church. He shared three stories of fathers who were transformed by the gospel message (Cornelius – Acts 10:1-2, the Philippian Jailer – Acts 16:31-34, and Crispus – Acts 18:8). Their faith resulted in their entire households coming to faith in Christ. The influence of a father's salvation and the proclamation of the gospel can transform entire families.

Paul discussed family discipleship in multiple texts. He addressed church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Five elements are similar in all three lists. Two of them focus on the home. Deacons and pastors were not to have multiple wives and they were to manage their households well. Through family discipleship, leaders have the opportunity to model the way for others in the church. Howard Hendricks aptly said, "If your religion doesn't work at home, then don't export it."

Much of Scripture focuses on fathers and their influence on discipling the next generation, but mothers are just as important. Several texts in Proverbs mention mothers. Paul described the influence of Timothy's grandmother,¹⁶ Lois, and his mother, Eunice in 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-17. Paul emphasized that Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures since infancy, primarily because of the influence of his mother and grandmother. It is never too early to start exposing the next generation to God's Word. Children become convinced of biblical truths learned at church when they see those truths lived out in the home on a daily basis. As parents share these gospel truths, they pave the way for children to trust in Jesus Christ and grow up in the faith.

Paul also addressed family discipleship in the household codes in Colossians 3:18-21 and Ephesians 5:25-6:4.¹⁷ In both passages, children are commanded to obey their parents. Although created with equal worth, father and mothers have different God-given roles. The role of fathers in discipling their children is also emphasized as Paul cautioned fathers against provoking children to anger. Fathers are commanded in Ephesians 6:4 to "bring them (children) up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."¹⁸ Christian families learned about their roles in the home as these letters were read to the churches. The church partners with families and equips them to disciple their children more effectively in order to help pass the faith along to the next generation.

Many individuals and families are mentioned in the mural of Hebrews 11. This chapter paints a picture of how faith has been passed along from one generation to another throughout the Bible.¹⁹ One of the common elements in family discipleship involves parents, primarily fathers, who have a close walk with God. These families

share biblical truths and biblical stories with their children, often resulting in their salvation and the passing of the faith from one generation to the next.

The Christian home is the fundamental discipleship axis for passing the faith along to the next generation. Discipleship ordained in the First Commission at home (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) multiplies the Great Commission around the world (Matthew 28:19-20).²⁰ God wants this faith, nurtured in the home, to be multiplied outside the home until every tribe, tongue, and nation have heard the good news.

A Personal Journey in Family Discipleship

A biblical view of family discipleship was a foreign concept in my family heritage. There wasn't a constructive picture to copy and reproduce. My grandfathers were involved in church only sporadically, attending only during holidays or other special events. My parents married and took a step forward in their generation by making a commitment to attend church consistently on Sundays, Wednesdays, and during other special activities. I'm thankful for the steps my parents began. However, we did not have many faith interactions in our home. We prayed over meals and had some family devotion times as young children but struggled to be consistent. My wife, Karen, grew up in a similar church and family with few faith interactions at home.

I was fortunate to have been discipled with MasterLife through the Baptist Student Union at Southern Illinois University. My wife was also fortunate to have been discipled intentionally through her church during her teenage years.

Karen and I married in 1994 while I was attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and she was in college at Dallas Baptist University. We had both experienced personal discipleship and enjoyed solid spiritual influence and education from church, college, and seminary. Still, family discipleship was not a significant part of that teaching or experience.

We both graduated and moved to Arkansas in 1996, where I began my first full-time ministry position as a BCM campus minister at Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia. Much of my time was spent intentionally discipling students. I discipled several student leaders while Karen discipled several female students each semester. However, I was not intentionally discipling my wife and children during that period of our family's life. Although I was involved in discipling through my ministry, family discipleship was not a part of our family photos.

My family discipleship journey began in 2003. I had been married for nine years, had a daughter who was six, a son who was three, and another son who would be born in 2004. When my daughter began kindergarten, we were wrestling with our family rhythm and tried to develop a process for discipling our children, but we struggled. As a BCM campus minister, I spent one third of my time discipling students in one-on-one and small group experiences. However, we had no intentional family discipleship in our home.

I led a group of collegians to One Day 2003 in Sherman, Texas, over Memorial Day Weekend. Over 40,000 students participated from all over the world. The theme of the One Day 2003 worship experience was from the book of Joel. I prepared my heart for a day of worship, reading through the book of Joel. I made it to Joel 1:3 and the Holy Spirit convinced me to pause and convicted me of my sin. The text spoke to me about beginning the process of family discipleship. Joel 1:3 says, “Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation.”

In that moment, God’s Word revealed the importance of family discipleship and my role in passing along the faith from one generation to the next. I spent the bulk of the day searching cross-references in my Bible to discover what God’s Word said about discipleship in the home. With all of my Christian background, I had been oblivious to this important scriptural theme.²¹

During the summer of 2003, I spent significant time studying Scripture about passing the faith along to the next generation. The key factor motivating me to begin discipling my family intentionally was a firm conviction about biblical family discipleship.

The key passage that began to shape my strategy was Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Being convinced of God’s desire for family discipleship, I led my family on a journey in which we experimented with many approaches, resources, times, and strategies. We struggled to disciple our children, failing at times and succeeding at other times.²² Our desire to parent and disciple our children while impacting the world with the gospel one home at a time motivated us to continue growing in the knowledge and practice of family discipleship.

An Academic Journey in Family Discipleship

My personal journey and passion for family discipleship expanded when God led me to move from Magnolia to Little Rock to become the Family Ministry Team leader with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention in 2005. Traveling around Arkansas and teaching on family discipleship, I eventually discovered that this problem was not mine alone, but it was also a challenge for many believers.

I have had the opportunity to speak in 500 different churches. I often share the message of biblical family discipleship. I frequently survey parents when leading a church seminar. I ask parents to identify key verses in the Bible that are related to parenting. They can write down the phrase if they do not know the reference. In Arkansas, the top verses parents identify are Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” and Proverbs 13:24, “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.” Only about 7% of parents have identified Deuteronomy 6. Most parents, even those who have grown up in church, struggle to know and apply a biblical view of family discipleship.

My experience and the struggles of parents and churches in family discipleship led me to focus on family discipleship for my doctoral studies. I completed my Doctor of Ministry through Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2012.²³ The focus of my dissertation was, “Equipping parents at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church to design and implement a strategic plan for nurturing the faith of their children at home.” Before designing the project, I surveyed fifty families at the church. I discovered most families had grown up in church and were aware of their responsibility to disciple their children. However, most families had not seen family discipleship modeled. They were not familiar with key Bible passages about family discipleship, nor did they have any kind of written plan that guided their family discipleship process at home.

I took parents through twelve weeks of parenting classes that exposed them to key Bible passages about family discipleship. Each week they wrote specific goals to help them engage in faith interactions with their children at home and track those faith interactions. One of the key goals of the project required participating families to turn in a written strategic plan for discipling their children at home. Half of the families who participated in the class turned in a written plan. Families who turned in a specific plan recorded twice as many faith interactions with their children compared to families who did not have a written plan. None of the families who turned in their written plan executed their plan perfectly. However, a written plan guided and motivated them to be more consistent in discipling their children through their normal family interactions.

Since completing the dissertation, I condensed much of the material into a seven week study for parents. It provides a basic overview of family discipleship with a strategy to help adults implement a written plan for discipling their children.²⁴ I frequently get the opportunity to champion family discipleship in churches. My vision is to D6 every dad, every parent, every family, and every church by helping them understand the implications of applying Deuteronomy 6 in their homes. I’ve learned much from reading on family discipleship, other parents, and my experience in practically discipling my family in the home.²⁵

Practical Family Discipleship Strategies

The Bible commands parents to disciple their children. Many parents are like me in that they did not have a constructive picture to copy and often struggle to apply God’s Word in discipling their children. Some basic strokes for family discipleship are shared below as a framework to help parents paint a beautiful picture of family discipleship that enable them to pass the faith along to the next generation.

1. Develop a Theology for Family Discipleship.

The best motivating influence for family discipleship is the desire to honor and glorify God by loving Him, obeying His Word, and fulfilling the Great Commission.

Statistics and outcomes can motivate, but they can never have the sustaining force of being transformed by God's Word. Read and study key texts related to family discipleship. After you have developed a theology for family discipleship, then begin to read what others have written and continue to be a lifelong learner. Remember that fathers are key to leading in family discipleship.

2. Memorize Key Passages Related to Family Discipleship.

These Scriptures will encourage, challenge, convict, and move you in the power of the Holy Spirit to honor and obey God. My frequent advice to parents is, "Memorize Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and then ask God the question, 'God, how do you want us to put this passage into practice in our home?'"

3. Examine Your Family Rhythm for Ideal Discipleship Moments.

Families are busy today, but most don't have an accurate assessment of where their time goes. Examine every hour of your day and discover ways to redeem your time. Examine when you travel, when you eat, when you get up, when you lie down and when you celebrate holidays. These occasions are natural rhythms that all families experience. You don't have to create additional time slots for family discipleship. Utilize existing time slots as opportunities to engage in faith interactions during these natural rhythms.

4. Write Out Specific Goals for Your Family Discipleship.

Identify times in your normal family rhythm where you and your family are most likely to hit a home run and be most consistent engaging in faith interactions. Brainstorm a variety of ideas that might work for your family's age and stage. Choose one goal to implement at a specific time in your family rhythm. It's easiest to start at the beginning of a school year or the beginning of a new year. Identify resources you will use that are appropriate for the age of your children. Start with one time slot in applying Deuteronomy 6 and strive for consistency before you add additional times to disciple your children. Summer and holidays are a struggle for most families because of chaotic rhythms; so don't throw in the towel just because of a slump in that season.

5. Implement Your Goals and Evaluate Your Progress in Family Discipleship.

Writing goals are worthless if you don't implement them. Focus on shorter, more consistent times rather than longer, more sporadic times. Evaluate your progress at the end of a semester to learn from the past and make future family discipleship plans. Know that you will have times of success and times of struggle. A faithful and consistent strategy will help you disciple for the long haul. Journal and record your favorite faith interaction moments with your children and regularly share them for posterity.

6. Adjust Your Family Discipleship Strategies as Your Children Age.

When my children were small, I read short passages of the Bible to them. As they aged, I asked them to identify key words. As they learned to read, I would read a few sentences and then they would read a sentence. As they became better readers, I would read a paragraph and they would read a paragraph. Eventually, they began to read the Bible entirely on their own. In addition to reading Scripture, as our children aged we exposed them to other Christian books to continue shaping their biblical worldview. Some seasons of family discipleship are easier than others. Many parents will be consistent when their children are young, but struggle in the chaos of the teen years. Remain faithful in discipling your children through the teen years and adjust your strategy and content.²⁶

7. Experiment with Different Family Discipleship Times, Tools and Tactics.

We've experimented with the following times: traveling, eating, mornings, evenings, and holidays. We utilized a variety of tools and tactics: family worship, catechism, family devotional book readings, discipleship studies, reading a Christian book together, reading the same Bible passage together and discussing together, reading the same Bible passage separately and then discussing together, utilizing prayer guides for countries of the world, Scripture memory, practicing gospel presentations, sharing testimonies, and others. Keep a record of what resources you use and when you use them. You and your children will have a tendency to forget, but a record of your discipleship journey will benefit your family greatly as you age and reflect on the spiritual growth of your family. There are enough times, tools, and tactics for a diversity of families. Discover what and when works best for family discipleship in your home.

8. Share Faith Interaction Stories of Your Family Discipleship with Other Believers.

The church body needs to learn from one another and encourage one another in our family discipleship journeys. Our small group asks the question every week, "Who wants to share a story of a faith interaction inside your home or outside your home this week?" We hear amazing stories each week on faith interactions between parents and children and faith interactions outside the home. Sharing struggles and successes in family discipleship encourages, challenges, comforts, and builds up the church body.

9. Utilize Family Discipleship to Launch Your Children to Fulfill the Great Commission.

Ultimately, family discipleship is not about you, your children, or your home. It's about being obedient to God's word and fulfilling the Great Commission. If family discipleship just influences persons in your home, then something is wrong. If we and our children are growing spiritually in our daily walk and in understanding of the gospel, there should be a desire to share that good news with others beyond

our home. Family discipleship at home should lead to an overflow of the good news to people outside the home at work, school, play, community, and around the world.

10. Equip Other Parents to Begin Family Discipleship.

My challenge to church leaders regarding equipping families is, “How does this church calendar, sermon, worship service, Sunday school lesson, prayer meeting, Wednesday night activities, special event, etc., help families better disciple their children at home?” Church leaders must think about equipping and enabling individuals and families to build up their faith at home.

Many people think about the church building being a lighthouse to the community, and it is. However, we must recognize that the church is made up of individuals and families that live in the community. The goal should be to equip individuals and families at church in such a way that their homes become lighthouses to the community, creating multiple outposts of evangelism, missions, and discipleship outside the walls of the church and lighting up the entire community with the message of the gospel.

Conclusion

The Bible paints a realistic picture for family discipleship that permeates every aspect of our daily family rhythm. Family discipleship that only involves taking children to church weekly, saying mealtime prayers at home, and depending on the church to do the bulk of discipling the next generation will fall woefully short.

Church leaders must understand that their role is to equip parents to disciple their children at home. Leaders and teachers must always be thinking about how the experiences at church (events, sermons, lessons, and other activities) can be transferable to the home. These activities should enable families to engage in faith interactions before, during, and after the church meetings. The church and families can partner together to create the potential for kingdom impact.

A Christian home is the fundamental discipleship axis for passing the faith along to the next generation. Fathers and mothers provide an ideal combination of working together to disciple their children. The church and the family provide an ideal partnership for sharing biblical truth with the next generation. The church equips parents with truth and tools, enabling parents to disciple their children more effectively.

Parents must know God, have a growing love relationship with Christ, and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to understand and apply God’s Word. Out of the overflow of their relationship with God and time in the Word they can disciple their children by sharing God’s Word through the natural events of each day. Families must have a biblical understanding of discipleship in the home. A biblical understanding of discipleship in the home should lead to developing a written plan or strategy. A written plan or strategy will help parents to be more intentional to

engage in faith interactions with their children and disciple them to mature in the faith. Children who are discipled well at home will continue to grow as disciple makers in their homes as adults. They can continue to impact the lives of others, creating a masterpiece of kingdom impact with the gospel that brings glory to the Master at home and around the world for generations to come.

NOTES

1. The scope of this article does not cover every instance of family discipleship in the Bible, but provides an overview revealing God's desire for families to become the primary disciple makers of their children and offers some practical strategies to help families.

2. A variety of Old Testament passages provide guidance and wisdom for parents to disciple their children. See Gen. 1:26-31, 2:15-25, 18:19; Exod. 12:24-28, 13:8-10, 14-16, 20:5-6, 12; Deut. 4:9-10, 40, 5:9-10, 16, 6:4-9, 11:18-21; Josh. 4:6-7, 21-24, 24:14-15; Judg. 2:10; 1 Sam.. 2:22-26; Job 1:1-5; Ps. 78:1-8, 127:1-5, 128:1-6, 145:4-7; Prov. 1:8-9, 4:1-4, 6:20-23, 22:6; J1 1:3; Mal. 4:6.

3. Gen. 8:15-9:17.

4. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Standard Bible Society, 2016).

5. Deut. 4:9, 10, 25, 40; 5:9, 16; 6:7; 11:2, 19, 21; 12:25, 28; 17:20; 29:29; 30:2; 31:13; 32:7, 20, 46.

6. Jeffrey H. Tigaay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 46. "Every parent is to be a teacher of religion. This obligation is the most pervasive expression of the biblical conviction that religion is not simply a personal, individual concern. Deuteronomy emphasizes repeatedly that the Israelites are not to keep to themselves the experiences they had and the responsibilities they were taught: they must transmit them to their children and grandchildren so that they, too, may share in the experiences, learn their responsibilities, and enjoy the benefits of faith and observance."

7. Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 167.

8. Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 103. "This passage envisages internal family teaching, in which parents answer children's questions regarding specific events, memorials, rituals, or observances. The child's question then becomes the springboard for explanation and teaching, rather like a catechism (which some scholars suggest is what we have fragments of here). The first thing to notice is that such questions and teaching opportunities would arise only if the parents themselves were conspicuously observing the laws. What was true for Israel as a whole (cf. Deut. 4:6-8) was true for each family – no observance, no questions."

9. See specifically Josh. 4:6-7, 4:21-24, 24:15.

10. Judg. 2:10.

11. Andreas J. Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 102-103.

12. Wes Haystead, *The 3000-Year-Old Guide to Parenting*, (Regal Books, Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), 19.
13. Bruce Waltke, *Proverbs 1-15*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 62. “The home setting for education in ancient Israel, for both the Mosaic law (cf. Deut. 6:7-9) and Solomon’s proverbs, is put beyond reasonable doubt by references to the mother (cf. Exod. 20:12; Lev. 19:3; Deut. 5:16; 21:18-21; Luke 2:51; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15) and in Proverbs in particular (4:3; 6:20; 23:25; 31:1, 26-23; cf. 10:1; 15:20). The prologue’s references to the mother as a teacher along with the father as the son moved into adulthood shows that her impact extended beyond small children.
14. Malachi 2:15-16, 4:6.
15. Marcia Bunge, ed., *The Child in the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 183-184.
16. The influence of grandparents in family discipleship is beyond the scope of this paper. However, in the Israelite community the fact that grandparents and extended family had considerable influence and Scripture illustrates this principle in a variety of passages: Gen. 18:19; Ps. 71:17-18, 78:1-8; Prov. 4:1-4; 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14-17.
17. Andreas J. Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 127.
18. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011), 52-53.
19. The faith hall of fame in Hebrews 11 begins with Abel and continues listing people who walked by faith. It was evident that God’s hand was on these individuals and most had a family heritage of faith and discipleship that provided a foundation for them to pass along the faith to another generation.
20. Wayne Rice, *Generation to Generation: Practical and Creative Ideas for Raising Kids to Know and Love God*, (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2010), 44-45.
21. Following are some of the key verses I discovered. Parents who read, study, and apply the following passages will discover that Scripture is a superlative, steady, and sustainable motivator for nurturing the faith of their children at home: Gen. 1:26-31; 21:5-25, 18:19; Exod. 12:24-28; 13:8-10; 20:5-6, 12; Deut. 4: 9-10, 40; 5:9-10, 16; 6:4-9; 11:18-21; Josh. 4:6-7; 24:14-15; Judg. 2:10; 1 Sam. 2:22-26; Job 1:1-5; Ps. 78:1-8; 127:1-5; 128:1-6; 145:4-7; Prov. 1:8-9; 4:1-4; 6:20-23; 22:6, 4:6; Luke 2:39-40, 51-52; Acts 16:11-15, 29-34; Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21; 1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12-13; Titus 1:6; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 1 Thes. 2:6-12.
22. We utilized a variety of Bible story books, devotion books, catechisms, and other resources. As our children have aged and could read on their own, we moved toward more Bible reading. Our current strategy is using the F260 Bible reading plan (<https://replicate.org/f260-bible-reading-plan/>) in which each family member reads the passage separately on their own and then we discuss at breakfast or another time during the day.
23. Ben Phillips, *Equipping Parents at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church to Design and Implement a Strategic Plan for Frequently Nurturing the Faith of Their Children at Home*, Doctor of Ministry Project Dissertation, (Kansas City, MO: Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012).

24. Ben Phillips, *TEACH Faith @ Home: Equipping Parents to Design and Implement a Strategic Plan for Nurturing the Faith of their Children @ Home* (Benton, AR: Self-published, 2017).

25. Some key authors who have helped me in the family discipleship journey are Michael and Michelle Anthony, George Barna, Voddie Baucham, Kurt Bruner, Brian Haynes, Mark Holmen, Reggie Joiner, Timothy Paul Jones, Andreas Kostenberger, Kara Powell, Dennis Rainey, Rob Rienow, Richard Ross, Donald Whitney, and Steve Wright.

26. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has developed an abundance of resources for parents that can be downloaded for free: <http://disciple6.com/>. Many good resources are available.