

Families in the Family of God
Disciples Making Disciples

Lesson #5 for February 4, 2006

Scriptures: Exod. 29:38-42; Prov. 1:8; 22:6; Matt. 28:18, 19; John 8:31; 13:35; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 6:1-4.

1. What is a disciple? One who is “trained”, “instructed”, “caused to be a follower”. What is the relationship between disciple and discipline?
2. How are parents supposed to disciple their children? John 8:31 suggests that disciples are ones who obey. John 13:35 suggests something quite startling: if we love, people will know that we are Christ’s disciples! Children are to be taught to respect and honor their parents. (Exodus 20:12) Parents are advised not to exasperate their children. (Ephesians 6:1-4). What do you think is the relationship between the way parents treat their children and the respect they get back?
3. At what ages and under what circumstances is discipling most effective? Is discipling an exact science?
4. How different is the relationship between a teacher and a learner (disciple) when compared with a master and his servant? In their early years children do almost anything they can to imitate their parents. In this sort of environment what is the best way for parents to teach their children?
5. What things enhance the discipling process and what things defeat or discourage it?
6. What happens if children receive mixed messages? God says we are to teach our children in every activity that we engage in. (Deuteronomy 6:5,6) Does God expect us to provide perfect examples for our children? How many of us are able to do that? Or does God ask us as parents to show our children the One Perfect Example as an example for them? Do your children see Jesus in you? How does that actually work?
7. One way in which children learn about God at home is through regular daily worship, Bible study and prayer together. If children think that daily Bible study and worship at home is boring and uninteresting are they learning the right lessons about God?
8. One of the greatest challenges for parents is to make spiritual matters attractive and interesting. How are we to do that?
9. The most important opportunity that parents and children have to meet God is during the Sabbath hours once a week. How many of our children look forward to the coming of the Sabbath each week? Why? How many do not? Why?
10. There is a famous statement: “the family that prays together stays together.” What do you think is implied by this statement? Do you agree with it?
11. When our children are very young they look to us as if we were God to them. At what point do we get them to shift their attention from us to the real God? How do we do that? How do we make God seem attractive to them?
12. Name some ways in which parents can make Bible study, daily worship, and the Sabbath experience a very special time for small children, for adolescents, and for teenagers.
13. One of the important challenges for parents is to teach children to give their lives to God. What does this mean? Does God want to control our lives? How do we explain Galatians 5:22,23 where the last of the gifts of the Spirit is self-control?

14. In a modern American Christian or Adventist home how much time is devoted to quality experience between parents and children and how much time is spent before the television set or the video games or the Internet?
15. **What kind of citizens would this country have if all of our children were parented by the television set?**
16. One very important issue in parenting is for the child to be loved and to feel loved. What is the best way to convey this message to our children?
17. **God expects us as parents to understand the developmental needs of our children.** You cannot treat infants, two-year-olds, adolescents and teenagers the same. Do we understand how to deal with each age group specifically?
18. If someone were to ask your children what "family" means to them what answer would they give?
19. What is the best way to say "I love you"? To children at different ages? To our spouses and all the members of our families?
20. Scientific studies have demonstrated that to communicate such a message there are several aspects which are important:
 - a. meaningful touch
 - b. a clear verbal message
 - c. demonstrating to the child that he is important and valuable to you
 - d. showing that child what you expect of him in the future and
 - e. doing your best to help the child reach his own goals.
21. **Do you feel comfortable saying I love you to all the members of your family? Why? Or why not? Is it possible to say to a teenager, for example, that he/she is loved even if their behavior is not? How can we best affirm our hopes and dreams for our children?**
22. The church has often emphasized the importance of daily or even twice daily family worship. What percentage of SDA families do you think have meaningful family worship times?
23. Read the following passages from Ellen White:

Let all who visit Christians see that the hour of prayer is **the most precious, the most sacred, and the happiest hour of the day.** These seasons of devotion exert a refining, elevating influence upon all who participate in them. They bring a peace and rest grateful to the spirit. {ST, December 17, 1885 par. 7; RH, 11/29/1887; MYP 342.3; CG 521.1; compare *BEcho*, 3/1/1897 par. 3; *Southern Watchman*, 6/13/1905; ChS 210.1}

Your children should be educated to be kind, thoughtful of others, gentle, easy to be entreated, and, **above everything else, to respect religious things and feel the importance of the claims of God.** They should be taught to respect the hour of prayer; they should be required to rise in the morning so as to be present at family worship. {5 T424.1; CG498.2; 521.2}

The father, who is the priest of his household, should conduct the morning and evening worship. There is no reason why this should not be the most interesting and enjoyable exercise of the home life, and God is dishonored when it is made dry and irksome. Let the seasons of family worship be short and spirited. Do not let your children or any member of your family dread them because of their tediousness or lack of interest. When a long chapter is read and explained and a long prayer offered,

it.” (NJB)

“Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it.” (NLT)

“Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.” (NRSV)

“Train a lad in the way he ought to go; He will not swerve from it even in old age.”

(Tanakh)

“Give instruction to a youth about his way, Even when he is old he turneth not from it.”

(YLT)

"Train a child in the way he ought to live and he'll remember it even when he's old."

(Clear Word)

28. How do you understand Proverb 22:6? When instructing and guiding and training a young child the biggest challenge of all is perhaps to make spiritual values attractive and winsome, even creating a thirst for spiritual matters.
29. **If an adult child chooses to abandon some or many of the spiritual values that his parents sought to give him does it mean that the parents efforts were a failure? What is the relationship between this verse and free choice?**
30. Many examples could be given of wrong ways in which to conduct family worship. This is not a time to rehearse the children's sins! It is not a time for parents to spell out in harsh tones exactly what they expect of their children. It is a time to do your best to make God and spiritual values attractive.
31. Fathers and mothers need to bear the burden of spiritual education together. In your own experience which parent do you think had the greatest influence on your spiritual development? Why?
32. Fathers often represent authority in the home. Some, perhaps, exercise this authority entirely too much! What does this teach children about God?
33. Scientific surveys have been conducted which show that children are much more likely to accept church membership and be converted at a young age than at an older age. The older people become the less inclined they are to change their minds about God. Why do you think this is?
34. What are the special challenges of parenting in families with less than an ideal makeup? Single-parent families, families where one parent IS not a Christian? Families where the father and the mother are of different Christians faiths or even different religions?
35. Hillary Clinton wrote a book entitled *It Takes a Village*. This has become a political slogan in some places. Is there a sense in which a spiritual community helps to parent a child? How can the church or a smaller group such as a Sabbath school class or a group of friends help to parent a child who has less than ideal circumstances spiritually at home?
36. How can we as a church help young couples understand the challenges of parenting step-by-step through the development of their children?

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