

## Go and Make Disciples – Teacher’s Guide

### Part Four: The Disciple-Making Home

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All **authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore **go** and make **disciples** of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching** them to **obey** everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”  
(Matt 28:18–20 NIV).

#### 1) How does the Great Commission relate to family discipleship?

- A) Many people think of the Great Commission as a call to **world** evangelism. After all, we send missionaries to foreign countries, and we send workers to large cities for inner city ministries. *But this overlooks a primary mission field—the **home**.* The Great Commission is also a call to make disciples of our **families**. As parents, we have the responsibility to do all we can to raise our children to be devoted followers of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>
- B) But isn’t discipleship something that’s done by pastors and church leaders? Isn’t that why we take our kids to church and send them to Christian schools? While it’s true that Christian schools and churches play an important part in forming disciples, *the **home** is the true center of discipleship.* One of the reasons we’re losing our children to the world is because we’ve taken a passive role and expected the church and the school to disciple our children. **We** must disciple our families!
- (1) Charles Spurgeon: “First, let us begin by emphatically declaring it is **parents** (fathers in particular) and not the church who are given the primary responsibility for calling the next generation to hope in God. The church serves a **supplementary** role, reinforcing the biblical nurture that is occurring in the home.”<sup>2</sup>
- (2) Jonathan Edwards: “Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little **church**, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by his rules. And family **education** and order are some of the chief means of grace. If these fail, all other means are likely to prove ineffectual. If these are duly maintained, all the means of grace will be likely to prosper and be successful.”

#### 2) What does the Bible say about discipleship in the home?

- A) The Bible makes it clear that discipleship begins in the **home**.
- (1) “You shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your

<sup>1</sup> Chap Bettis, *The Disciple-Making Parent: A Comprehensive Guidebook for Raising Your Children to Love and Follow Jesus Christ*. (Diamond Hill Publishing, 2016), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Bettis, pp. 14–15.

- heart.** You 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” (Deut 6:4b–7). Two things stand out: (1) “Before God commands us to teach our children, he reminds us of the need we have to love God and to carry his Word in our hearts. It is impossible to pass on something we do not possess. Example has always been and will always be the most powerful teacher.”<sup>3</sup> (2) The responsibility to teach and talk about God’s Word is given to the parents. Other believers provide supplementary support, but the primary obligation is on fathers and mothers.
- (2) “[God] established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he **commanded** our fathers to **teach** to their children, that the next generation might **know** them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their **hope** in God and not **forget** the works of God, but **keep** his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God” (Ps 78:5–8). This is a commentary on Deuteronomy, and it confirms that parents are commanded to teach their children to serve God, remember His works, and not repeat the mistakes of past generations.
- (3) “Hear, my son, your **father’s** instruction, and forsake not your **mother’s** teaching” (Prov 1:8). “My son, do not forget my **teaching**, but let your heart **keep** my commandments” (Prov 3:1). “My son, do not despise the Lord’s **discipline** or be weary of his reproof” (Prov 3:11). “My son, be attentive to my words; **incline** your ear to my sayings” (Prov 4:20). Proverbs (especially chapters 1–9) is a textbook on how to talk to your children about the things of God. It is a frank, practical and realistic view on life and how to live it in the fear of God.
- (4) “Children, **obey** your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **Honor** your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’ Fathers, do not **provoke** your children to anger, but bring them up in the **discipline** and **instruction** of the Lord.” (Eph 6:4). Obedience to authority is fundamental to discipling children. If kids won’t obey their parents, who they can see, how will they obey God, who they cannot see? Godly discipline and instruction is the antidote to haphazard and inconsistent parenting, which only serves to infuriate children.
- (5) “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your **grandmother** Lois and your **mother** Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. But as for you, **continue** in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from **childhood** (*brephos*) you have been acquainted with the sacred **writings**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14–15). Timothy is an example of how a grandmother and mother (evidently without the support of the father) can pass on the faith to the next generation. Note that Scripture was a part of Timothy’s life from infancy (cf. 1 Pet 2:2, “like newborn babies”).

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<sup>3</sup> Bettis, pp. 39–40.

- B) Scripture confirms that discipleship in the home is a **prerequisite** for ministry in the church:
- (1) “If anyone aspires to the office of **overseer** (*episkope*), he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must **manage** his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children **submissive**, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s **church**?” (1 Tim 3:1–5). Successful discipleship in the home prepares believers for ministry in the church. This means that each man must be the small group leader of his home!
  - (2) “Let **deacons** (*diakanos*) each be the husband of one wife, **managing** their children and their own households well.” (1 Tim 3:12). Lest we think that only pastors and elders are subject to this requirement, Paul makes it clear that church ministers and workers are also in view.
  - (3) “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are **believers**<sup>4</sup> and not open to the charge of debauchery or **insubordination**.” (Titus 1:5–6). This passage gives further detail on what it means to manage your household and children well.

### 3) What does discipleship in the home look like?

A) Personal **example**.<sup>5</sup>

- (1) The most important thing parents can do to disciple their children is to be **disciples** themselves. Why? Because we learn primarily by **observation** and **imitation**. This means the example parents set is the first and greatest teacher.
- (2) Remember Deuteronomy 6:4–8? Before God commanded parents to teach their children, He focused first on the affections of the parents. Why? Because it’s impossible to pass on something we don’t possess. The first duty of family discipleship actually has nothing to do with children at all: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart” (Deut 6:5–6).
- (3) Now, obviously, this covers the basics of personal discipleship, but your kids are also watching your entire life:
  - How you interact with authorities.
  - How you talk about people you disagree with.
  - How you answer all the “Why?” questions.

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<sup>4</sup> See the excellent discussion in Robert S. Rayburn and Steven A. Nicoletti, “An Elder Must Have Believing Children: Titus 1:6 and a Neglected Case of Conscience,” *Presbyterian* 43/2 (Fall 2017): 69–80.

<sup>5</sup> Bettis, pp. 39–40.

- How you react while driving.
- Your attitude about church attendance.
- Your love of God's Word and prayer.
- Your comments about current events.
- How you entertain yourself—what you watch, listen to, and read.
- What you do to relax.

B) Loving **leadership**.

(1) For men, being a disciple of Christ in the home means:

- Personal **integrity** and wise **management** (1 Tim 3:1–5; Titus 1:5–9). The example to follow: the qualifications given by Paul.
- Loving their **wives** (Eph 5:25–33; 1 Pet 3:7). The example to follow: Christ's sacrificial love for the church.
- **Providing** for their families (1 Tim 5:8; 2 Thess 3:6–12; Col 3:23–24). The example to follow: Paul's hard work to support himself.
- Bringing their children up in the **discipline** and **instruction** of the Lord (Eph 6:4).

C) Respectful **obedience**.

(1) For women, being a disciple of Christ in the home means:

- Being their husband's **helper** (Gen 2:18–24; 1 Cor 11:8–9). God created Eve to be a helper for Adam. Wives needs to ask themselves, "Does this help my husband?"
- **Submitting** to and **respecting** their husbands (Eph 5:22–24; 1 Pet 3:1–6). The example to follow: the church's submission and obedience to Christ. When a wife is disrespectful and defiant to her husband, the children notice. They, in turn, often imitate her example by acting out against authority.
- Loving their **children** (Titus 2:4; Prov 29:15). Mothers have a natural desire to care for their children, but true love always does what is best for the child and that often means reproof and rebuke. Many times women find themselves pampering, spoiling, or pacifying their children rather than loving them.
- Being **self-controlled**, **pure**, **working** at home, and **kind** (Titus 2:5). While it is the man's responsibility to be the provider of the home, it is the woman's responsibility to be the *caretaker* of the home. (Titus 2:3–5; 1 Tim 5:14).

D) Proper **priorities**.

(1) **God** is our first priority. Our decisions should be made with this question in mind: *Is this in harmony with God's will and His place of supremacy in my life?*

(2) **Spouse**. Putting God first will enable us to be the husband or wife God wants us to be. The most important thing husbands and wives need is the affection and companionship of a spouse who is totally committed to loving God with all their heart. We can't succeed as a spouse if our relationship with God is marred by sin.

- (3) **Children.** Putting our spouses before our children will enable us to be the parents God wants us to be. The most important thing a child needs is the environment of a healthy, loving husband-wife relationship in the home. We can't succeed as parents if we're neglecting the needs of our spouses or if we're undermining each other's role in the family.
- (4) **Church.** The needs of the family take precedence over the needs of the church. All too often people allow their ministry to take priority over their family. Eventually the problems created by this in the home will undermine your ability to minister in the church.
- (5) **Job.** While our jobs are essential in providing for our families, they should never prevent us from obeying God's command to meet together regularly with other believers (Heb 10:25). All of us are an essential part of the body of Christ, and we need each other in order to be successful disciples of Jesus.
- (6) Think about how this priority structure will guide your decision making:
  - It will prompt you to find a job that allows you to attend church on a regular basis.
  - It will make sure that you don't let the time spent with your children crowd out the time you spend with your spouse.
  - It will ensure that you don't spend more time ministering to others than you do to your own family.
  - It will remind you that your job should never take priority over your wife and children.

E) Proactive **training**.

- (1) Teach your children to **obey**. At very early ages, children can be taught the meaning of the word 'No.' Be proactive about this, and set up training sessions. Place a desirable object where they can reach it, and when they make a grab for it, in a calm voice say, "No." If they grab it anyway, give their hand a swat and simultaneously say, "No." The swat should not be hard enough to make them cry. When children become emotional, the cognitive part of their brain shuts down and you can't train them until they are relaxed again. The swat should be hard enough to make your child consider the relationship between the object, their desire, the command "No," and a little reinforcing pain. It may take several times, but if you're consistent, they will learn to obey.<sup>6</sup> You can use this same approach for the positive commands of "Give" or "Come." Set your child down on one side of the room and then say "Come." Give them lots of praise when they make their way to you. Spend a week or two every day with these two commands, and you will be amazed at how quickly your children can be trained.
  - Make sure your instructions and expectations are well **defined** and **understood**. Avoid being vague. This will save you a lot of issues down the road.

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<sup>6</sup> Michael and Debbi Pearl, *To Train Up a Child: Child Training for the 21st Century*, p. 14.

(2) Treat a rotten **attitude** as the **rebellion** that it is. Outward compliance that conceals inward resentment must never be tolerated. This gets harder to detect as your children get older, so you need to be vigilant about this when they are young. If a child obeys you but sticks out their lip at the same time, treat it like disobedience. Sulking, pouting, whining, complaining, begging, and such like should be dealt with promptly and firmly. If you're consistent, you can avoid the dreaded temper tantrums that many people are forced to deal with.

- As they get older, teach your children this definition of obedience: “Doing **what** I’m told, **when** I’m told, with a good **attitude**.” If any of those pieces is missing, it’s disobedience.

F) Consistent **discipline**.

(1) It deals with the root problem in our children’s hearts: **folly** (Prov 22:15). “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.”

- When we look at our children, what do we see? We see their bright, inquisitive faces, so full of life and curiosity about the world. We see how cute they are, how adorable they are. But do we see the sinful nature that is lurking there? Do we see the folly that is bound up in their hearts? Do we see their determination to have their own way, whatever the cost, and the rebellion that is just under the surface? Most of us don’t, yet that is what God wants us to see, for we all come into this world as fools and sinners. We need to learn to see our children from God’s perspective!
- What does it mean that folly is in our children’s hearts? It means that children do NOT know what is best for them. It means that children do NOT know how to choose wisely. We should never leave decisions concerning work, entertainment, education, health, etc., up to them. We are the parents; we are the adults! We should be making the right choices for them, even if those choices are not to our children’s liking. Remember this: your children’s happiness is NOT the guiding principle for parenting! God’s Word and their eternal welfare is. “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Prov 29:15). If you leave the garden of your child’s heart untended, it will grow weeds, not roses.

(2) It is the essential ingredient in **loving** your children (Prov 13:24). “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.”

- Solomon equated love with “discipline,” and hate with “sparing the rod.” By this definition, many parents hate their children. What a sobering thought! Now understand, this is not talking about the feeling of hate; it’s talking about an action of hate. You can feel affection for your kids, you can feel all kinds of warm fuzzy feelings about them, and yet be hating them!
- When we think about this proverb, it should remind us of Eli and his sons. He scolded his sons, but he did not discipline them or remove them from service (1 Sam 2:22–36). If we coddle our children and excuse their sin, we are setting

the stage for their destruction.

- Now, you probably noticed one word that keeps popping up: the rod. Proverbs emphasizes the need for physical discipline, so let me give you a few tips on using the rod: (1) the **earlier** it's used, the less it's needed; (2) the more **consistently** it's used, the more effective it becomes; (3) it teaches best when used in **private**; (4) it should always be accompanied with words of **reproof**; (5) its presence **paves** the way for other **forms** of discipline; (6) when used properly, it will make your children feel **loved** and, in turn, they will love you.
- (3) It prepares our children for the **gospel**. “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from [death]” (Prov 23:13–14).
- Long before our children can understand words like depravity and flesh and sin, the **pain** of discipline is showing them that they have a **problem**. I'll never forget when my child, who was on their way to another painful session with the rod of discipline, asked me, “Why do I keep doing this!?” Why indeed! What a great question! That gave me the chance to tell them about the true condition of their hearts.

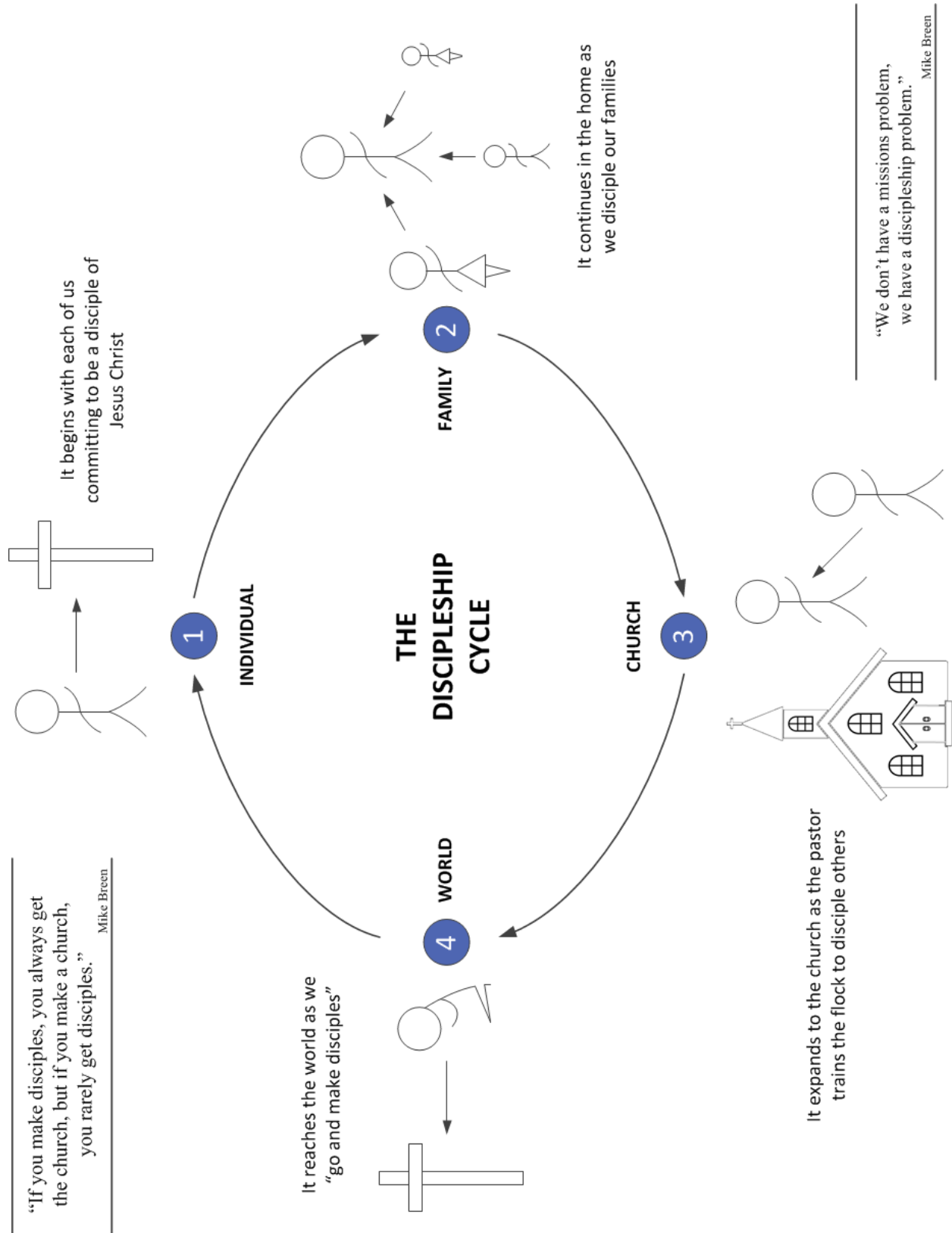
#### G) Spirit-led **evangelism**.

- (1) Share your **testimony**. Do your children know the story of how you were saved? I hope so! As soon as they are able to understand, you should be telling your kids how you came to Christ. If you were saved from an adult life of sin, make sure never to glorify or glamorize the things you used to do. Explain the scars those sins left on your life and impress on your children that they must not make the same mistakes. If you were saved as a child, all the better! You can use that to encourage your children to follow your example.
- (2) Model **repentance**. If (or perhaps I should say ‘when’) you ever treat your children unkindly or harshly, make sure you say, “I was wrong. What I did was sinful and I apologize. Will you forgive me?” This gives them an example of sincere repentance which they can one day use as a model for their own repentance. You can also relate other times of failure and tell your children how you asked God to forgive you (do this in moderation and with discretion). This reinforces the principle that sin must be confessed and forsaken.
- (3) Be **prepared**. If your child came to you right now and asked you to help them pray for forgiveness, are you ready to lead them in prayer? If so, wonderful! If not, let me give you a suggested prayer for kids: “God, I know that I’ve done bad things. I’m sorry for doing wrong. I believe that Jesus is Your Son. I believe that He died for me and that He came back to life so that I could live in Him. I ask you to forgive me and come into my heart. Thank you for saving me. In Jesus name, Amen.” You should expect your children to serve God, and you should let them know that you expect this. Don’t tell them they’re saved if they’re really not, and don’t coerce them, but make sure they understand that serving God is the greatest thing in the world and that it’s the smartest decision they’ll ever make.

## H) Thoughtful **instruction**.

- (1) **Lead**. Encourage each member of your family to practice personal discipleship. The husband should lead by example, and the wife and children should follow the husband's leadership. When an entire family is engaged in personal discipleship, the results are amazing. I recommend that you have your family on a common reading plan since this will facilitate discussions of God's Word.
  - When kids are too young to read the Bible, be sure to saturate their minds with Bible stories and Christian media. I recommend resources like Adventures in Odyssey, the Bible in Living Sound, the Picture Bible, Answers magazine and such like (we keep the FaithLife Bible Screen running on our screens at home). When they're ready, have them start listening to the Bible with the goal of making something from the reading using Legos or coloring sheets or Play-Doh. Remember: they don't have to understand everything in order to start reading the Bible!
- (2) **Fellowship**. Take time each day to discuss what God said in the daily reading. You can use the Think section of the Bible page to do this. Share ideas and personal applications. Help your family develop the habit of discussing their relationship with God: what they're learning, how they're growing, what God has been saying to them, etc. This will prepare them to discuss spiritual things with people outside your family.
- (3) **Teach**. Schedule a time each week or month when your family gets together for a discipleship lesson. Make the occasion special, something your family will look forward to during the week. Pick a lesson from the website (see the "Lessons" menu), and go over the material. Encourage questions and discussion. If you do this consistently, you'll be preparing your children to disciple their children.





"If you make disciples, you always get the church, but if you make a church, you rarely get disciples."  
Mike Breen

"We don't have a missions problem, we have a discipleship problem."  
Mike Breen