

11. The Biblical Foundation for Training

Shortly before Christ returned to heaven, He gave us a commission to “Make Disciples” of all nations. The very first place that we should make disciples is in our own homes as we show our children how to become disciples of Christ. Christ gave the Biblical definition of a disciple in Matthew 13:52 where we read, “Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.’” The word that is translated “instructed” in this verse is the word that is translated “make disciples” in Matthew 28:19-20.

As parents, it should be our goal to help our children become disciples of the kingdom of God. This verse gives us several characteristics of a disciple. First, we see that a disciple is one that has become a householder or the head of a spiritual household. Second, a disciple has a treasure. That treasure is the Word of God and the life that he has in Christ. Third, a disciple is able to bring things out of that treasure or teach what he knows to others. Fourth, a disciple brings out of that treasure things that are new – he or she has a learner’s attitude so that he or she is learning new things from the Word of God. Fifth, a disciple brings out of that treasure things that are old – he or she is able to teach others the basics of Christianity.

Here, we see that the goal of training our children is to equip them to become “adult sons” and “adult daughters” that have become partners in ministry. That means that we are partners and can learn from them as they learn from us. One of the greatest blessings of my life was when my father asked me to show him how to teach evangelistic Bible studies so that he could have a ministry of evangelism to other adults during the final years of his life.

This brings us to the question, Is there a Biblical process for developing our children and helping them become disciples? The answer to that question is **yes**. Christ demonstrated that process by the way that He developed His disciples and equipped them for ministry. In fact, Christ demonstrated that He had completed that process and helped His disciples become adult spiritual sons and partners in ministry when He said to them in John 20:21, “So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’” We will help our children become disciples of Christ as we follow the same process that Christ followed in making His disciples. That process could be called “Four Calls and a Commission”. We will see today how that process applies to our children.

In John 1:38, two men asked Christ where He was staying. He invited those men to come and see. Over the next few months, Christ invited many other people to just come and spend time with Him. His goal during that first stage was to evangelize (Reach). For that first year, Christ just took these people along with Him so that they could observe His life. This is the same way that we reach our children for Christ. As they are growing up in their lives, we take them along with us and spend time with them so that they can see our love and our example. As they observe that we are led by the love of Christ, instead of being driven by the fear of man, the Lord will use our love to draw them to Himself. While we are leading them by love, we are also providing an example for them to follow.

We may not realize it, but our children are observing our lives very carefully as they grow and mature. This is best seen if we will observe them while they are playing during their early years. Carefully notice how they talk to one another when they are playing house and you will know how they hear you when you talk to them. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Paul, Silas and Timothy told how they had helped new Christians grow. They give us an example of what we want our children to observe as they grow. In verses 7-9, those men said that they had provided the love of a nursing mother. Then, in verses 10-12, they said that they had provided the example of a godly father. In the same way, our children will learn from our love and example as they observe us.

After those men had followed Christ for a year and observed His example, Christ said to some of them in Matthew 4:18-22, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” This began the second stage of Christ’s ministry to His disciples. His goal during this second stage was to edify (Teach). For the next nine months, Christ showed the disciples how to explain to others the message of repentance and faith. Matthew 4:23 says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.” During that nine-month period, Christ had the disciples participate as well as observe.

Once our children become Christians, we also want to begin showing them how to share the Gospel with their friends. We encourage them to start praying together with us for their friends who are not Christians. We help them memorize the verses that we use as we share the Gospel. We have them quote the verses that they are learning as we share the Gospel with their friends. We help them learn as we share the Gospel with their friends. We help them learn by taking them with us as we share the Gospel with others. The focus of this period is teaching them how to pray for others and what to say as we help them begin to participate with us as we minister to their friends.

After His disciples had followed Christ for about 21 months, Mark 3:13-14 says, “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” Here, we see that Christ began the third stage of ministry to His disciples. During this stage the goal of Christ was to equip (Train). In Mark 6:7-13, Christ sent out the twelve for a period of time in teams of two to share the Gospel with others. Then, in Mark 6:30-31, the disciples returned to Christ and reported what they had done and what they had taught. Later, in Luke 10, Christ sent out a total of seventy of His disciples to share His message with others. Luke 10:17-19 tells how they reported what they had done and taught when they returned. During this stage, Christ had the disciples do and report while He observed. Then, they continued to do ministry together.

In the same way, we begin encouraging our children to share the Gospel and minister to others when we are not with them. As they tell us what happened when they shared and ministered, we encourage them by rejoicing with them about the way that the Lord is using them as they share with others the things that they have learned. Then, we continue doing ministry with them so that they can learn to minister in other ways as we show them how to help their friends that have become Christians begin to grow. Our goal is to help our children learn to serve the Lord by

showing them how to serve Him in all of the different ways that we serve Him.

After His resurrection, Christ told the disciples in John 20:21, “...Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” This brings us to stage four where Christ expanded the leadership (Mobilize). Then, in John 21:15-17, Christ told Peter and the other disciples “Feed My sheep” and shepherd My sheep. Here, we see that the disciples had now become full partners in ministry with Christ. Over the previous three and a half years, Christ had shown them how to minister in every way that He had ministered. He had given them opportunities to participate. He had sent them out and then they reported what they had done and taught. He had ministered together with them after they returned to help them continue to learn. He had promised to send the Holy Spirit to give them power to serve.

In the same way, we continue to help our children grow and develop their ministry so that they grow and mature both spiritually and physically. Our goal is to help them become equipped for effective ministry by the time they become adults. We help them understand that they were given the Holy Spirit at the time of their salvation and help them understand that as they yield to the Holy Spirit, He will give them the power for effective ministry. We also recognize them as “adult sons and daughters” by sending them forth to serve the Lord just as the Lord sent us. We help them realize that they are now full partners in ministry in the work of the Lord.

Finally, after giving the disciples these four calls and showing the disciples how to do effective ministry, Christ gave them a commission. This is the fifth stage of ministry as Christ sent them out to extend His ministry (Send). Matthew 28:19-20 says, “‘Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Just as Christ had helped them become disciples, He now sent them out to repeat the process and Make Disciples. The process included: showing others the things that Christ had shown them; teaching others the things that Christ had taught them; giving others opportunities to do what they had learned and report on what they had done; inviting them to become full partners in ministry. We are to do the same things with our children.

We are to help our children develop a vision of the way that the Lord can use them as they go and make disciples. We help them to realize that this is best done as they first show others how to become Christians. Then, they teach others as they minister and as they give others the opportunity to participate with them. We help our children realize the importance of giving on-the-job training to those that they teach and rejoice with them as they report back what they have done. Finally, we help our children learn to help others become “adult sons and daughters” that are full partners in ministry and then commission them to make disciples also. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to become partners in the ministry of the Lord.