LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DISCIPLESHIP WITHIN THE HOME

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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God considers parents the primary disciplers of their children. He created the family to be the incubator of a teenager’s spiritual growth. God has given parents the responsibility of creating an environment suitable for their teen to become a follower of Christ. He also expects parents to maintain the maturation process while their children still live at home. More specifically, the father has been given the privilege of being the catalyst of each family member’s unique journey in becoming like Christ. This thesis will help parents understand why God has given them the enormous task of discipling their teenagers, what their role is in the disciple-making process, and how to strategically apply the biblical principles in disciple-making of their teens.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Did you know that the word “disciple” has many meanings? Some people use this term to mean the group of twelve men who followed Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. Other people use it to describe a person who is decidedly dedicated to a particular philosophy or ideology. No matter how the term is used, the main question to ask is “Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?” If you are a disciple, the LORD expects you to commit your life to become a disciple-maker of every people group. And if God has given you the privilege to be a parent, the LORD has even more important and special instructions for your life. With the gift of children, God gives you the unique responsibility to lead them to Christ and to help them grow into the likeness of Jesus. In other words, God makes you the disciple-maker of every people group on earth including your own teenager.

Student ministry has been a primary focus of this author’s life for twenty years. The writer has made it his life’s goal to be a disciple-maker of every student with whom he has contact. The author has watched hundreds of students give their lives to Jesus Christ and become engaged in his youth ministry. In every student ministry that the writer has led, he has encouraged students to utilize the various discipleship opportunities offered through the church as a supplement to their own personal studies and to their
parents’ teaching. Over the years, he has offered various small group Bible studies, weekly Sunday school, personal devotions, mission trips, service projects, discipling groups, and many other opportunities. These offerings were strategically designed to help a student grow spiritually mature in their faith. But more specifically, they were only designed to be an added resource for the teenager and parents to utilize.

Looking back over the last twenty years of his ministry the writer has been rewarded and humbled to say the least. The author has had the opportunity to catch up with many former students and hear how they are continuing and flourishing in their walks with the LORD. The writer has been encouraged to reconnect with so many former students and to find that they are involved in their local churches. In addition, some of his former students have even become pastors, worship leaders, and youth pastors. However, sad to say, the author has watched and heard about many other students who have, over time, become less involved in the church or have dropped out all together. As a result, the church has become irrelevant to them. As the author looks back, there seems to be a gambit of reasons for their previous involvement. The writer is compelled to ask the question “why?” “Why are there some students who are taking their relationships with Jesus seriously? Why are so many former students not in church and not committed disciples of Christ?”

The author feels the LORD has shown him some common themes associated with the lack of a student’s spiritual condition and growth. This conclusion is not through any statistical data or survey analysis. However, it does come from observing and noticing patterns in the lives of teenagers and their parents over the last twenty years. The writer has noticed that the absence of continuous spiritual development in his former students is
a direct result of their parents not taking the lead responsibility for being the primary disciplers in their teenager’s life. Why did these parents not take on this important responsibility? As the author looks back, the one missing element that seems most prevalent is the component of deliberate and intentional time focused on spiritual pursuits.

Without a doubt, parenting is a hard and often thankless job. With the busyness of life, there are many things, especially spiritual issues, which might be left undone or not done at all. Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross make this poignant and direct statement. They said, “Children don’t become kingdom kids because they go to better schools, wear the best labels, or have more elaborate vacations. Children become emotionally and spiritually vibrant young adults because, in part, they spend powerful hours enjoying the focused attention of their parents.”1 Looking back, the writer has observed that many parents were too busy to make the investment. They lacked biblical knowledge, self-discipline, and the confidence to be the disciplers their teenager needed.

In light of the last twenty years of his youth ministry, this thesis will be written to encourage parents to be the disciplers their teenager needs. The project will apply many biblical texts to the subject; however, there will be two very important key passages that will serve as the foundation. The passages are Proverbs 22:6 and Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

God desires every individual to follow Him as His disciple and become a disciple-maker. The Bible is full of verses and passages that command Christians to be disciple makers. To better understand what the LORD wants from parents, we only need to investigate two parts of His Word. The first passage was written by King Solomon, the

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1 Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross, Parenting with Kingdom Purpose (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group), 73.
wisest man to ever live. He authored most of the book of Proverbs. He wrote one of the most well known verses in the entire Bible. For centuries, parents have read and heard the command to, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." As a parent himself, Solomon wrote this verse to give vital instruction and encouragement to parents regarding the daunting task of raising a teenager who desires to live for the LORD.

The second key passage that will be used is found in Deuteronomy 6. The Jewish people know this Biblical account as the Shema. The Bible says,

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Based on these two key passages, we can see that God clearly makes the parents the primary leaders of spiritual matters. Although there are many ideas and philosophies concerning the subject of raising teenagers, God’s Word has the best, most thorough, and sufficient advice regarding raising a teenager so that he will love and honor God. Parents should remember that when God gives the command, He also makes the way. Not only does the Bible hold the greatest guidance; God also promises the necessary resources to accomplish His goals and desires in each individual teenager’s life. Since God has the best counsel and provides all the resources, He gives the responsibility of utilizing the resources to the ones to whom He’s given the teenager. Therefore, the LORD gives the

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2 Proverbs 22:6 (King James Version).

3 Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (New International Version).
command to parents and then provides the means for them to be the primary influence for the teenager in their home to be trained according to His standards. With that understanding, this thesis will encourage, teach, and instill confidence in parents to disciple their teenagers to have authentic relationships with Jesus Christ and become disciple-makers.

Statement of the Problem

In the writer’s twenty years of student ministry he has seen a correlation between the low spiritual heath of a teenager and the lack of spiritual maturity of their parents. From his perspective, the lack of spiritual maturity in adults is related to their minimal commitment to practice spiritual disciplines in their day-to-day lives. In a survey conducted for the research of this thesis, several questions were asked of Christian parents regarding their personal time spent in God’s Word. When asked, “During an average week, how many days do you read your Bible?”\textsuperscript{4} a shocking 34%\textsuperscript{5} of Christian parents read their Bibles 5-7 times per week. Incidentally, only 33%\textsuperscript{6} of the fathers surveyed indicated that they read their Bible 5-7 times per week. The follow-up question asked was, “During an average week at home, how many times does your family read the Bible together?”\textsuperscript{7} On average, 57%\textsuperscript{8} of Christian families never have a time when they

\textsuperscript{4} See Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{5} See Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{7} See Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{8} See Appendix B.
read the Bible together. This result was sadly surprising. When the parents fail to model basic spiritual disciplines in front of their teens, the likelihood of their teenagers having a robust spiritual walk will be less likely. It is safe to say that this lack has a profound impact on the lives of their teens today and in the future. Unfortunately, most parents are oblivious of the long-term impact. John Wesley once said, “What this generation tolerates, the next generation will embrace.”9 Parents cannot afford to become spiritually lazy when it comes to their own spiritual journey.

Another problem the author has observed over the years has been the way parents have used the church. He has watched parents allow the church to be responsible for spiritually raising their teenagers. Parents expect programs and church staff members to be the primary disciplers in their teenagers’ lives. Many parents think that as long as they take their teens to church, involve them in some weekly spiritual activities, and send them on a few retreats and missions trips, their spiritual development will automatically take place. Additionally, parents assume that their teens’ attendance and participation in church will continue in the future as a result of going to church when they are young. Parents will insist that their teens engage in student ministry activities although the parents are not engaged with the student ministry or simultaneous Bible studies or ministries the church has to offer. As a result, parents think that incorporating church involvement in their teenagers’ lives while the parents run errands or return home will result in future church involvement when the teens leave home and make lives for themselves. This, unfortunately, is not the case. Many teenagers who are drop-offs at church will be dropouts of church later in life. Ken Ham and Britt Beemer ask the

question, “Why isn’t our faith taking root in our children?” They respond by stating,

First, it’s possible that the parents themselves do not have a “robust Christian faith” to start with. Christianity is contagious, but children won’t catch it unless the parents are infected. If your children aren’t following Christ, you must first check to see if they’re following your lead! Your first priority as a parent is to live the Word of God in a natural, sincere way. If you try to preach it to your kids without living it, you’ll only add to the hypocrisy that turned so many of them away.¹⁰

David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, confirms this idea when he made several observations about research regarding the spiritual activity of adults who were, at one time, active in their local church as children and as students. He stated in the 2009 article,

It is important to clarify what this research does and does not indicate. First, correlation does not imply causation. This means that the research does not prove that spiritual activity as a young person causes spiritual engagement as an adult. In fact, the research confirms the pattern that many students who are active early in life disengage from their faith, as they get older. And people’s recollections of childhood activities are only one limited way of understanding faith durability.¹¹

Further evidence (indicated in Figure 1)¹² shows a significant decrease in the church attendance and faith activity of adults compared to their church involvement when they were younger. This trend has to be reversed. Jim Burns said it best when he stated, “The first layer of influence for spirituality is the parent, and then the church.”¹³ Therefore,

¹⁰ Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do To Stop It (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), 144.


¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jim Burns, Confident Parenting (Bloomington, IL: Bethany House Publishers, 2007), 61.
this thesis will explore the need for parents to engage in every aspect of their teenager’s spiritual development. But first, this project will give great attention to the need of a growing spiritual maturity in the parents. There will be a major emphasis throughout this project for the parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their teenagers and provide a nurturing environment for their continued growth.

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<th>ATTENDED RELIGIOUS PROGRAMS AS A TEENAGER</th>
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<td>active faith*</td>
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<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times / month</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less often</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
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**NATIONAL AVERAGE**

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<th></th>
<th>attended church in the past week</th>
<th>active faith*</th>
<th>unchurched**</th>
<th>changed from childhood faith***</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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* active faith = prayed, read the Bible, and attended church in the last week, as adults
** unchurched = individuals who have not attended a church worship service in the last six months, not including holidays or special events.
*** changed faith = response to the following survey question: Question posed: Some people have the same faith perspective for their entire life while other people change faiths or significantly change their faith views as they get older. Thinking about your life, are you part of the same religious faith today as you were when you were a child or have you ever changed to a different faith or significantly changed your faith views since then?

Fig. 1. American Faith Engagement As Children and Teenagers

It is obvious that parents need guidance to overcome these problems. This thesis will discover what God thinks about who the primary discipler of the teenager should be.
The goal will be to help a parent understand the heart of God and His desire for each of them to become more strategic in the role as the primary trainer, or discipler, of their middle and/or high school student(s). In other words, who is most qualified, called by God, and has the most vested interests in a teen becoming a genuine follower of Christ? Obviously, it is the parents.

Next, the thesis will address the problem of the parents’ spiritual maturity. If a parent is going to attempt to train their teenager in the way he should go, they are going to have to dedicate their time, discipline themselves, and be determined to become students of God’s Word. They must live out their faith without shame. This process for the parents, especially the father, is a non-negotiable if the command to train their teenager will ever be accomplished. Jim Burns stated, “When it comes to discipleship, life lessons are more caught than taught. Sometimes as parents we take the easy way out and simply lecture our kids. That is the least effective way. The better style of discipleship is by training our kids and walking alongside them.”14 To be an effective disciple-maker, the discipler must be pursuing a healthy and growing walk with the LORD before they can ever expect to lead anyone else into a healthy and growing relationship. In her book, Spiritual Parenting, Michelle Anthony discussed the importance of the discipler’s duty for his own spiritual development and personal holiness prior to helping someone else along in their quest to become more like Christ. She said,

Before I can be responsible for anyone else, I must take responsibility for me. This is not a selfish act, but a necessary one. My friend Roger Tirabassi illustrated this point well when he said that the airline companies understand this concept when they instruct passengers, “In the event of an emergency, if you are

14 Ibid., 67.
traveling with a child, first put on your own oxygen mask before putting on the
mask of your child.” By taking responsibility for myself, I am in a better position
to offer myself to others.”\textsuperscript{15}

It is bizarre to think that anyone can possibly help another person develop as a disciple of
Christ when there is no personal commitment and growth within themselves. Therefore,
the disciplers must take their role seriously so they can make a difference in the ones God
has given them to help along in their journey. Discipleship is a subject that is very
important to God; therefore, He has emphatically addressed this very important issue.

Next, this thesis will explore the father’s role as the husband, dad, and discipler of
the home. Today, many fathers have become disengaged from their God-given role as
the family leader. This desertion has caused many problems. In his book, \textit{Raising Godly
Children in an Ungodly World}, Ken Ham discussed the role reversal that is occurring in
today’s culture. He said,

In the majority of Christian homes, it is usually the mother, not the father, who
acts as the Spiritual head. In too many cases, neither the mother nor the father is
fulfilling the responsibility to train their children in the things of God. In the
homes where some training is happening, the mother is usually the one that
teaches, prays, and reads the Scriptures without her husband’s help. Mothers
seem to be taking on the leadership roles more and more; fathers are opting out of
this area all together.\textsuperscript{16}

This is not God’s design. Homes need a leader, and God has chosen men to fill that role.
Therefore, an in-depth investigation will discover the need for the man of the house to be
the prophet, priest, and king of the family.

The Bible says in the book of Second Peter, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his

\textsuperscript{15} Michelle Anthony, \textit{Spiritual Parenting: An Awakening for Today’s Families}
(Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 142.

\textsuperscript{16} Ken Ham and Steve Ham, \textit{Raising Godly Children in an Ungodly World:}
\textit{Leaving a Lasting Legacy} (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), 108.
promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”\textsuperscript{17} God is serious about everyone putting his faith and trust in His son. The Bible also says, “For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”\textsuperscript{18} God gave His son as our substitute and wants no one to enter eternity without a relationship with Jesus Christ. It has been the author’s experience with parents that salvation, especially their teenager’s salvation, is a subject about which they are very concerned. The problem is that many parents are either not comfortable discussing salvation with their teenagers or they are not sure how to lead anyone to Christ. Therefore, this thesis will give great attention to the most important decision a person has to make. That decision, of course, is making Jesus Christ the LORD and Savior of their lives. Using the following chapters, parents may grow spiritually, overcome fear, gain confidence, and learn how to lead another person, especially their teenager, to a genuine and authentic relationship in Jesus Christ.

The next area of focus will deal with helping parents understand how their teenagers learn best. This thesis will look into the personality and learning style of each teenager being discipled. A parent will discover, “What conditions are most suitable for helping a disciple develop in the likeness of Jesus Christ?” There are numerous methods and scientific processes to help determine and discover the answer to this question. This thesis will look at different methods to discover the best way to employ a healthy and productive learning environment. Some people would say that going through this step is

\textsuperscript{17} 2 Peter 3:9 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{18} John 3:16 (New International Version).
a waste of time and is unnecessary. However, this extra step will prove to be an invaluable resource to the disciple and especially the discipler.

Once the learning style of the teenager has been determined, another tool will be suggested to aid in the long-term developmental growth of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Many parents have no idea where to start with discipleship topics. They do not know how to teach anyone, especially their teens, how to read the Bible, pray, or to acquire other spiritual disciplines. This thesis will address this problem and help parents lead their teens in the way they should go. The Discipleship Growth Guide (DG$^2$) will be introduced and explained in detail. DG$^2$ should be utilized and uniquely implemented by the discipler for each teen in the home. By implementing this tool in the early stages of the discipleship process, the discipler will be able to guide his disciple in the way he or she should go and make learning about God and His Word easier based on the person’s natural learning bent.

One additional problem will be addressed. God has given the parents, specifically the father, the responsibility to make the home a place where spiritual growth can occur. Often this responsibility is a challenge especially when men are not being the spiritual leaders God has called them to be in the first place. This problem must be eliminated. It is time for dads to step up, take leadership of the home, and be the creators of an atmosphere where growth can happen. Just as Adam was given the task of providing an atmosphere of growth in the Garden of Eden, today men are called to provide for growth in their homes. Until the father creates an atmosphere of spiritual growth, true discipleship will be difficult. The goal of this thesis will be to address the problem of not having an atmosphere of spiritual growth in homes and to offer parents the necessary
fundamentals on how to create such an atmosphere … an atmosphere where genuine love for the Lord and His Word cause authentic spiritual growth to take place.

When parents commit their lives to growing relationships with the LORD, realize that the Bible is clear in making them the primary disciplers of their teenager’s lives, discover the learning styles of their students, and, most importantly, make certain their teenagers have the opportunity to give their lives to Jesus Christ, then parents will be able to “Train up a child in the way he should go.”  

**Special Terminology**

- **Parents** – The word “parent” could have three different definitions. The first meaning could refer to the biological father and mother that live in the home with the teenager. The second could refer to one of the two parents being the biological parent and the other parent being the stepparent. In this case, the teen spends the majority of his time in one home. A third option could refer to a teen who comes into the home by means of adoption.
- **Child** – The term in this thesis implies that the child is within the years of birth to twelve years old. Scripture may define a child as a person of any age.
- **Teenager, Teen, Adolescent, or Student** – Teenage is the age range of a child that is between thirteen and nineteen years old.
- **Disciple** – A disciple is a student, learner, and personal, lifelong follower of Jesus Christ.
- **Discipler** – This term refers to both parents to whom God has given the responsibility to “Train up a child in the way he should go.”
- **Primary Disciplers** – The primary disciplers are the parents of the teen. More specifically, the father of the home is the parent that is considered by God to be the most accountable.
- **Discipleship** – Discipleship is the process and practice of being a student, learner, and lifelong follower of Jesus Christ.
- **Atmosphere or Home Environment** – These terms will be used to indicate the tone, mood, and growth potential of the home.
- **Blended Family** – The blended family is a family made up of parents who are bringing children from another relationship into the marriage; therefore, a stepparent and stepchild blend is created.

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19 Proverbs 22:6 (King James Version).

20 Ibid.
• **J1.8 Principle** – The Joshua 1:8 Principle (J1.8 for short) is a way of life based on the verse found in Joshua 1:8. The principle is based on what a disciple talks about, on how a disciple studies the Bible, and on how a disciple obeys the Word.

• **DG²** – The Discipleship Growth Guide is a resource developed to help parents disciple their teenagers in five basic areas of Christian growth. The areas are Bible reading, prayer, spiritual disciplines, evangelism, and prayer.

**Statement of Limitations**

When it comes to the idea of parents being the primary disciplers of their teenagers, many people would disagree. They think that the job belongs to a pastor, Sunday school teacher, or Christian schoolteacher. Many parents believe they are not qualified to give their teenagers a proper spiritual education. They feel that a professional is the only one qualified for such a lofty task. This thesis will take on the many false ideas and incorrect mindsets that have permeated today’s church and parent culture.

The project will address the many issues that exist surrounding the misconception of parental involvement in discipleship. According to the Bible, parents are to be the primary disciplers in their teen’s life. Therefore, they are held accountable for providing for their teenager’s spiritual growth and development. A teen’s spiritual growth and development can be attained by a combination of several methods. For instance, a parent can have a Bible study, require daily devotions of the teen, and challenge him with scripture memorization, just to name a few examples. However, this thesis will not be a guide on how to do these things. Nor will it provide any curriculum. That responsibility will be left to the hundreds of authors who have written excellent Bible studies, devotional guides, and books.

When it comes to discipleship topics, the thesis will not cover every topic that a
systematic theology course would offer. The Bible is full of truth about God, His desires, and how we can intimately know Him. The subjects and information that are contained in scripture is so overwhelming that it would take more than a lifetime to cover. That is why this thesis will not address specific theological topics. However, this project will discuss and provide helpful information regarding how to approach scripture, how to make discipleship contagious, and how to implement a lifelong plan of discipleship practices.

This project will focus and concentrate on parents who have teenage children. The age range will be specifically for children who are thirteen to nineteen years old. Even though much of this project can be used and implemented by parents who have children that are not teenagers, this thesis will be limited to only target the narrow age range of teenagers.

In today’s culture, there are many families who have adopted children or have stepchildren. Blended families are growing more and more each year. A blended family is created when one or both partners getting remarried bring their children from a previous marriage into the new family. The parameters of this thesis will focus on parents who have teenagers that live in their home whether they are biological children, adopted children, or stepchildren. The goal of this project will be to challenge the parents, specifically the father, to take the initiative and responsibility to disciple the teens they have in their home. Whether the teenager is a biological offspring or not, God has allowed the parents and the teen to be together; therefore, a discipler is needed for the teenager.

Lastly, this thesis is written to parents who are believers in Jesus Christ. In each
of the subsequent chapters, the information will be written to parents who are interested in growing in their own faith and desiring to be disciple-maker of Jesus Christ. Consequently, their love for the LORD will be contagious.

**Theoretical Basis for the Project**

Proverbs 22:6, one of the most familiar verses in the Bible pertaining to the parents’ responsibility regarding the upbringing of children, is one of two chair texts of focus in this thesis. Interestingly, this verse is written by King Solomon who is speaking to his son in the book of Proverbs. God gives explicit instructions concerning His desires for the family. The goal of every Christian parent should be to honor the Word of God and seek to please the LORD through obedience to His Scripture. The Bible says, “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”21 The focal word of this verse is the word ‘train.’ To more fully comprehend the meaning, a closer look at the original Hebrew language and the history behind the word ‘train’ must be considered. According to *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Sid Buzzell states,

*Only in Proverbs 22:6 is the verb translated ‘train.’ Hanak seems to include the idea of setting aside, narrowing, or hedging in. The word is sometimes used in the sense of ‘start.’ Child training involves ‘narrowing’ a child’s conduct away from evil and toward godliness and starting him in the right direction. Gleason L. Archer points out that this Hebrew verb is similar to the Egyptian h-n-k, which means ‘to give to the gods’ or ‘to set up something for divine service.’ He suggests that in verse 6 this gives the following range of possible meanings: ‘Dedicate the child to God,’ ‘Prepare the child for his future responsibilities,’ ‘Exercise or train the child for adulthood.’*

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21 Proverbs 22:6 (King James Version).

Buzzell is indicating that it must be the parents’ responsibility to initiate the training process in their teenager’s life. God is the one who has given the parents the privilege of having a child come into their home. The Bible says, “Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from Him.” Therefore, the parents must do everything in their power to give their children a chance to make Christ the LORD of their lives and guide them to become true disciples.

David Jeremiah, in his book *Hopeful Parenting: Encouragement for Raising Kids Who Love God*, asked the question, “What does it mean to ‘train up’?” He answers his question in a compelling way when he said,

> The term is used in the Old Testament just three other times, in all three instances to convey the idea of dedication: once to describe the dedication of Solomon’s house, twice to convey the idea of dedicating the temple. The word originally related to the palate of the mouth. An Arab midwife would rub crushed dates on the palate of a baby’s mouth to stimulate the instinctive action to suck, so that the child could be nourished. Over time the concept of training up came to mean “to create a thirst or a hunger within a child for the godly things of life.” Sometimes we’ve given the concept a military flavor. “Get in shape!” “I’m training you up, boy!” But it’s not like that at all. This isn’t boot camp; it has to do with creating within the child a thirst and a hunger for the things of God.

Considering these two reportable sources, the idea behind the word ‘train’ is one of intentionality and determination. God lays squarely on the shoulders of the parents the task of returning the child with whom they were blessed back to Him. The idea, though, is to eagerly give their children back to God seeking and craving after Him. The parents are to produce an adult that is hungering and thirsting after the LORD. In other words,

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23 Psalms 127:3 (New International Version).


25 Ibid., 71-72.
parents should reproduce an improved copy of themselves. God has given this ominous
task of discipling the child to the parents without reservation.

Additionally, in Proverbs 22:6, the word ‘train’ takes on two distinct ideas to
ensure a proper focus and balance. The first idea is from the perspective of the one doing
the training. From the time the child enters the family until he is old enough to leave
home to live on his own, the parents are given the mission to prepare him for a productive
and honoring life of service to God. Before parents can attempt to train anyone properly,
they must first subject themselves to being instruments that God is using or can use. The
Bible says in the book of Proverbs, “The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their
children after them.” Before parents can lead a child anywhere, they must first be
molded and shaped by the hand of God. LaVonne Chandler, President of Touched by
Grace Ministries, said “You cannot give something that you have not received and you
cannot lead someone to a place you have never been.” The parent must earnestly
continue his pursuit of becoming like the Christ. Whether the parent is an immature
believer or a seasoned veteran, he must strive to be a usable instrument for God to use in
his teenager’s life. It is imperative that parents take their own spiritual maturity into
consideration. Each parent must be a student of God’s Word and strategically implement
the various spiritual disciplines in their own lives. These ideas will be discussed more
fully in later chapters.

The second aspect is more direct. The parents are given the task of guiding their
teenager away from evil and pointing them to Christ. God uniquely creates each person


27 Linda Davis, Flying Free: Answering God's Call to Freedom (n.p.: Tate
Publishing & Enterprises, 2006), 12.
with different personalities, behavioral tendencies, and learning styles. The Bible says, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.”\textsuperscript{28} We are individuals. Therefore, the parent must take into consideration each teen’s individuality and personal predisposition before attempting training efforts. To understand how a teenager learns best is critical. Before parents can begin to properly train their teenager, they should consider how that teen learns best. People learn in different ways. A teen could be a visual learner, auditory learner, kinesthetic learner, or a combination of these three styles. It would be wise for the parent to know the teen’s learning style through any number of learning style assessments. These ideas will be discussed more fully in later chapters.

To further investigate the verse, there is one more item to consider. Later in the Proverbs 22:6 verse, Solomon uses the word ‘child.’ Some people assume this word implies a baby or a small kid. Many people do not connect the meaning of this word ‘child’ to someone who is a teenager. The word translated from the original Hebrew is na’ar. In his book, \textit{Parenting: From Surviving to Thriving}, Charles Swindoll states,

\begin{quote}
The translation leads us to believe that the verse has a little boy or girl in mind. But the Hebrew term na’ar is much broader. It is used to refer to young people in all stages of growth. In 1 Samuel 4:21, na’ar is a newborn. In Exodus 2:6, Moses is a three-month-old na’ar; and in 1 Samuel 1:22, Samuel, the na’ar, has yet to be weaned. First Samuel 3:1 uses the term to describe Samuel as a young lad serving Eli in the temple. Na’ar in Genesis 21:12 pictures Ishmael as a preteen, while in Genesis 37:2, Joseph is a seventeen-year-old na’ar. The young men who served as David’s messengers in 1 Samuel 25:5 are called na’ar, as was a young man of marriageable age in Genesis 34:19.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

Na’ar can mean a small child, however, it implies the teen years as well. So the term

\textsuperscript{28} Psalms 139:13 (New International Version).

na’ar has a distinct relationship to the age group this thesis is addressing.

The second of the two chair texts discussed in this thesis is found in the second book of the Law. “The book bears the name Deuteronomy (deutero = repeat; nomos = law), a restating of the Law.” Before his death, Moses gave his last sermon to the children of Israel. He announced God’s commands to nurture their families and allow their families the chance to succeed now and in future generations. Moses said, “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Jack Deere, a commentator of this passage, noted in the Bible Knowledge Commentary his insight and explanation. He stated,

God’s people were responsible to meditate on these commands, to keep them in their hearts. This enabled them to understand the Law and to apply it correctly. Then the parents were in a position to impress them on their children’s hearts also. The moral and Biblical education of the children was accomplished best not in a formal teaching period each day but the parents, out of concern for their own lives as well as their children’s, made God and His Word the natural topic of a conversation which might occur anywhere and anytime during the day. The commands to tie them and write them were taken literally by some later Jewish readers. However, the commands are probably emphasizing symbolically the need for the continual teaching of the Law.

In other words, God expects parents to maintain a continuous maturation process with

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their teenager at all times. As stated by Deere, the teaching and training duties of the parents were to be accomplished as a "natural topic of a conversation which might occur anywhere and anytime during the day." 33 There was no need for a special time or occasion to talk about God. Talking about God was to be as natural as breathing.

Interestingly, Moses repeats this same passage almost word for word just five, short chapters later. In chapter eleven, Moses uses many of the same words and phrases he used in chapter six. The same ideas are also implied, however, the order of his thoughts are slightly different. Moses restates his command to the parents when he said, "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates..." 34 In this passage, Moses is again giving similar instruction to the nation of Israel concerning their own spiritual focus and the upbringing of their children for future generations. Moses knows that these commands are worth mentioning again. Israel has the potential and propensity to sin, especially by worshipping other gods. As the nation is ready to enter into the Promised Land, God gives them a stern warning concerning whom they are to worship.

These two passages have much to teach us regarding God’s design and desire for the spiritual upbringing of children, especially teenagers. The process begins in the heart of the parent. In Deuteronomy 6:6, Moses speaks directly to the parents about their own

33 Ibid., 275.
Moses said, “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.” Moses is addressing the parents and making the point that they cannot teach what they do not possess. Before the parents can effectively lead their teenager to a deeper relationship with the LORD, the parents’ hearts must first possess the Word of God. When God mentions the heart, He is not talking about the muscle inside the body that pumps blood. In the Hebrew Bible the word refers to the volition and the will of a person. Moses was not just teaching the parents of Israel to simply memorize the words of the Law; rather, “The goal was a change in the way God’s people thought.”

Once God has established His Word in the heart of each parent, He then transitions to discuss the delivery system. In verse seven the Bible says, “Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” Without hesitation, Moses is placing the primary responsibility of Bible discussion with a teen on the parent. Moses is suggesting that anytime is a good time to talk about God. Formality of time or place is not suggested in this passage. He tells the parent to take advantage of any moment to discuss a truth from the Bible. In other words, parents cannot afford to miss any occasion to talk about God. There are times when there is a need for other godly people to enter into a teenager’s life. There can be great benefit from having another individual teach, encourage, and challenge a child regarding biblical topics. Moses actually implies this.


idea when he said, “Here, O Israel.” Moses is speaking to all of Israel about the importance of widening the circle of influence with strategic relationships with other godly people. Research has shown the great value of establishing healthy relationships outside the home. Research has indicated, “Teens who had at least one adult from church make a significant time investment in their lives were more likely to keep attending church. More of those who stayed in church – by a margin of 46 percent to 28 percent – said five or more adults at church had invested time with them personally and Spiritually.” However, anyone other than the parent will always be considered secondary. “There is no hint here – or anywhere else in the Bible – of the multigenerational teaching of the truths of God being abdicated by parents in favor of ‘trained professionals.’”

Moses continues to instruct the parents on how to properly train and raise a godly teenager who will honor and please the LORD in verses 8-9. The Bible says, “Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” In these verses, Moses is recommending ways the parents can teach their teens simple methods of remembering God’s Word. Having Scripture displayed in prominent areas and having easy access to them allows a parent and a teenager the chance to memorize and meditate on God’s Word.

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39 Ibid., 89.

anytime and anywhere. To constantly have Scripture close by when confronted with temptation is a vital tool. Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof described Moses’ command when they said,

For a generation, they received daily reminders about who God was and how dependent they were on God for everything. There was the manna they depended on every day to eat. There was the cloud of smoke that hovered over them every day to lead the way. There was even a pillar of fire that was there every night when they went to sleep. This nomadic people knew a God who was very present in their everyday experience.⁴¹

In these verses, Moses is pointing out the need to establish the home as God’s territory. When he said, “Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates,” he was describing ways a family could physically display God’s Word in their homes to be deliberately distinct from other homes in the world. Voddie Baucham commented on this Scripture by saying, “This is a specific expression of the general principle of the whole passage. There should be tangible things in and about our homes of God’s people that distinguish them from the homes of others.”⁴²

Overall, Moses was helping the families avoid the sin of compartmentalization. Israel was to view their faith as a regular and daily relationship. He knew that keeping the families talking about God, memorizing His truth, and visually seeing it displayed would help them stay away from segmenting God and putting Him into compartments of their lives. By naturally integrating God into every aspect of life the people would not have the tendency to partition Him out. Joiner and Nieuwhof said it best when they stated, “If families decided to take advantage of the times already built into their routines,

⁴¹ Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof, Parenting Beyond Your Capacity: Connect Your Family to a Wider Community (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 126.

initiating interaction would be natural."\(^{43}\)

Other biblical passages to be utilized in this thesis will provide further evidence of God’s explicit instructions concerning His desires for the family. The goal of every Christian parent should be to honor the Word of God and seek to please the LORD through obedience to His Scripture. There are passages in the Bible that point to the father’s direct involvement in the training aspect of a teenager. The Bible says,

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\text{Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.}^{44}\]

In this passage, God is giving strict instructions to the fathers of the homes to teach their teenagers repeatedly the truths of the Bible so they will not be easily forgotten. God’s goal in this command is to encourage a repetitive teaching method by the parents. By teaching a subject on a regular basis improves their teens’ ability to understand God’s truth and helps them to remember God’s truth.

Other verses in the Bible support the idea of the father being the primary discipler of the family. The Bible says, “The father to the children shall make known thy truth.”\(^{45}\)

The Bible also says, “Fathers...bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 132.

\(^{44}\) Psalms 78:1-7 (New King James Version).

\(^{45}\) Isaiah 38:19 (King James Version).
LORD.”  Since the role of the father is enormous, God, the ultimate Father, makes a promise. The Bible calls the LORD, Jehovah-Jireh. Jehovah-Jireh is translated to mean ‘the LORD will provide.’ According to Blueletterbible.org, “This is a symbolic name given to Mount Moriah by Abraham to memorialize the intercession of God in the sacrifice of Isaac by providing a substitute for the imminent sacrifice of his son.”

In other words, when God requires anything from a dad, He will provide the necessary tools and talents to accomplish the task. God requires a great deal from parents. Parenting is not an easy job. However, God has never, nor will He ever, ask a parent to do something and not give him or her the adequate resources to accomplish the job.

By integrating these biblical passages and their principles into the fabric of our families, God will be honored and pleased. Through these verses, He has given parents explicit instructions and guidelines regarding child rearing. Parents could assume that if they were to explicitly follow the instructions God has outlined in scripture then He would guarantee their teen to be a Bible scholar, totally committed follower of Jesus Christ, and a well-behaved, obedient child. This, unfortunately, is not the case. Parents can perfectly execute God’s commands found in Proverbs, Deuteronomy, and other passages from the Bible for parenting and still not reach the goals that God desires. A parent may conclude, “If there is no guarantee, then why even try?” The answer to this question is simple. As believers in Jesus Christ and as parents, we are commanded to follow God’s instruction for our lives, especially when given the privilege to raise

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46 Ephesians 6:4 (King James Version).

children. Not trying is not an option. We are given explicit instructions regarding the upbringing process, and we are to leave the results up to God. Parents are given a promise in Proverbs 22:6b about the role of parental responsibility. The verse ends by saying, “and even when they are old they will not turn from it.”\textsuperscript{48} When the parents accomplish their task and properly plant the seed of God’s Word into the lives of their teenagers, it becomes the LORD’s responsibility to create growth and produce fruit. As a side note, when a parent takes God’s Word seriously and applies its teaching to every aspect of the life of his teen, the odds are greatly increased that the teenager will choose to honor God with a lifelong commitment to Him.

\textbf{Statement of Methodology}

This thesis will answer the question, “How does a parent become the primary discipler in a teenager’s life?” The chapters of this thesis will provide biblical evidence of parents’ God-given role as the disciplers of their children. The chapters will provide action steps and support for parents to purposefully and deliberately grow in their own relationships with Christ. Fathers will better understand the specific role God has given them in the overall disciple-making process. Parents will be encouraged to live out their faith at home so that they can have the opportunity to make God known to their teens. The parents will learn how to systematically and intentionally implement discipleship practices into the daily flow of their own lives and the lives of their family. Finally, parents, especially fathers, will be guided to create a much-needed atmosphere of spiritual growth in the home. In other words, the goal of this thesis will be to encourage

\textsuperscript{48} Proverbs 22:6b (New International Version).
families to embrace Christ as a natural way of life.

Chapter one, “Who Is the Primary Discipler in a Teenager’s Life?” will provide the parents with an in-depth exegetical analysis of several passages from the Bible. The first passage is found in Deuteronomy 6. In this highly regarded passage, Moses is delivering his farewell sermon to the children of Israel. His address is prior to the Israelites crossing the Jordan River and entering into the Promised Land. In this passage Moses is giving specific commands from God to ensure a long and prosperous life in the new land. Moses stated,

> These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all His decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. When the LORD your God brings you into the land He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.49

God, through Moses, clearly gives the primary responsibility of discipleship to the parents of their teenager. In verse seven God said, “Impress them on your children.”50 God was directing this statement straight at the father and mother. God clearly places the

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50 Deuteronomy 6:7 (New International Version).
parents at the top of the discipleship process. The LORD has purposefully placed parents in this position because research has shown that they have the most influence in a teenager’s life.

Chapter eleven of Deuteronomy also supports parents as being the primary disciplers. In this passage, Moses reiterates these ideas to emphasize the importance of his point. He said,

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.51

God uses Moses to underscore His desire for the parents to take the lead in discipleship development of each teen in their home. According to these passages, it is up to parents to strategically enlist the church and other godly people to assist them in training their teen as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

This same sentiment is also implied in the book of Proverbs. In chapter twenty-two, Solomon gave explicit instruction to parents in one short verse when he said, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”52 In this verse, God gives His promise to parents when they are diligent in their pursuit to obey His command. God promises, “When he is old, he will not depart from it.”53 Ken Ham, in his book Already Gone, adds this commentary regarding Proverbs 22:6. He said,


52 Proverbs 22:6 (King James Version).

53 Ibid.
“What a reminder to teach children from when they are born – and a reminder to be diligent in providing the right sort of training/curricula, etc., for children.” The goal of chapter one is to prove to parents what God’s Word has to say about their personal role in the disciple-making process of each of their teenagers.

Chapter two will discuss the discipleship process that must first take place with each parent. In “Discipleship Begins With You” there will be a detailed look into the personal holiness of each parent. The parents’ personal holiness is a critical issue, not only for themselves but also for their teenagers. In his book, Parenting with Kingdom Purpose, Ken Hemphill drives home this point when he said, “Most parents who want to know where their kids are headed religiously just need to look in the mirror.” In other words, parents are not setting the right example. Bobby Bowden, the longtime football coach of Florida State University, has seen the effect of parents setting a poor example first hand. In a message he delivered at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes event, he told a story of a time he was asked about the change he has seen in the players he recruited and coached. The question was, “Have the boys you’ve coached changed over the years?” Astonishingly he said, “No, they haven’t changed.” He went on to say, “The

54 Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do To Stop It (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), 32.
55 Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross, Parenting with Kingdom Purpose (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 36.
56 Bobby Bowden, “Bobby Bowden’s Talk” (lecture, Hickory Metro Convention Center, Hickory, NC, December 6, 2010).
57 Ibid.
people who have changed are the parents.”58 He then clarified his statement by saying, “The parents have quit raising their kids.”59 This chapter will concentrate on the steps required for a believing parent to deal with his personal sin, constantly experience the filling of the Holy Spirit, and be the spiritual leader his teenager needs to have.

Personal holiness begins with God’s Word. According to Lifeway, “the No. 1 catalyst for spiritual growth is simple: daily Bible reading.”60 God expects parents to chase after personal holiness with all their hearts, souls, and strength at all costs. Parents are to pursue personal holiness by reading and studying God’s Word and striving to live pure lives.

Secondly, a serious inward evaluation will be conducted. Parents will have to come under the scrutiny of God’s Word and allow the Holy Spirit to perform the needed surgery in order to amputate the sin in their lives. This is the critical first step for the parents who desire to pursue a life of purity. Areas that will be dealt with are:

- The Sin of Your Thoughts
- The Sin of Your Attitude
- The Sin of Your Speech
- The Sin of Your Action

Coming to terms with these sins is essential and must be dealt with on a daily basis. Parents will learn how to win over sin and experience victory in their lives. Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily

58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
and follow me." Therefore, before a parent can possibly expect to be an effective instrument in God’s hand, they need to surrender to the LORD and purposefully allow the Holy Spirit’s cleansing of sin in their lives each day through His Word. When a proper attitude toward sin is present in a believer’s life, God is able and willing to do extraordinary things. That’s why the Bible says, “Come near to God and He will come near to you.” The result is a purified life.

On the other hand, if a believer has an apathetic attitude toward sin in his life, there could be any number of grave consequences. Isaiah makes this point clear when he said, “Look! Listen! God’s arm is not amputated—He can still save. God's ears are not stopped up—He can still hear. There's nothing wrong with God; the wrong is in you. Your wrongheaded lives caused the split between you and God. Your sins got between you so that He doesn't hear.” God never wants a follower of Jesus Christ to ever live apart from Him. He never wants any sin to come between Him and His child.

Parents who are believers in Jesus Christ cannot afford to ever have their sins come between them and God. Therefore, it is critical that parents have a thorough understanding of how to properly handle and deal with the sin in their lives. No parent can afford to be without the power of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. As a result of not having the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, parents cannot expect to accomplish any good work for the LORD in the life of their teenager. It is God’s desire for those who are His followers to live a holy and blameless life. The Bible says, “May God

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himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."64

Chapter 3 will be entitled, "Prophet, Priest, and King." In this chapter we will look at passages form the Old Testament and the New Testament regarding how the father is to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of the home. More specifically, this chapter will explain how he is the primary disciple-maker of the entire family based on a detailed analysis from a passage found in Luke 2. First, the father is known as the prophet of the family. God has given the father the duty of being the one who brings the truth of Scripture into the home. Secondly, God expects the father to be the one who presents his family to the Heavenly Father at the altar of prayer. He is to represent the priest of the Old Testament and be the mediator of his family to the Heavenly Father. Lastly, God expects the father to take responsibility of being the king of the home. As described throughout the Old Testament, the king is the one who provides what is needed to those God has given him the privilege to serve.

Additionally, this chapter will address the importance of the issue of fathers spending quality time with their teenagers. In today’s fast paced culture, time has become a precious commodity. Parents have less and less time to spend due to the ongoing, hectic pace of careers, family, social activities, and diminishing margins. This chapter will ask some hard-hitting questions regarding priorities, how parents spend their time, and the myths that entrap them. In other words, dads will be challenged to make some big adjustments in their lives. The goal of this chapter will be for parents, especially the fathers, to take a serious look at God’s main concerns regarding their lives,

64 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (New International Version).
responsibilities, and priorities.

The next chapter will focus on the most important task of parenthood. Each parent is given the distinct privilege and opportunity to introduce his teenager to Jesus Christ. Chapter 4 will have the title, “Making God Known to your Teenager.” A comprehensive study will be done on how parents can introduce their teenagers to Christ. Parents will be encouraged to live out a faith that matters, comprehend modern culture and Biblical terminology dealing with salvation, and anticipate and fortify their teenager’s decision in making Jesus Christ the LORD of their lives. In addition, the Joshua 1:8 (J1.8) principle will be discussed, specifically how it can be used in everyday life.

This chapter will take a distinct stance on Biblical salvation. From a theological standpoint, there will be the assumption that the family does not hold to the five points of Calvinism or adhere to an Armenian stance. Therefore, this chapter will be written with the understanding that the teenager has the opportunity to make their own decision to be an eternally secure follower of Jesus Christ. To aid in this process, the book by authors Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross will be utilized. In particular, chapter six of Parenting with Kingdom Purpose will be used to convince parents of the influence and impact they have in their teenager’s life.

This chapter will also deal with the “smorgasbord of alternatives ways to God” that today’s culture embraces. Parents will be challenged to adopt the tribe of Issachar and Berean philosophies in regard to culture and ascertaining God’s truth. Also, parents will be encouraged to study, understand, and know how to discuss the Biblical terms associated with true salvation. From there the thesis will guide parents in ways to help
make Christ a real and natural part of everyday family life. No matter if their teenager is a follower of Christ or not, this chapter will help parents know how to interact and dialog with their teens in order to lead them in the way they should go.

Chapter 5 will be entitled, “A New Model to Disciple Your Teenager.” In this chapter, a close look into Proverbs 22:6 and how a teenager learns best will be examined and explored. First, this chapter will help parents lead their teenagers to own and live out their faith. Parents will be introduced to the Discipleship Growth Guide (DG²), which highlights five basic areas of spiritual development. The areas of concentration are Bible study, prayer, spiritual disciplines, witnessing, and ministry. Next, the chapter will help guide parents to understand how their teenager best learns any subject, especially biblically related subjects, according to his natural “bent” or learning style. There will be several Internet resources used to gain valuable information and insight in the discovery of the various learning styles.

According to experts there are three basic learning styles. The styles are known as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. These different learning styles are explained in detail below:

**Visual learners** process new information by reading, looking at graphics, or watching a demonstration. Children with this learning style can grasp information presented in a chart or graph, but they may grow impatient listening to an explanation.

**Auditory learners** prefer listening to explanations over reading them and may like to study by reciting information aloud. This type of learner may want to have background music while studying, or they may be distracted by noises and need a quiet space to study.

**Kinesthetic learners** learn by doing and touching. They may have trouble sitting still while studying, and they are better able to understand information by writing
it down or doing hands-on activities.\(^{65}\)

Educators have determined that a teenager typically learns best by using a combination of the different learning styles, however, one style is usually preferred over the other two. When the proper learning style is used with a teenager, the results are noticeable. Frustration levels are reduced, homework wars can be eliminated, and the parent—teenager relationship can be greatly improved. Therefore, it is important for a parent to find out his teen’s preferred learning style, or bent, to help them learn-how-to-learn.

Discovering your teenager’s learning style is not rocket science, but a science nonetheless. Determining which style combination best fits with a teenager is a key to succeeding in his overall education and discipleship process and the implementation of DG\(^2\). When a parent understands his teen’s learning style, education can be fun. No matter if the subjects are academic or biblically related, learning can be made easier and more productive with the application of the proper learning technique.

If a parent will consider these evaluations and make a serious effort to employ these strategies, training of any subject can be possible. In other words, making God’s command of “Train up a child in the way he should go”\(^{66}\) can become a reality.

Chapter 6 will be entitled, "Ways of Making the Home an Atmosphere of Spiritual Growth." Discipleship topics are unlimited. There are countless studies, devotions, and theological topics that can take a lifetime to explore. This chapter will not focus on specific discipleship topics. Rather, it will focus on how parents, specifically the father,

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\(^{66}\) Proverbs 22:6a (King James Version).
can create an atmosphere where spiritual growth can flourish in the home.

Initially, to help dads make the home an atmosphere where spiritual growth can occur; a look into what happened in Genesis 1 will be discussed. God’s original design in the Garden of Eden was for Adam and Mrs. Adam to maintain and create an environment of growth. Just as Adam was given the responsibility to create an atmosphere of growth in the Garden then, God gives the same duty to dads today. Put simply, “A happy home doesn’t just happen; it’s the result of giving the LORD top priority and investing time and attention in the family.”

In order for fathers to create an atmosphere where spiritual growth can flourish, they need to love God completely, love their wives sacrificially, and love their children openly. This takes time!

There will be a focal verse that will guide our thinking and outline the chapter. This verse is found in this thesis’ chair text passage of Deuteronomy 6:5. The Bible says, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” Moses gave this verse to the Hebrew nation as a daily homework assignment. The Jews recited this verse two times a day in order to keep the idea of this verse in the forefront of their thinking and activity.

In his sermon entitled, *Jesus Silences His Critics*, John MacArthur gave a detailed commentary on this verse. In Matthew 22, the Sadducees were trying to trap Jesus with a question concerning life at the resurrection. Needless to say, they failed in their attempt to catch Jesus. After that exchange, the Pharisees decided to give their luck a try and trap Jesus with their own test about the Law of Moses. Jesus brilliantly condensed the whole

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Law of Moses into two points, and the Pharisees could only walk away speechless. In the first of the two points, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 verbatim. MacArthur gave his interpretation of this passage when he said,

Jesus did the opposite of what the Pharisees expected Him to do: He quoted Moses directly from the Pentateuch (Deut. 6:5). He affirmed a strong solidarity with Mosaic teaching. Not only did He quote Moses, but He also quoted the most familiar passage Moses ever wrote! The Shema (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41) was the most familiar Scripture to all Jews because they had to recite it twice a day. Every Jewish home had a mezuzah by the front door with the Shema in it. The men strapped phylacteries (small boxes with portions of the Shema in them) to their foreheads and left arms to remind them of their responsibility to God. Many orthodox Jews follow the same practices today.

The Hebrew word for love in Deuteronomy 6:5 is aheb, which refers primarily to love exhibited by the will, mind, and actions rather than love exhibited by feelings or emotions. It is the highest kind of love, for it motivates you to do what is right and noble no matter what you may be feeling. It is akin to the agape love of the Greek language, which is the love of intelligence, as opposed to philia, which is the love of emotion, or eros, which is physical attraction. The love Jesus speaks of in the greatest commandment is the noblest, purest, and highest form of self-sacrificing love that each person is commanded to have toward God. The Jewish people already knew the number-one command was to love God with their whole heart, soul, mind, and as Mark adds, strength (Mark 12:30). In pointing out all four aspects of the human being, Jesus is simply calling together all that a person is. He was saying, "You need to love God with your entire being." I don’t think His intent is to sort out the individual sense of each word, but there is something to be learned by studying the four words He used.69

The Hebrew word aheb, found in Deuteronomy 6:5, will be a major focus of this chapter. Aheb refers to the type of love that is demonstrated deliberately by the will, mind, and actions. When aheb is present in an individual, the results are extraordinary. Aheb motivates a person, especially the father, to do the right things no matter how they may feel. This chapter will explore how the aheb type of love can naturally motivate the fathers to lead their families in worship. There will be specific discussion regarding how

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the *aheb* type of love encourages the father to use verbal and non-verbal communication
to love his wife. Lastly, this chapter will plead with earthly fathers to love their teenagers
in ways that genuinely reveal the love the heavenly Father has for them. As a result,
when fathers demonstrate the *aheb* type of love, they are providing the primary ingredient
to have an atmosphere of spiritual growth to permeate the home. As a bonus, when the
father invests his life in this endeavor, he plants a seed for future generations as well.

**Review of the Literature**

The following is a summary of the related literature used for the topic of how
parents can disciple their teenagers. These resources have been written by leading
experts and nationally-know authors in the field of family ministry, discipleship, and
theology. The websites, newspaper and magazine articles, books, interviews, audio
lectures, video lectures, and sermons accumulated are utilized to logically and
systematically discover why a parent needs to be the primary discipler of his teenager.
Additionally, these resources will be used to help a parent understand what is required to
encourage his teen to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ. These resources have also
provided valuable insight and wisdom about how parents can create an inviting
atmosphere within the home that is conducive for a lifetime of spiritual growth.

**Internet Websites and Magazine Articles**

In this thesis, there are a number of web sites used to give insight, analysis,
statistical data, and council for the topic of how parents can disciple their teenager.
These are well known and trusted sites that have a good reputation for their information
and accuracy.

1. George Barna – http://www.barna.org. George Barna is internationally known for his survey work and statistical analysis of current trends regarding family and Christian values. His information will benefit this thesis when dealing with current teen trends regarding their view of the church.

2. Parade Magazine – Parade is a weekly magazine distributed to its readers through the Sunday, Charlotte Observer newspaper. In a publication, on November 14, 2010, the feature story discussed the importance of the family eating together.

3. Survey Monkey – http://www.surveymonkey.com/ is an Internet website that allows the end user to create a survey to gather information. For this project, the writer has created a survey that will be discussed in more detail in and throughout this thesis.

4. Center for Parent/Youth Understanding – http://www.cpyu.org is a website to help “parents, youth workers, educators, and others understand teenagers and their culture so that they will be better equipped to help children and teens navigate the challenging world of adolescence.”

5. Search Institute – http://www.search-institute.org/ is an organization that is dedicated to “discovering what children and adolescents need to become caring, healthy, and responsible adults. Drawing on extensive research, Search Institute brings hopeful solutions to pressing challenges in the lives of young people and their communities.”

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6. Family Life – http://www.familylife.com is a ministry that offers families assistance with marriage and parenting issues, counseling, spiritual growth, and emotional health. The ministry provides articles and podcasts by Dennis Rainey and other leading experts and covers a variety of parenting and teen topics.

7. Parade Magazine – Parade publishes their magazine weekly for many Sunday newspapers. Their website, http://www.parade.com, along with their weekly publication, offers information about the heartbeat of Americans in many family related areas. In two different articles the magazine addressed the issue of families gathering to eat their meals together. Their statistics gave tremendous insights on the need for families to establish or fight to continue a time together around the dinner table. The article accessed was *The Truth About Family Dinners* reported by Mark Clements Research.

8. Internet Learning Style Tests – There are several valuable resources used in this thesis to help parents understand how to evaluate the learning style of their teenager. The websites used are:

   - www.ldpride.net
   - www.greenville.k12.sc.us/hillcrm/lstyles/lsurvey.htm

9. Online commentaries – Also used in this work are several online commentaries. The commentaries used are:

   - Matthew Henry – This commentary can be accessed by: http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_author.cfm?AuthorID=4
   - Chuck Smith – This commentary can be accessed by: http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_author.cfm?AuthorID=1
   - Ray Stedman – This commentary can be accessed by: http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_author.cfm?AuthorID=9
   - John MacArthur – This commentary can be accessed by: http://www.biblebb.com/files/mac/sg2358.htm
10. Lifeway Christian – http://www.life.com There are numerous articles used from this website. The authors used in this thesis are:

- Parents and Churches Can Help Teens Stay in Church
- Mark Kelly – Parents, Churches Can Help Teens Stay in Church
- David Roach – Waggoner Finds American Protestants Deviate from Biblical Discipleship Standards
- Mary Rettig – Study Shows Example May Be Parents' Best Teaching Tool
- Ginger Plowman, Talking So Your Children will Listen
- Christine Field, If We Listen

11. Other websites used to access articles:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metanarrative

Books on Discipleship, Parenting, and Other Related Issues

In this thesis, there are a number of excellent books on discipleship, parenting and other related issues by seasoned professionals that give insight, analysis, statistical data, and counsel on the topic of how parents can disciple their teenagers. Many of the authors are internationally known and considered experts in the field of discipleship. Other authors are well-known speakers on parenting. There are pastors and preachers of the Gospel listed who have a wealth of wisdom and theological knowledge. This list is not intended to be exhaustive on the subjects of discipleship and parenting, however, for this thesis the list below will reflect many of the resources used to help parents understand how to become the primary disciplers of their teenager.

God. In his book, Jeremiah discussed parenting from a unique Biblical perspective. As a pastor, husband, father of four, and a grandfather of ten, his perspective gave great insight to this thesis.

2. Voddie Baucham – Baucham is as good a writer as he is a speaker. The LORD has gifted him to be an extraordinary mouthpiece for Him. In his book, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk With God*, Baucham deals extensively with God’s command in Deuteronomy 6 regarding the upbringing of children. His main focus centers on the family, especially the father, being the epicenter of spiritual development and growth.

3. Steve Wright with Chris Graves – Their book, *A Parent Privilege: That the Next Generation might know… Psalm 78:6*, was the catalyst for this thesis. Their work convinced the author of the great vacuum of discipleship within so many homes. As a result of their book, it is the writer’s goal through this thesis, to encourage parents to make discipleship a priority in their home. It is imperative that parents understand God’s mandate for them to become the primary disciplers of their teenagers.

4. Reggie Joiner & Carey Nieuwhof – These men have given new and fresh insight on the Deuteronomy 6 passage. In their book, *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity: Connecting Your Family to a Wider Community*, these authors discussed five significant family values that are crucial in providing discipleship in the home. These values are as follows:

- **Family Value #1**: Widen the Circle: Pursue strategic relationships for your kids.
- **Family Value #2**: Imagine the End: Focus your priorities on what matters most.
- **Family Value #3**: Fight for the Heart: Communicate in a style that gives the relationship value.
- **Family Value #4**: Create a Rhythm: Increase the quality of quality time you spend together.
• Family Value # 5: Make it Personal: Put yourself first when it comes to personal growth.  

Their book helped the writer understand and grasp God’s desires for the family through their commentary of Deuteronomy 6.

5. James Merritt – Merritt’s book, *In a World of...Friends, Foes, & Fools: Fathers Can Teach Their Kids to Know the Difference*, was written by a dad to dads. This book is based on Scripture found in the book of Proverbs. It is written to help fathers lead their children in making right choices in their lives and how to avoid making wrong choices.

This book is divided into three distinct parts.

• Part 1: Looking Up to a Crumbling Down World,
• Part 2: Wising Up in a Dumbing Down World,
• Part 3: Standing Up in a Falling Down World.  

There are few people who have had greater impact on the author’s life than James Merritt. The author has been an avid podcast listener of his sermons for several years. The writer considers him his mentor even though we have only formally met one time.

6. George Barna – During the author’s research, he was able to utilize several resources published by George Barna. God has used him in astonishing ways to help people see more clearly our cultural landscape through his extensive research. In particular, two of his books are used in this thesis to bring out various aspects of discipleship. His books, *Revolutionary Parenting: What the Research Shows Really Works* and *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ*, give evidence that discipleship in the home is a must by every parent.

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73 James Merritt, *In a World of...Friends, Foes, & Fools: Fathers Can Teach Their Kids to Know the Difference* (n.p.: Xulon Press, 2008), xi-xii.
7. Ron Luce with Mike Guzzardo – These authors wrote the book, *Battle Cry for My Generation*, to ignite a fire in the hearts of teenagers for their own generation. This resource will be utilized to reveal the great needs in a teenager’s life that each parent ought to know.

8. James Dobson – Dobson is an internationally known radio and television personality. He is the author of several books pertaining to marriage, parenting, and child development. In this study, the author will use two of his works. The first book, *Bringing Up Boys: Practical Advice and Encouragement for Those Shaping the Next Generation of Men*, will be used in subsequent chapters to help focus on the father’s responsibility as the primary discipler. Also, his book, *The Wonderful World of Boys*, will be utilized to help a father know how to be the dad his teenager needs to have.

9. Michelle Anthony – Anthony’s book, *Spiritual Parenting: An Awakening for Today’s Families*, gave some insightful information. She was able to help the author understand discipleship in a new way from a woman’s perspective. One very strong aspect of the book was her focus on “knowing God’s voice.” She suggested that parents reading her book “Remember the goals of spiritual parenting we set in chapter 1 – to put our children in the path of the Divine so that they would learn to:”

- *hear* and *know* God’s voice,
- *desire* to obey it,
- *obey* it in the power of God’s Spirit (not their own strength).

Her writing will be helpful when dealing with the chapter regarding “Introducing Jesus Christ to your Teenager.”

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75 Ibid., 194.
10. Greg Laurie – Greg Laurie is one of the author’s favorite radio preachers. In his book, *Discipleship: The Road Less Traveled*, he made the author stop and think about his own personal discipleship plan. He was able to challenge the author to consider his plan of attack in becoming like the Christ. In the first chapter, he referenced to a book by J. Dwight Pentecost. Laurie discussed the concept of “The idea of radical Christian living, or true discipleship. He sums it up in three simple words: curious, convinced, and committed.” Laurie concluded the chapter with a list of what a believer looks like when they move from being a nominal Christian to a committed Christian. He listed,

- Result 1: You will bear fruit
- Result 2: You will study and obey God’s Word.
- Result 3: You will love one another

11. John Maxwell – John Maxwell is considered an expert and guru on the subject of leadership. He has written numerous books helping pastors and church leaders understand the basic principles and philosophies of being a leader that people will want to follow. In his book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You*, Maxwell gave incredible biblical wisdom and practical advise. As a result, his writing will help parents know how to lead their teenagers from where they are to where they need to be.

12. Alan Melton & Paul Dean – These co-authors wrote the book *Disciple Like Jesus For Parents: Following Jesus’ Method and Enjoying the Blessings of Children*. Their book is written to parents who may feel they are not adequately trained or qualified to disciple anyone, especially their own teen. They used this resource to systematically approach how a parent can and must be teachable so that they can, in turn, teach others.

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13. Mark Holman – In the book, *Building Faith at Home: Why Faith at Home Must Be Your Church’s #1 Priority*, Holman wrote from a unique perspective. He discussed how a church could weave family ministry into the fabric of the church and help bridge the gap between the home and church ministries. The major emphasis of the book is the reestablishment of the home as the primary location where faith is grown and cultivated.

14. Richard Swenson – Swenson is a medical doctor who has a heart for people who are too busy. His book, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, challenges the reader to stop, take inventory of their lives and schedules, and re-evaluate their priorities to make them honoring to the LORD. Swenson’s prescriptions, when heeded, will always result in a healthy, balanced, and simplistic life.

15. Dennis and Barbara Rainey – This husband and wife team wrote the book *Parenting Today’s Adolescent*. They are both well-traveled and respected speakers and authors when it comes to parenting. Their book helps parents understand how to navigate their children through the traps of the preteen and teenage years.

16. Bill Hull – Hull has written two books that will be utilized in this thesis. His books, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on the Journey of Faith* and *Jesus Christ Disciplemaker*, both give great clarity through scripture regarding the methods Jesus used to make disciples.

17. Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton – These authors have assembled an extraordinary amount of research in their book *Soul Searching*. Their work helps parents understand the American teenager’s religious and spiritual lives. Even though this book was written in 2005 many, if not all, of their findings are very useful today.
18. Debbie Salter Goodwin – In her book, *Raising Kids to Extraordinary Faith: Helping Parents & Teachers Disciple the Next Generation*, Goodwin gives some useful advice to help moms and dads, as well as teachers in the local church, understand their role in cultivating Christian virtues in the lives of teenagers. As a mom and a leader in her local church, she was able to zero in on the important aspects of discipleship and leading others to a genuine relationship with Christ.

19. Gregory R. Frizzell – Frizzell has written numerous books in his lifetime. However, *Returning to Holiness: A Personal and Churchwide Journey to Revival*, is by far one of his most impacting works. This book has played an instrumental role in the author’s spiritual growth in recent years. The writer considers this resource a vital component of this thesis. His book is divided into three different sections. The book’s outline is as follows:

- Preparing for Your Journey
- Beginning Your Revival Journey
- Onward to Powerful Prayer and Dynamic Service

In particular, section two guides the reader to seriously consider eight specific sins that inhibit a relationship with the LORD and, consequently, a spiritual life. Frizzell helps the reader understand God’s Word and seek God’s grace through genuine repentance.

20. Ken Ham & Britt Beemer – In their book, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It*, these authors paint a startling picture of today’s church congregation. They jolt the reader when they say, “The numbers are in and they don’t look good. From across Christendom the reports are the same: A mass exodus is
underway. Most youth of today will not be coming to church tomorrow." This is a startling truth that the author has personally seen. This is perhaps one of the main reasons why the writer feels this thesis project must be completed.


22. David Alan Black – Black is the Greek and New Testament professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. His book, *The Myth of Adolescence*, goes into great detail about the vast difference in today’s adolescent in comparison to the teachings of the Bible. He makes a compelling argument regarding the case to eliminate the term “teenager.” His book will be a great benefit to Chapter 6 of this project.

23. Ken Hemphill & Richard Ross – These two, well-known authors have combined to write an exceptional book entitled *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose*. This resource “looks at Bible teaching and the recent National Study of Youth and Religion to share a fresh approach to raising children that will cut through the chaos of modern life and bring families closer to each other and the Lord.” This source gives great insight to biblical truth and how it can relate to the reality of parenting in today’s world. Therefore this work is a must in this thesis.


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these men help the reader understand what made Jesus such an effective mentor. They examine the way Jesus prayed, taught, and served other people. They inspire and equip the reader to also mentor like Jesus.

25. Charles R. Swindoll – In his book, *Parenting: From Surviving to Thriving*, Swindoll presents six biblical principles from the book of Deuteronomy that help parents bring up their child in a way that honors and pleases God. His six principles are:

- Parents cannot pass along what they do not possess.
- Children won’t benefit from what isn’t authentic.
- Truth isn’t a core commitment if it lacks courage convictions.
- Prosperity without personal sacrifice often leads to indifference toward God.
- Compromising faith in the one true God is politically correct but spiritually lethal.
- Mercy brought us out, grace brings us in, but obedience enables us to survive.  

Therefore, Swindoll’s book will prove to be a valuable addition to this research and thesis work.

26. Thom S. Rainer & Art Rainer – This father and son team works together to write, *Raising Dad: What Fathers & Sons Learn From Each Other*. These two authors share their personal stories to cause parents to think through their ideas and methods regarding childrearing. This valuable resource will assist in the area of how parents can connect with their teenagers.

27. Jim Burns – In his book, *Confident Parenting*, Burns gives great advice to parents to help encourage them in their adventure as a parent. His book is sectioned into five different valuable lessons. His lessons are:

- The Lesson of the Shema
- The Lesson of the Sabbath
- The Lesson of the A.W.E.

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- The Lesson of Disciple and Grace
- The Lesson of the Blessing

These lessons are beneficial insights from a seasoned veteran that has a wealth of knowledge to share with parents who desire to improve.

28. David Staal – Staal’s book, *Leading Your Child to Jesus*, will be a great benefit to chapter 4 of this thesis. Chapter 4, *Making God Known to Your Teenager*, will take an in-depth look at how parents need to plan and prepare themselves regarding the salvation of their teenager. His book gives great advice to parents on how to talk to their children about salvation and faith.

29. Walt Mueller – In his book, *The Space Between*, Mueller gives parents a clear understanding of the many changes that occur during the teenage years. He discusses the physical, social, intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual transformation of teens. His insight and expertise give parents a biblical perspective of how God expects them to respond during these transformative years.

30. Tom McGrath – The book, *Raising Faith-Filled Kids*, was written to parents by a parent. McGrath takes the simple approach to assist any parent with taking everyday opportunities and turning them into teachable moments. His goal is to help parents foster and promote spiritual growth in their children.

31. Max Anders – Anders was the general editor and author of the *Old Testament Commentary: Proverbs*. This thesis will use several verses from Proverbs. His insights and remarks on these verses will help better communicate the heart and mind of Solomon and God. His knowledge of the Hebrew language and his ability to clearly give application is a vital tool for this project.

32. Bible Knowledge Commentary – *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*
is edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. These men have assembled an outstanding team of theologians to accurately give insight and expert opinion on almost every verse in the Old Testament. This commentary has been a great benefit on numerous previous projects and will be during this process as well.

33. Patrick Morley – Wrote both *The Man in the Mirror* and *The Young Man in the Mirror*. These resources are important to this project because of Morley’s stance and understanding of the issues that face men and their sons. He helps men deal specifically with sin issues and gives them hope and encouragement to overcome temptation.

34. *Perspectives on Family Ministry* – This book was written by three men who have seen the ups and downs of church ministry. Paul Renfro, Brandon Shields, and Jay Strother combine to make a very serious and compelling argument that every church should implement some form of family ministry.

Personal Interviews of Bible Teachers Who Are Parents

During the data-gathering phase of this thesis, the author was able to sit down and talk to several notable Bible teachers and ask them a variety of questions. God gave the writer the opportunity to discuss the discipleship methods they used with their own families. The author also asked what advice they would give to parents who desire to implement Proverbs 22:6 with their own families. The writer was truly blessed with the opportunity to sit with these individuals.

1. Steven Wright – Steven is an accomplished writer and a well sought after speaker. He is an associate pastor in Raleigh, NC and the father of three teenagers. He allowed the writer to talk to him regarding his books and the numerous challenges in teen culture.
2. Bill Bennett – Bennett, a retired pastor and professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, has been the author’s mentor and friend for over twelve years. He has a passion for mentoring men and has written numerous books. The author will use many of the lessons he has taught him over the years in this thesis.

3. James Merritt – Pastor of North Point Community Church in Duluth, Georgia is a father of three boys. The author was able to have a 1-½ hour conversation with him on how he and his wife discipled their sons. The author was able to ask direct and poignant questions concerning the methods he used to implement Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Proverbs 22:6 in the lives of his boys. He graciously shared with the author his philosophy on raising his sons, however, the one aspect that stood out the most was his commitment to personally live out his faith in Jesus Christ everyday. It was obvious Merritt purposely lived out the Christian life. There was no question that he is the same man in the pulpit as he is at home with his family.

4. Elmer Towns – Towns, professor and co-founder of Liberty University, allowed the author to take a few minutes of his time after a Doctorial of Ministry class in June 2010. His insights were helpful and beneficial.

5. Jonathan Falwell – Falwell is the pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. He was a guest speaker in a Doctorial of Ministry class in August 2010. During a question and answer period, the author was able to ask him a few questions regarding his philosophy and approach to discipling his own children. Falwell is a busy pastor, however, he discussed how he is able to separate family time and the demands of his work. Without a doubt, his priority is to his family.
Audio and Video of Lectures and Sermons

This is a list of speakers who have lectured or preached on topics related to the family, discipleship, and spiritual growth from a biblical perspective. These speakers are seasoned veterans in ministry and have years of experience.

1. Steven Wright – Steven delivered a lecture at the Connecting Church and Home Conference. This conference was held at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky on August 21, 2010. His message was entitled: Ready, Set, Go. Steven based his lecture on 1 Timothy 3 and Ecclesiastes 3:11. His main focus was to teach parents to “teach what they know and reproduce who they are.”

2. Stephen Rummage – Rummage, Senior Pastor of Bell Shoals Baptist Church in Tampa, Florida, preached a message entitled Marriage Survival. This message addressed the passage in Genesis 1 & 2 concerning the first marriage and how God ordained this institution. His message regarding how God has designed the marriage, His overall purpose for the union, and the intent of the family unit will be incorporated into this thesis.

3. Randy Stinson – Stinson delivered a lecture at the Connecting Church and Home Conference. This conference was held at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky on August 21, 2010. His lecture was based on Ephesians 5:22-33 and was entitled, Husband, Father, Disciple Maker: Being the Catalyst for Your Child’s Spirituality. The interrogative to his lecture was, “What does it look like for a husband to

80 Steven Wright, “Ready, Set, Go!” (lecture, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, August 21, 2010).
lead in the home Spiritually? During the lecture, Stinson discussed the nine markers that represent a husband who leads the home spiritually. The markers he discussed are as follows:

1. Vision – This is where we are going.
   - What do you want things to look like 10 years from now?
2. Direction – This is how we get there.
   - Map out your daily, weekly, monthly and yearly written plans.
3. Instruction – Let me show you how.
   - Prepare your children daily for obstacles that will come up.
4. Imitation – Watch me.
   - Model what to do when you mess up.
   - How attractive do I make the Gospel to my kids?
5. Inspiration – Isn’t this great?
6. Affirmation – You’re doing a great job at home!
7. Evaluation – How are we doing?
8. Correction – Let’s make a change.
9. Protection & Provision – I’ll never leave you, you can count on me.
   - It’s for you to come up with the plan.

4. Rodney Cooper – Cooper was a guest speaker at a men’s conference the author attended in the fall of 2007 at Lakeview Baptist Church in Hickory, North Carolina. He spoke on various topics related to manhood and the family during the weekend. One of his lectures still resonates with the writer even today. The lecture was entitled The Man as the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Home. He discussed how the Bible describes the man of the home and his responsibility in leading his wife and children in their relationships with the LORD. His lecture challenged the author then, and he plans on utilizing this information in this thesis to emphasize the point of the man’s duty in the home.

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81 Randy Stinson. “Husband, Father, Disciple Maker: Being the Catalyst for Your Child’s Spirituality” (lecture, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, August 21, 2010).

82 Ibid.
CHAPTER II
WHO IS THE PRIMARY DISCIPLER IN A TEENAGER’S LIFE?

Who is the primary discipler in a teenager’s life? Some people would assume that parents have been given the responsibility to disciple their teenager since God has placed them together in the same home. Others would argue that the church, or more specifically the pastor or youth pastor within the church, is most qualified and should have the duty of discipleship. Biblically speaking, both statements are actually true. God has provided two very strong institutions in a teenager’s life. While the family and the church should work together, the parents are the ones who are ultimately responsible.

Parental Pushback

When the author has asked questions to parents about their efforts in discipling their teenagers, the writer has received a number of different responses. The author began by asking, “Who is the primary discipler in your teenager’s life?” Parents either do not know how to answer, change the subject, or begin to give the writer reasons why they are not doing a great job. The author has found most parents actually know that discipleship is their responsibility. Nonetheless, parents are not comfortable with the task and try to explain away their rationale regarding their lack of participation in discipling their teenager. Their responses include:
1. “I have no influence on them! Other people have more impact than I do!”
2. “I’m too busy, I don’t have time!”
3. “I have no idea how to disciple my teen, especially since I’ve never been discipled myself.”
4. “I don’t have a seminary degree. I can’t possibly answer all their questions.”
5. “You’re the paid professional, that’s your job!”

These were statements made by parents when confronted with the idea of discipling their teenager. This chapter will address these concerns by helping parents understand their God-given responsibility, the role of the church, and a method to properly enlist others in the quest of discipling teenagers.

**Power of Influence**

Many parents think they have no influence on their teenager. They believe that friends, church leaders, teachers, media, and coaches have more input into the lives of teens than parents do. According to a variety of studies and surveys, parents are actually getting a false reading. The idea that a teenager never wants the input of their parents is simply not true. Parents, in all actuality, are by far the most influential people in a teenager’s life. Wayne Rice and David Veerman state, “An extensive study of 272,400 teenagers conducted by *USA Today Weekend Magazine* found that 70 percent of teens identified their parents as the most important influences in their lives. Twenty-one percent said that about their friends (peers), and only 8 percent named the media.”

It is staggering to see the gap between the parental influence percentage and the peer influence percentage. With a lead of forty-nine percentage points, the study indicates that

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parents are the most prominent people in a teenager’s life. Ironically, a website of the Coors Brewing Company also adds, “Nearly three out of four parents believe their children’s friends and classmates have the most influence… Yet contrary to what parents think, kids say mom and dad have the biggest impact on the choices they make.”\(^8^4\) This information is eye-opening. No wonder the brewing companies target adults so poignantly with their commercials and advertisements. They are extremely aware of the impact the father and mother have on their children. The media knows if they can entertain and entice adults with their advertising, their children are very likely to follow in their footsteps. In his book, *The Myth of Adolescence*, David Alan Black stated, “Secure relationships in the home are the primary source of significant adult relationships. Research reveals that the strongest influence on the life of a teenager is his or her parents. Parental influence decreases while peer influence increases each year through the ninth grade, but at no time does peer influence outweigh parental influence.”\(^8^5\) Parents must take special care regarding their actions.

It is evident that children and teenagers take special notice of their parents’ actions: good and bad. Studies have shown this principle is especially true in religion. “Children and teenagers need parents and other adults in their lives who have a genuine, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ.”\(^8^6\) A study revealed by Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross in their book, *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose*, indicated, “The evidence clearly

\(^8^4\) Ibid., 18.


shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents. Grandparents and other relatives, mentors, and youth workers can be very influential as well. But normally parents are most important in forming their children’s religious and spiritual lives.\textsuperscript{87} Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof boldly say, “No one has more potential to influence your child than you… Your influence as a parent will be permanent.”\textsuperscript{88} To further make the point, Christian Smith, a leading researcher of youth culture, said in his book, \textit{Soul Searching}, “Contrary to popular, misguided, cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misperceptions, we believe that the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents. This recognition may be empowering to parents, or alarming, or both.”\textsuperscript{89} The influence of the parent is undeniable. Parents have the ability to direct their teenager with incredible authority.

Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger retold the stories of forty-six college freshmen in their book, \textit{Amazing Conversations}. These college freshmen state, “We acquire our religion from our parents almost as certain as we inherit the color of our eyes.”\textsuperscript{90} Altemeyer and Hunsberger go on to add, “You can make a pretty good prediction of whether or not a university student, raised as a Christian, will still accept

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{87} \textit{Ibid.}, 50.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Reggie Joiner and Casey Nieuwhof, \textit{Parenting Beyond Your Capacity: Connect Your Family to a Wider Community} (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 27.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Steve Wright and Chris Graves, \textit{Rethink: Decide for Yourself, Is Student Ministry Working?} (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest Publishing, 2008), 48.
\end{itemize}
Christianity if you know how much the family religion was emphasized while he was growing up.”

There is little doubt that God has given this ominous task of discipling the child to the parents without reservation. And for good reason, they are the most influential people in their teenager’s lives, especially in matters of faith. There is no one who comes close to being more qualified for the job than the parents. Alan Melton and Paul Dean said, “There are many reasons that no one can disciple your child better than you. First of all, there is no one who has the availability to disciple your children like you… No one else loves your children like you do… No one naturally knows your children better than you and your spouse… No one else is commanded by the Lord to disciple your children.”

According to all indications, parents have the most influence, the greatest interest, and are held most accountable; therefore, there is no one better suited for the job of discipler.

**Biblical Mandate**

Since the LORD is specific about the primary discipler of a teenager, the question is “How does a parent disciple teens when life is so busy?” God’s Word is full of guidance and direction to help parents understand this responsibility. Within the Old Testament books of Deuteronomy and Proverbs the Bible gives parents everything they need to know regarding how to honor God as a discipler.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses delivered his farewell sermon to the children of Israel. Just prior to the Israelites crossing the Jordan River and entering into the

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91 Ibid., 48-49.

92 Alan Melton and Paul Dean, *Disciple Like Jesus for Parents: Following Jesus’ Method and Enjoying the Blessings of Children* (n.p.: Xulon Press, 2009), 59-60.
Promised Land, Moses gave specific commands from God to ensure a long and prosperous life in the new land. Moses stated,

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.\(^{93}\)

God, through Moses, clearly gives the primary responsibility of discipleship to the parents of sons and daughters. God knew the dangers that awaited the Israelites just on the other side of the river. The Canaanite people worshipped idols. One idol named Molek was the god of purity. The Canaanites believed that to satisfy Molek they were required to sacrifice their children to him. According to the Bible, the LORD hates “hands that shed innocent blood.”\(^{94}\) There were grave consequences associated with falling into idol worship. The Bible says, “Any Israelite or any foreigner residing in Israel who sacrifices any of his children to Molek is to be put to death. The members of the community are to stone him.”\(^{95}\) Obviously God is serious about His commands.

Therefore, in Moses’ sermon, the LORD revealed His design for the family. First, the phrase “Love the LORD your God with all heart and with all your soul and with all your strength”\(^{96}\) has a specific point. God wanted all His people to love Him with all their being and hold nothing back. God demanded that He be the only and true God in

\(^{93}\) Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (New International Version).

\(^{94}\) Proverbs 6:17 (New International Version).

\(^{95}\) Leviticus 20:2 (New International Version).

\(^{96}\) Deuteronomy 6:5 (New International Version).
their life. Secondly, the phrase “Are to be upon your hearts”\textsuperscript{97} has a direct purpose. God wanted the following commands to be rooted and secured in their hearts. His commands were not for casual thought. God desired His Word to be first and foremost in their thinking, attitudes, speech, and actions. Thirdly, the phrase “Impress them on your children”\textsuperscript{98} has several implications. The LORD directed His commands to the parents of the ‘children.’ In other words, God directed this statement straight to the father and mother. God clearly implied that parents are at the top of the discipleship process. God commanded the parents to, love Him with all their being and transfer that love to their children. God’s instructions are simple and specific. He directed them to talk about His commands when they sit together, walk together, at bedtime, and when they get up in the morning. In other words, while parents intentionally spend time with their children, they should make God a natural part of their conversation. God is not suggesting that parents are to force a spiritual conversation. God expects parents to love Him so much that their love for Him becomes a normal expression of their lives. Believers are to be so focused and filled with love for the LORD that it overflows in every aspect of their lives. To genuinely love the LORD with all their hearts, soul, and strength would require parents to have a philosophy similar to Joshua 1:8 (J1.8). Joshua stated, “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”\textsuperscript{99} When parents practice loving the LORD with all their heart, soul, and strength, they constantly

\textsuperscript{97} Deuteronomy 6:6 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{98} Deuteronomy 6:7 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{99} Joshua 1:8 (New International Version).
talk about God, think about God, and carefully obey God.

It is not a coincidence that Moses repeated almost the same words and phrases later in his sermon to the Israelites only five short chapters later. In Deuteronomy 11, the LORD knew that the people would need to hear His commands a second time to let them know the importance of His desires.

This same sentiment is also implied in the book of Proverbs. In chapter twenty-two, Solomon gave explicit instruction to parents in one short verse when he said, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”  Solomon, known as the wisest man to ever live, was giving godly advice to parents from the standpoint of being a parent.

In his book, Hopeful Parenting: Encouragement for Raising Kids Who Love God, David Jeremiah asked the question, “What does it mean to ‘train up’?” He gave a compelling answer when he stated,

The term is used in the Old Testament just three other times, in all three instances to convey the idea of dedication: once to describe the dedication of Solomon’s house, twice to convey the idea of dedicating the temple. The word originally related to the palate of the mouth. An Arab midwife would rub crushed dates on the palate of a baby’s mouth to stimulate the instinctive action to suck, so that the child could be nourished. Over time the concept of training up came to mean “to create a thirst or a hunger within a child for the godly things of life.” Sometimes we’ve given the concept a military flavor. “Get in shape!” “I’m training you up, boy!” But it’s not like that at all. This isn’t boot camp; it has to do with creating within the child a thirst and a hunger for the things of God.

The word “train” obviously has the idea of intentionality and determination. God holds

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100 Proverbs 22:6 (King James Version).


102 Ibid., 71-72.
the parents responsible to produce a hungering and thirsting after the LORD in their teenager’s life. In other words, parents should reproduce an improved copy of themselves. In Proverbs 22:6, God gives His promise to parents when they are diligent in their pursuit to obey His command. God promises, “When he is old, he will not depart from it.” In his book *Already Gone*, Ken Ham adds this commentary regarding Proverbs 22:6: “What a reminder to teach children from when they are born – and a reminder to be diligent in providing the right sort of training/curricula, etc., for children.”

How do busy parents in today’s society accomplish the biblical mandate? There are two key ingredients: parents must restructure their schedule and realign their priorities. The first key may require a great deal of effort. Learning how to say ‘no’ is very difficult for most parents, but it will provide the much-needed time for parents to invest in their teenagers. Parents need to be selective with their time in order to protect the time necessary for the family to naturally come together. In other words, parents need to say ‘no’ to busyness in order to streamline the time they have as a family. In his book, *Margin*, Swenson gave this illustration. He said, “When Steve Jobs took over Apple Computer for the second time in 1998, he preached that the company needed a prioritizing plan to rediscover its main emphasis. ‘Focus does not mean saying yes,’ explained Jobs, ‘it means saying no.’ His words speak to many of our lives as well.”

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103 Ibid.

104 Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do To Stop It* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), 32.

When parents learn to strategically say ‘no,’ they will be able to talk about God more, think about God more, and obey God more fully.

Realigning priorities is another key ingredient that could mean some drastic changes. Parents have to decide to trust the LORD and do what He says even if it means radically changing their normal daily routines. Daily routine changes may require turning off the television, playing games together, eating more meals together during the week, and instituting a daily, or at least, a weekly devotional time. These simple suggestions can allow parents to experience quality time together that they would not normally have. When parents learn to strategically realign their priorities, they will be able to talk about God more, think about God more, and obey God more fully.

God’s requirements are simple, however, some restructuring and realigning may be required. Parents need to remember one very important thing. If they are faithful, the LORD is faithful too. If the parents will do their job, the LORD will make good on His promise “when he is old, he will not depart from it.”106

Church Mandate

The New Testament has many insertions regarding the importance of parents’ discipling their children. The Apostle Paul gave explicit instruction to the church regarding discipleship in the home. Even though Paul never married nor had any children, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to give instruction in this area. Paul said in Ephesians 6, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the

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training and instruction of the Lord.”  

Before parents can accomplish the task of ‘training and instruction’ they need to be trained and instructed themselves. The question may be asked, “Where do parents get this training and equipping?” The answer lies in the church. According to Ephesians 4, the Bible says, “So Christ himself gave … pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”  

In other words, Christ has provided spiritually mature people in the church to give biblical training and instruction to equip parents as disciplers. The church has a major task to accomplish. Barna stated, “Parents are not so much unwilling to provide more substantive training to their children as they are ill-equipped to do such work.”

The church has a very important and critical job. It is the duty of the church to provide biblical teaching in relevant and practical ways so that parents are able to know and understand God’s Word on every subject pertaining to life. Another way of putting it is, “The church must train parents how to train.” This is very important especially for parents who have never been discipled themselves. People need spiritually mature believers in their lives. The Bible says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” and the best place to get that assistance is in the church.

Many parents have used the church not so much for their own spiritual 

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108 Ephesians 4:11-12 (New International Versions).


but as a place to drop off their kids so the professionals can provide biblical education for their children. Steve Wright stated, “The church must excel in instructing and equipping moms and dads in all aspects of family life, especially discipling their children.” Therefore, the church has the responsibility to provide discipleship opportunities for the entire family with excellence.

Training and discipling aspects for parents can come in a variety of ways within the church. It is the responsibility of parents to take advantage of those opportunities. The LORD is able to use sermons, small groups, and personal discipleship ministries to help parents develop a growing knowledge of scripture. As their knowledge increases, parents will not be intimidated by hard theological questions facing their children. As parents grow, they will be able to search scripture and answer even the most difficult questions they are presented. Even if they are not able to discover the answer to a difficult question, parents could utilize other people in the church to help answer the hardest questions. God has established the church and given the home to the parents. According to Steve Wright, “The home is responsible for training children, but the church is responsible for equipping parents in how to train their children.” The church and the home have the potential to be the most viable and influential institutions for discipling teens when both work together as a team. Parents need to be determined to invest the time to become a genuine disciple of Christ. A seminary or Bible college degree is not required. Using the church to become the disciples their teenager needs is

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actually God’s design. Then they will be able to provide the needed guidance for their teenager to become the disciple God desires him or her to be. George Barna states, “Revolutionary parents see their church as an invaluable partner in a long-term effort to raise a mature follower of Christ.”

**Significant Others**

Without a doubt, the LORD has given parents the ominous task of discipling their teens. In addition, God expects the church to come alongside the parents to give them the needed assistance and support in the discipleship process. Even though the Bible is clear regarding the job of the parent and the church, God does not expect them to do it alone. In the Deuteronomy 6 passage there is a phrase that often is unnoticed. In verse four the Bible says, “Hear, O Israel.” To the casual reader this would seem to be just an introduction with little to no significance. This is not the case. Moses is actually calling the whole congregation of Israel to attention and accountability to what he’s about to say. The commands outlined in verses 4b – 9 are given specifically to the parents. However, the LORD is also strategically commanding the entire nation to take part in the discipleship process. Not only was Moses speaking to the parents during his message, he was also addressing grandparents, aunts, uncles, and the extended community as well.

The Hebrew culture described in Deuteronomy naturally promoted this kind of relationship. We’re challenged to rethink our understanding of family, as the Fuller Youth Institute explains: ‘A family in the Old Testament would have included parents, children, workers, perhaps adult siblings with their own spouses and children. In fact, households could be compiled of as many as eighty people.

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115 Deuteronomy 6:4a (New International Version).
These texts, such as Deuteronomy 6, are discussing the communal raising of children. Our own cultural distance from these passages may cause us to put undue pressure on parents alone.\textsuperscript{116}

Even though we live in a different time and culture, there is much to learn from the Hebrew people. Today families do not typically have eighty family members living in the same house much less nearby. However, we can purposefully recruit godly family members who also have a vested interest in the teenagers’ lives to help disciple them. It is critical for parents to enlist people they know and trust to come alongside them to assist in the daunting task of discipling their teens.

Parents need all the help they can get when it comes to the discipleship process. Verse four also indicates another valuable resource at the parent’s disposal. Parents should utilize godly people from the church and community to assist in their discipleship efforts. These people are not to take the place of the parents but to supplement the work of the mom and dad. Reggie Joiner said, “The goal is for you to pursue strategic relationships so another adult voice will be speaking into your son’s or daughter’s life, saying the kinds of things you would try to say as a parent.”\textsuperscript{117} The parents should seek the James 1:5 methodology in discovering who would complement their disciple-making efforts best. James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”\textsuperscript{118} Therefore, asking God to give wisdom to utilize family or friends is of utmost importance.

\textsuperscript{116} Reggie Joiner and Casey Nieuwhof, \textit{Parenting Beyond Your Capacity: Connect Your Family to a Wider Community} (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 64.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 72.

\textsuperscript{118} James 1:5 (New International Version).
In an article published by Lifeway, the writer indicated the importance of intentionally having another adult spend time with a teenager. Time spent today is actually an investment in the teen’s future. The article said, “Teens who had at least one adult from church make a significant time investment in their lives also were more likely to keep attending church. More of those who stayed in church – by a margin of 46 percent to 28 percent – said five or more adults at church had invested time with them personally and spiritually.”¹¹⁹ Based on this research, parents could potentially affect the adult life of their teens in a positive way. Proactive parents who take the time to allow positive adult influences can help their teen become faithful church attendees later in life.

In an article written by Mark Kelly of Lifeway he stated, “Investment time in young people lives out the love of Jesus Christ in a tangible way, he said. It proves that a young person belongs at church. It can help connect the dots to help a teen integrate their faith into their life. And it gives the teen a connection to church after graduation when many of their peers are no longer around.”¹²⁰ It is vital for a parent to purposefully seek out other godly people who will add value to their discipleship efforts.

Conclusion

Scripture is unmistakably clear concerning parents’ responsibility to their teenagers. According to the Bible, parents are the primary disciplers in their teen’s lives. As stated earlier, many parents have the false assumption that they have little influence


with their teenagers. In reality, the evidence overwhelming points in the opposite direction. Parents are the most influential people in their teens’ lives. Parents need to make time for their families even if it means reprioritizing and readjusting their lives to earn the right to speak into their teens’ lives. Time is of utmost importance, and parents need to make the most of every moment with their teenagers while they still live at home.

Parents have also tried to argue that since their spiritual journeys has been absent of discipleship training they are unable or unqualified to disciple. This statement is a false assumption. It is time to stop the cycle. Parents can learn how to be the discipler their teenager needs in his or her life. God will provide everything that is needed when parents are trying to obey His commands. Parents have to stop seeing discipleship as an impossible task, stop making excuses, and trust the LORD.

In the book of Exodus, God confronted Moses with what seemed to be an impossible task. At the burning bush, God spoke to Moses and gave him specific instructions regarding the freeing of the Israelite slaves from Egypt. The LORD gave Moses explicit instructions on how to approach and handle the situation. God was making specific requests and assuring Moses that He would provide the needed resources when they were required. God told Moses, “I will be with you.” At each point, Moses tried to counter God and make excuses, however, this was a futile effort. The Bible says that, “The LORD’s anger burned against Moses.” Moses found himself in a very awkward situation. Moses was arguing with the omniscient and omnipotent Creator of the universe and attempting to tell God that He had the wrong man. Moses was

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121 Exodus 3:12 (New International Version).

insinuating that God did not know what He was doing and must have made a mistake. After Moses succumbed to the LORD’s desires, he worked with God to accomplish His plan. The LORD expects the same obedience today.

The church and parents are to become a team and work together in every aspect of the training process. Parents should allow themselves to be trained so they can become the trainers their teenagers’ need. Parents should put themselves under the authority of godly pastors so they can be taught the Word of God. As a result, parents will be equipped to handle Scripture and know how to discover answers to the most difficult and challenging questions. Parent should use family members and church members to assist in the discipleship process of their teenagers.

Finally, the LORD makes commands of people today and, as in the case with Moses, promises to provide whatever is needed when the need arises. Moses did not have any experience leading enslaved people out of an oppressive land. Moses had never made any formal demands on the ruler of the known world, nor was he a paid professional. However, when he was willing to allow the LORD to completely use him, God did the miraculous. As a team, God saved a nation even though Moses was not qualified. Parents must realize that since God has given them the task of being the primary discipler of their teenagers, God will give them everything they need to be successful. As an instrument in the hand of the LORD, parents will be the greatest disciplers teenagers will ever need.
CHAPTER III
DISCIPLESHIP BEGINS WITH YOU

According to Scripture, God holds parents responsible to be the primary discipler in a teenager’s life. Based on Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Proverbs 22:6, God has made it clear that moms and dads are given the responsibility to make disciples of their children. Parents are also commanded to utilize the church and strategically enlist others in the disciple-making process.

God gives parents the primary responsibility of discipling their teenagers due to the tremendous influence they have in their teens’ lives. Many secular surveys and studies have been conducted that consistently prove that parents are the most influential people in a teenager’s life. The MTV network did a nationwide study and discovered how influential parents are to their viewers. They asked their audience between the ages of 13 and 24 the question “What makes you happy?” The study revealed,

A worried, weary parent might imagine the answer to sound something like this: Sex, drugs, a little rock ‘n’ roll. Maybe some cash, or at least the car keys. Turns out the real answer is quite different. Spending time with family was the top answer to that open-ended question… Parents are seen as an overwhelmingly positive influence in the lives of most young people. Remarkably, nearly half of teens mention at least one of their parents as a hero.123

Simply put, teens like their parents. God designed this honor for parents and desires for

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parents to obey His command to influence their teens by discipling them.

Before parents can disciple their teenagers, there are some conditions that must be met. To be an effective disciple-maker of teens, God expects parents to be pursuing a strong and vibrant relationship with Him. John Maxwell once said, “People cannot give to others what they themselves do not possess.” Before parents can disciple anyone, they need to be growing spiritual. Spiritual growth takes determination and dedication. In her book, *Spiritual Parenting*, Michelle Anthony discussed the importance of disciplers taking responsibility for their own spiritual development. She said,

> Before I can be responsible for anyone else, I must take responsibility for me. This is not a selfish act, but a necessary one. My friend Roger Tirabassi illustrated this point well when he said that the airline companies understand this concept when they instruct passengers, “In the event of an emergency, if you are traveling with a child, first put on your own oxygen mask before putting on the mask of your child.” By taking responsibility for myself, I am in a better position to offer myself to others.”

It is bizarre to think that anyone can possibly help another person develop as a disciple of Christ when there is no personal commitment and growth within themselves. Therefore, disciplers must take their relationship with Christ seriously so they can make a difference in the people God has given them to help.

**Parents’ Personal Holiness**

Common phrases such as “the apple doesn’t fall from the tree,” “like father, like son,” and “a chip off the old block” illustrate the incredible comparisons between parents

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and their children. There are numerous similarities in looks, demeanors, and inclinations that can be uncanny. From a religious standpoint, however, it is astonishing to see the parallels in the parents’ spiritual maturity levels and that of their teens. In his book, *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose*, Ken Hemphill drove home this point when he said, “Most parents who want to know where their kids are headed religiously just need to look in the mirror.”¹²⁶ This statement is true. In many cases, the spiritual aptitudes of the parents and their teenagers are remarkably related.

The Bible is keenly aware of these similarities. Scripture says, “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”¹²⁷ God desires parents to be holy. There is nothing more important in a believer’s life than personal holiness. This truth is not only for parents but also for their teenager. Parents need to get serious about their personal holiness not just for themselves but also for their children. Their children’s spiritual growth depends on it. The writer of Hebrews ended the verse by saying, “without holiness no one will see the Lord.”¹²⁸

God deliberately places children in the lives of parents to prepare them to live out each day to honor the King. Discipleship with every child begins at home. God’s design is to have every child living with the most influential people in their lives to constantly talk with them concerning God, help them properly think about God, and show them how to carefully obey God. In the end, parents are ultimately responsible for preparing them for eternity. Therefore, if children, especially teenagers, are ever going to experience a

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healthy relationship with the LORD, they need their parents to pursue personal holiness first.

Needless to say, this matter is serious. Parents can ill afford to take growing in their faith for granted. For parents, personal holiness must be of utmost importance. They must faithfully be a continual learner of the Word of God and deliberately live it out with consistency. Ed Stetzer observed, “Students are experts at noticing inconsistencies between what parents say and do.”129 It is easy for parents to talk the talk, but the real issue comes down to can they walk the walk. Norma Schmidt stated,

My mother had put her finger on an essential truth: Kids absorb the values they see adults putting into action. Ever notice how quickly kids spot any inconsistency between what we say and what we do? Long before kids can spell “hypocrisy,” they notice when our actions fall short of our words. “Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you,” author Robert Fulghum says, Kids need to see us “walking the talk.” In fact, we teach kids best when we practice “being what we want to see” in them.130

John Maxwell put it another way when he said, “we teach what we know, we reproduce what we are.”131 By in large, what parents think about subjects, their attitude regarding situations, what they say concerning issues, and how they respond to circumstances often get adopted by their children. Christian Smith in his book, Soul Searching, stated, “We’ll get what we are. By normal processes of socialization, and unless other significant forces intervene, more than what parents might say they want as religious outcomes in their


children, most parents most likely will end up getting religiously of their children what they themselves are.\textsuperscript{132} Personal holiness may require parents to make adjustments in their thoughts, attitudes, speech, and actions. Parents need to focus their attention on their own personal holiness. Parents must reproduce themselves in their teens.

\textbf{Where It All Starts}

Parents have an enormous job to do. They are busy inside and outside the home. Nonetheless, God expects parents to pursue personal holiness. Parents may ask, “How do I pursue personal holiness in this day and time?” God’s answer is simple. He desires His followers to read and study the Bible daily and strive to live a purified life. This pursuit may require adjustments in lifestyle, priorities, and mindset. Whatever the case, God expects parents to pursue personal holiness at all costs.

\textbf{Study of the Word}

According to Lifeway, “the No. 1 catalyst for spiritual growth is simple: daily Bible reading.”\textsuperscript{133} The Bible says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”\textsuperscript{134} Christ expects His followers to


\textsuperscript{134} 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (New International Version).
read their Bibles and pursue vibrant and healthy relationships with Him. This, unfortunately, is not the case. A local survey conducted for this project revealed a disturbing result in the homes of many Christian parents. Moms and dads of teenagers were asked, “During an average week, how many days do you read your Bible?” Only 34% said they read their Bible 5 to 7 times per week. In addition, a national survey conducted by Brad Waggoner uncovered some alarming statistics. He discovered, “Only 16 percent of Protestant churchgoers read their Bible daily and another 20 percent read it a few times a week.” Even though the Bible is the most popular book sold in the world, it appears that it is also the most neglected. This information points out a major disconnect. If Bible reading produces spiritual growth then that only means one thing! Parents must not be growing spiritually. Christians seem to be short-circuiting the process. John Maxwell has said, “We cannot lead anyone else farther than we have been ourselves. Too many times we are so concerned about the product we try to shortcut the process.” It is time to stop the cycle. When parents shortcut the process of learning and growing in their own walk, the teenager is the ultimate looser. Parents must be determined to pursue personal holiness by reading and studying their Bibles.

135 See Appendix A.

136 See Appendix B.


Without a doubt, personal holiness begins with reading and studying God’s Word. No matter what spiritual level parents of teenagers have attained, there is always room to develop a more vibrant relationship with the LORD. Another aspect in pursuing personal holiness is found in striving to live a purified life. God expects parents to pursue purity. The Bible says, “All who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.”\(^{139}\)

Striving to live in purity is nonnegotiable for believers. Purity is not only for the parents’ personal walks but also for the ones who see them most: their families. Their teenagers watch and see everything they do. Parents need to stop and remember that their sins can and most often will show up in their teens’ lives if left unchecked. Parents must assume the responsibility and strive to live in purity. While striving for purity consumes many areas, only four basic ones will be addressed. God desires parents to have purity of thought, attitude, speech, and action.

**Purity of Thought**

The Bible is clear regarding the impure thoughts of all believers. There are several verses and passages in God’s Word that help parents understand the importance of controlling their thoughts. The Bible says, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”\(^{140}\) Christian parents must be on guard to control what runs through their minds. Taking ungodly thoughts captive is of utmost importance.

\(^{139}\) 1 John 3:3 (New International Version).

\(^{140}\) 2 Corinthians 10:5 (New International Version).
When parents vocalize ungodly thoughts or when they act upon ungodly thoughts, teens are affected because they are so impressionable. Parents must apply God’s Word to take their thoughts captive before they are heard or put into action. This is God-honoring.

When wrong thoughts are verbalized or acted out, parents are actually giving their teens permission to do the same. In an article written by Mary Rettig she stated, “A recent study proves that, when it comes to bringing up children, more is caught than taught.”

In the book of Colossians the Bible says, “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” God desires for His followers to put Him first in their thinking. Parents must fill their minds with His priorities instead of earthly pursuits. Teenagers are constantly bombarded by materialistic and narcissistic ideology throughout their middle and high school years. God calls His children to be passionate about Him and His Kingdom instead of the affairs of the world. When parents choose not to put God first in their thoughts, they are giving their teens licenses to do the same. This is why it is critical for parents to display in their own lives that God is the priority of their thoughts.

One of the most dangerous thoughts for parents to allow in their minds are thoughts of lust. Jesus made the statement, “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Lust is extremely prevalent in today’s culture. Music, movies, and the media are saturated with words and images that stimulate and tantalize. Christian parents cannot allow lustful

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143 Matthew 5:28 (New International Version).
thoughts to occupy their minds. The LORD expects more from His followers. Parents need to make a conscious effort to ‘take captive’ every unclean thought and replace it with thoughts that are honoring and pleasing to God. James Merritt was asked, “What would you consider to be the top 3 things attacking the family?” He quickly responded, “Materialism, media, and morality.”  

It is impossible to totally avoid the lustful words and images found in music, movies, and media. However, it is possible for parents to take their thoughts captive and demonstrate to their teenagers how to resist the temptation of dwelling on lustful thoughts.

God has the answer when thoughts need to be taken captive. The Psalmist wrote, “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.” Christian parents must apply God’s Word to their lives. When a believer makes it their habit to persistently read and study the Bible, there is little room for sinful thoughts. Also in the book of Psalms the Bible says, “I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.” When parents regularly place God’s Word in their day and endeavor to obey it, they are setting the right example in the home and demonstrating to their teenager the importance of God’s Word.

Christian parents are to evaluate their thoughts carefully. They need to reflect on the kinds of thoughts that inhabit their minds. Parents should never allow their minds to be filled and controlled by angry, unclean, worried, or fearful thoughts. For Christians to maintain pure thoughts is God’s ultimate desire. Parents’ personal holiness is important

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144 James Merritt. Interview by author, Cross Pointe Church, Duluth, GA, September 28, 2010.

145 Psalms 1:2 (New King James Version).

146 Psalm 119:15-16 (New International Version).
for them and for the people around them: their family. Parents cannot allow ungodly and impure thoughts to control their lives. Their teenagers watch and see everything they do. Parents need to stop and remember, “we teach kids best when we practice ‘being what we want to see’ in them.”

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Purity of Attitude

Without reservation, God expects parents who are followers of Christ to pursue purity in their attitude. In Philippians 2 the Bible is clear when it says, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” Paul is setting a high standard.

God expects Christian parents to be conscious of wrong attitudes like pride. Pride can be extremely contagious when parents allow this attitude into their lives. The Bible says, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” God desires to show His grace to parents when they seek humility. Moms and dads should long for a humble attitude. Pride must never gain control in parents’ lives, because their teenagers are quick to mimic that attitude.

Self-centeredness is another attitude to which parents and teens are extraordinarily susceptible. Paul stated, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you


149 1 Peter 5:5 (New International Version).
to the interests of the others.” In other words, a self-seeking and egotistical attitude has no place in a Christian’s life. Moms and dads must make “putting others first” a standard mind-set in life. When parents constantly allow their teenagers to see them over-valuing themselves or possessions, they are giving permission to their teens to copy their attitudes.

Prejudice is also an attitude that has no room in a Christian parent’s life. When teenagers witness prejudices in their parents, parents can expect to see this attitude take hold in teen’s lives in many forms. Prejudices toward economic class, ethnicity, and appearance by the parents can be greatly magnified in the attitude of teenagers. When teens see their parents’ prejudice, it is as if the moms and dads are giving them consent to express the same attitude. In the book of James, the Bible says, “My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism... have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?” In other words, prejudice must be eliminated.

“Materialism and worldliness are among the most pervasive (yet unacknowledged) sins of modern Christians.” Parents in today’s culture find it difficult to come up with a Biblical balance. Coveting possessions, enormous financial debt, and worldly status have become the norm even for many Christians. When parents fall prey to the expectations of materialism, teenagers view it as a normal way of life.

150 Philippians 2:3-4 (New International Version).


They develop the mindset that “getting more will make me happy.” However, the reality is that “getting more” never produces happiness only emptiness due to a lack of satisfaction. The Bible says, “But godliness with contentment is great gain.”

Contentment should be what a believer pursues. The writer of Hebrews remarked, “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.” John states, “Do not love the world or anything in the world.” God desires for parents and teens to find their satisfaction in Him. Contentment in Christ, not materialism or worldliness, should be every parent’s and teenager’s goal.

Christian parents should endeavor to cultivate positive attitudes in their homes. Kindness and forgiveness should be the dominant attitude in their day-to-day lives especially since parents are the most influential people in a teenager’s life. They should model appropriate attitudes such as loving dispositions and forgiving spirits. The Bible states, “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” Jesus also said, “But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” These types of attitudes are contagious when parents genuinely portray them in front of and toward their teenagers. Love should be the overarching theme in the home. When parents display wrong attitudes such as self-centeredness, anger, frustration, and resentment, teenagers will be more apt to copy them because, “we

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153 1 Timothy 6:6 (New International Version).
155 1 John 2:15 (New International Version).
156 Ephesians 4:2 (New International Version).
teach what we know, we reproduce what we are.”\textsuperscript{158} Christian parents should strive for purity in their lives, not just for their own personal holiness, but for the sake of their teenagers as well.

\textit{Purity of Speech}

Words that are spoken have the ability to promote the most good or create the most chaos. “God places enormous importance on our speech.”\textsuperscript{159} Scripture spends a great deal of time addressing the words people use. Jesus said, “For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”\textsuperscript{160} Jesus was saying people talk about what is on their hearts. After that statement the LORD declared, “But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every empty word they have spoken.”\textsuperscript{161} Jesus is simply saying that every person will have to explain the intention of every word they even used when they stand before Him. James, the half brother of Jesus, also said, “Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.”\textsuperscript{162} God takes seriously the words people use. People can tell if faith is real for a person just by listening to the words that person speaks. Every word is important. Parents who have the most authority

\begin{footnotes}
\item[160] Matthew 12:34b (New International Version).
\item[161] Matthew 12:36 (New International Version).
\item[162] James 1:26 (New International Version).
\end{footnotes}
in a teenager’s life must take special care regarding the use of all words. When parents fail to use words appropriately, they give their teens permission to follow their example.

The Bible says, “But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these…filthy language from your lips.” Christian parents need to consider every word that is spoken in their homes especially bad language. Slang words, crude speech, filthy language, and dirty jokes have no place in a believer’s life. Children, especially teenagers, are very quick to imitate words and phrases their parents use. Parents need to understand when they use impure words and phrases they are giving their teenagers permission to do the same.

Parents must evaluate the overall intent of their language. Exaggeration, not fulfilling promises, and not telling the truth can be interpreted by teens as expectable behavior. When teenagers hear their parents embellishing stories, not keeping promises, or giving false information, it causes confusion in their minds. The Bible says, “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.” Many teens instinctively know it is wrong to lie. Parents must set the right standards and examples in their homes. When parents do not keep a promise or stretch the truth, they are giving to their teenagers’ permission to copy their behavior.

To counterattack the wrong use of words, scripture provides clear guidance. The Bible says, “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Believers are commanded to have a lifestyle of praise. Speech is one of the

163 Colossian 3:8 (New International Version).
164 Colossians 3:9 (New International Version).
165 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (New International Version).
primary ways of accomplishing this task. However, all too often believers fail to live this standard. Paul strongly urges, “Do everything without grumbling.” When parents have a habit of grumbling, instead of giving thanks, teenagers can easily follow their lead and join this approach to life. There are many long-term dangers in having a negative spirit, therefore, God expects parents to set the right example each day.

Words are powerful! Paul said, “But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” When Christian parents use words in anger, have a critical spirit, or shout in a loud voice or a harsh tone, it can cause a number of problems. Parents can make their teens feel unworthy, timid, insecure, and self-conscious when they speak toward them in these ways. Parents should never tear down people. They are commanded to “Encourage one another and build each other up.” That’s why the Bible pleads with every believer, especially parents, to, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” When parents fail to use words properly, they are giving consent to their teenagers to do the same. Parents need to control their speech and consider, “we teach kids best when we practice ‘being what we want to see’ in them.”

166 Philippians 2:14 (New International Version).
168 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (New International Version).
Purity of Action

The old saying, “Actions speak louder than words” is too often extraordinarily true. Teenagers put parents’ actions under a microscope whenever they get an opportunity. They are constantly watching for consistency and authenticity. At the same time, they are also looking for someone to imitate. A Christian parent’s behavior should constantly take on exemplarily characteristics.

Paul, when he spoke to the believers in Corinth, said, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”† In the context of this verse, Paul was reminding the more mature believers of the church they needed to be a good example to the Jews, Greeks, and new followers of Jesus Christ. In other words, He was commanding the established believers to display a proper behavior even when they were among people who opposed their beliefs, were indifferent, or were younger believers. Paul clearly implores parents to exhibit proper actions no matter where they are. As parents interact with the community, friends, and family, they are to do it in such a way that it will bring honor to God’s name. Teenagers want to hear and see the lives of their parents match the Word of God because as it turns out “we teach what we know, we reproduce what we are.”†

Paul instructed fellow believers in their conduct. In chapter 3 of Colossians, he encouraged Christians to allow Christ to rule them, to be thankful for what God had done in their lives, to let the Word live in them, and to edify Christ and the church. He capped

†1 Corinthians 10:31 (New International Version).

off his commands when he said, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”\(^{173}\) For Christians, no matter what they say or do, it should be considered an action to and for the LORD. William Barclay put it another way when he said, “One of the best tests of any action is: Can a person do it calling upon the name of Jesus? Can he do it while asking for His help? A good test for what is spoken is: Can one speak it and, in the same breath, name the name of the Lord Jesus? Can one speak it remembering that Jesus will hear, or asking Him to hear?”\(^ {174}\) Every action has to be connected to the name of Jesus Christ.

However, Paul does not stop there. He ended his thought by adding the phrase “giving thanks.” Not only are Christians to have proper actions; they are to have a proper attitude while doing them. A believer should never have feelings of duty or obligation in their actions but demonstrate thankfulness instead. Paul described how to live the basic Christian life. He gave every believer God’s prescription for right actions and motives in this verse. Parents should strive to have purity in “whatever they do.” In any situation a Christian parent’s action does not match the Bible, a teen sees an opportunity to compromise. Parents can ill afford to negotiate in this area. There can be no concession made to this command. Paul lived out this command in his life, and he encourages parents to do the same today. That is why he was able to say, “I urge you to imitate me.”\(^ {175}\) Teenagers want to hear and see the lives of their parents match the Word of God

\(^{173}\) Colossians 3:17 (New International Version).


\(^{175}\) 1 Corinthians 4:16 (New International Version).
because they are looking for someone to model life for them.

Later in his letter to the Colossians, Paul again said, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the LORD, not for human masters.”¹⁷⁶ The context of this verse was set toward slaves’ actions and responsibilities toward their masters. In today’s culture and environment, Paul is giving great advice on how to act and respond to employers and how to have a positive, overall work ethic. For Christians, no matter where they are or what they are doing, God expects them to work with diligence and determination. Whether believers are on the job, at church, in the community, or at home, they are to cheerfully go about their duties as unto the LORD. This principle is especially important for Christian parents with teenagers. Teens are either approaching the age to work, are able to have jobs, or have entered the workforce. Parents are to set the right example for their teenagers regarding their attitudes toward their employers and work. Teenagers need to see and hear their parents have respect for the people in authority over them. When parents display the proper actions toward work, the potential to reproduce the same positive mind-set in their teenagers is greatly increased. Therefore, Paul pleads yet again for parents to pursue personal holiness by making all their actions God honoring. Parents need to stop and remember, “No matter what you teach the child, he insists on behaving like his parents.”¹⁷⁷

**Conclusion**

Parents have an enormous and often thankless job. They are busy people and far

¹⁷⁶ Colossians 3:23 (New International Version).

¹⁷⁷ James Merritt, *In a World of...Friends, Foes, and Fools: Fathers Can Teach Their Kids to Know the Difference* (n.p.: Xulon Press, 2008), 193.
from perfect. Nevertheless, God expects parents to chase after personal holiness with all their hearts, souls, and strength at all costs. Parents are to pursue personal holiness by reading and studying God’s Word and striving to live pure. Personal holiness may require that parents make great adjustments in their schedules, priorities, thinking, attitudes, speech, and actions. God desires parents to place personal holiness above all other aspects of life because the impact will be great in their own lives and in the lives of their teenagers.
Jesus grew up as the perfect son although He did not grow up in the perfect home. No earthly home can possibly be perfect due to the fact each one is lead by imperfect people. Mary and Joseph were no exception. However, Mary and Joseph desired to teach their son well, showed Him how to properly enter into the presence of the LORD, and provided for Jesus so He could grow into the man with whom the Heavenly Father would be pleased.

The Bible has little information regarding the childhood of Jesus; however, Luke sheds a small ray of light on the early life of Christ. The Bible says,

> When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him. Every year His parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When He was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom... After three days they found Him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Him was amazed at His understanding.  

Even though little is known about Jesus’ adolescence, there are some important truths we can learn from these few short verses.

Mary and Joseph demonstrate how to scripturally “Train up a child in the way he
should go.”179 It is evident in these verses that Jesus’ home life provided Him the ability to grow mentally and spiritually. Mary and Joseph did, “everything required by the Law of the Lord.”180 As Jesus’ parents, they were dedicated to properly teach their son about God and His Word. David Black said, “In Jewish thought, the highest goal of life is “the knowledge of God.” All education was directed toward this end.”181 This truth is even more apparent in the Scriptures describing the trip to Jerusalem for the Passover when He was twelve years old. The feast was over, and the family and others began their long journey back to Nazareth. Once they discovered Jesus was missing from the caravan, Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem to find their son. The Bible says, “After three days they found Him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.”182 There are two very important things to consider from this event. First, scripture portrays Jesus as having a hunger for spiritual things. He was found in the temple courts sitting, listening, and asking questions of the teachers. We can give some credit to Mary and Joseph for this action. They were obviously obedient to the requirements of the Law, the instructions given in the Shema, and Proverbs 22:6 as seen in their son’s actions. Secondly, it is evident that Jesus had been taught subjects pertaining to scripture by Joseph and perhaps others. In the later part of Luke the Bible

179 Proverbs 22:6a (King James Version).


says, “Everyone who heard Him was amazed at His understanding.” The fact that He was with the teachers of the temple and had a conversation with them reveals that spiritual discussions were not foreign to Him. He engaged in a spiritual exchange with the teachers of the Law. Obviously, Jesus’ parents were dedicated to properly teaching their young son the truths of scripture.

Another thing we see in scripture is the dedication of Mary and Joseph to the commandments of God to attend the annual Passover celebration. In Deuteronomy the Bible says, “Observe the month of Aviv and celebrate the Passover of the LORD your God, because in the month of Aviv He brought you out of Egypt by night.” Jesus’ parents were determined to give their son every opportunity to worship the Heavenly Father. In Luke the Bible says, “Every year His parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When He was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.” Each family member was to participate in the Passover celebration that was led by the father. Joseph made sure his son observed him leading the family into the presence of the LORD and interceding in prayer on their behalf. Joseph, as the head of the home, became his family’s link to the Father during the celebration. This image would be a picture Jesus would later display in His own life.

We observe Joseph as the guardian of the family. Joseph took care of his young family as protector and provider. The Bible says, “And the child (Jesus) grew and

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became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.” In order for Jesus to grow and become strong, His father obviously physically cared for his son. Joseph made a modest living as a carpenter so his wife and son could have the necessities of life. Because Joseph was a good provider, Jesus was filled with wisdom and God’s grace was on Him. Later, Joseph would train Jesus in the carpentry trade. It was the Jewish custom for the father to pass along the family business to his children. Little did Joseph know that He was giving his son the skills He would need to eventually be the primary provider for the family when he was gone. Joseph was a model caregiver to his family.

Mary and Joseph lived out a biblical example of parenting for today’s parents to note. Even though there are so few verses describing the early life of Jesus, the LORD has given us a profound look into Scriptural parenting. The biblical calling of parents to raise their children in the way they should go can be clearly seen in just these few verses. If the Luke 2 passage is read casually, a much deeper message could easily be missed. We can better comprehend the weight of Mary and Joseph’s calling when seen through the pages of the Old Testament. We are able to appreciate that Joseph was more than just a teacher, worship leader, and caregiver. Joseph was his family’s prophet, priest, and king.

**Prophet**

The Bible considers the father to be the family prophet. In the Old Testament, the prophet would stand with his back to God in front of the people on behalf of God and

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say, “This is what the LORD says.” Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, and Isaiah were all men who heard the voice of God and declared God’s Word of Truth to the people of God. Prophets were the moral compass to the nation. They were the ones who dictated to the people the ethical values of how they were suppose to live.

The Bible says, “And the child (Jesus) grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.” The fact that Jesus was full of wisdom and God’s grace was on Him indicates that Mary and Joseph were obedient to teaching their son God’s message of truth. Clearly, the Shema was an integral part of family life. Jim Burns wrote, “The Shema…was likely the first Scripture Jesus learned as a child.” Jesus’ parents made certain they taught their son biblical truths and principles. Joseph, being the family prophet, obviously was a student of God’s Word and instilled that same hunger for scripture in his son.

Fathers are seen by the LORD to be the family prophets. Dads are given the responsibility to set the standards in the home. God expects fathers to stand before their family and communicate His message. It is their job to say, “this is what the Bible says about…” any issue of life. That’s why the Bible says, “the father to the children shall make known thy truth.”

Unfortunately, this is not presently the case. A nationally-known author discovered a disturbing trend in families. He observed that men are stepping off the battlefield of being the family prophet and the wives are stepping onto the field in their place.

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189 Isaiah 38:19 (King James Version).
place. In his book, *Raising Godly Children in an Ungodly World*, Ken Ham discussed the role reversal that is occurring today. He said,

> In the majority of Christian homes, it is usually the mother, not the father, who acts as the Spiritual head. In too many cases, neither the mother nor the father is fulfilling the responsibility to train their children in the things of God. In the homes where some training is happening, the mother is usually the one that teaches, prays, and reads the Scriptures without her husband’s help. Mothers seem to be taking on the leadership roles more and more; fathers are opting out of this area all together.190

Taken a step further, a local survey was conducted for this project in which several questions were asked of Christian fathers and mothers. The investigation found an even more troubling development. One of the questions asked in the study was, “Who typically leads the family devotion time?”191 An astonishing 45%192 of the parents polled answered, “We don’t do family devotion time.”193 This is dangerous ground for families to be treading. If parents do not take ownership of biblical training in the home, there is little chance their teenager will be a growing Bible student when they get out of the house and living on their own. Christian Smith wrote, “Most teenagers and their parents may not realize it, but a lot of research in the sociology of religion suggests that the most important social influence in shaping young people’s religious lives is the religious life

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191 See Appendix A.

192 See Appendix B.

193 Ibid.
modeled and taught to them by their parents.\textsuperscript{194} With that said, parents can ill afford to neglect being the prophet the family so desperately needs.

It is time to stop the cycle. Dads must reclaim their God-given responsibility. It is time for fathers to become the prophet their family deserves. The Bible commands all believers to pursue personal holiness by reading and studying God’s Word and striving to maintain pure lives. When dads pursue personal holiness, they are able to lead and teach their family well. When fathers take their responsibility seriously they are able to instruct their family on many biblical issues. Dads should teach on subjects such as prayer, Bible reading, scripture memorization, giving a testimony, witnessing, tithing, and using spiritual gifts, just to name a few. The father can teach these subjects to their family when they sit together, walk together, at bedtime, and when they get up in the morning. Dads need to put God’s Word first and foremost in their thinking, attitude, speech, and actions, so they can proclaim God’s Truth and lead their families to constantly talk about God, think about God, and carefully obey God. Fathers need to humble themselves before the LORD and allow Him to use them to instill biblical direction and principles in their teenagers’ lives. Their eternity depends on it!

\textbf{Priest}

The Bible considers the father to be the family priest. In the Old Testament, the priest turned his back to the people and looked toward God and interceded on behalf of the people. They were the mediators. Priests were the bridge between God and man.

They also led the people of God into the presence of the LORD. Men like Melchizedek, Aaron, and Eli all sought after God for others. These men stood in the gap before God for the people of God.

The Bible says, “Every year His parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.” It is evident that Mary and Joseph were dedicated to obeying God’s requirements for all Jewish customs and celebrations. Luke goes on to say, “When He was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.” According to these verses, Jesus and His family annually attended the Passover. Kent Hughes, in his commentary of Luke, described what Jesus would have experienced during the Passover celebration. Hughes said,

At about 3:00 the sacrifice began. We may well surmise that Joseph and his relatives, in preparation for Jesus’ manhood, took preadolescent Jesus into the temple with them so He could observe the sacrifice. If so, as the gates of the temple court closed behind the vast group of worshipers, He heard a ram’s horn sound and saw Joseph, in concert with hundreds of other worshipers, slaughter his family’s lamb. The priests, standing in two long rows, caught the blood in gold and silver basins, then doused it against the base of the altar. Levites sang the Hallel Psalms (113 – 118) above the din as Jesus’ father dressed his lamb and, before leaving, slung the animal, wrapped in its own skin, over his shoulder and departed with his young son in tow.

Every year at the Passover celebration, Joseph was the family priest.

Today, fathers are seen by the LORD to be the family priests. Dads are given the responsibility to minister for and with their family. God expects fathers to stand and face Him on behalf of their family. It is the father’s job to come before the LORD to intercede for his family. James Merritt, author of *In a World of...Friends, Foes, and*

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Fools, said, “I am convinced you can do nothing greater for your kids (and future generations) than to pray for them continuously.” Men are to bridge the gap and lift up their families to the Heavenly Father.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case. In a study conducted for this project, several questions were asked of Christian men regarding their prayer life. One of the questions asked was “During an average week, how many days do you specifically pray for your child(ren)?” 67% of the men polled said they pray 5-7 times per week for their children. Only 5% said they never pray for their children. These results are somewhat encouraging, however, they are not good enough. As the family priest, fathers should be the first to pray for their teenagers. Not only should dads be the first to pray for their teens, they should pray with their teenagers. Another question was asked in the local survey regarding this point. The question was, “During an average week at home, how many times does your family pray together (not including meal times)?” Sadly, 50% of these Christian parents answered that they never pray together as a family outside of mealtime.

Dads should be at the forefront in praying for and with their teens. However, that’s not all. God also expects fathers, as the priest, to lead their family into the presence

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198 James Merritt, *In a World of...Friends, Foes, and Fools: Fathers Can Teach Their Kids to Know the Difference* (n.p.: Xulon Press, 2008), 194.

199 See Appendix A.

200 See Appendix B.

201 Ibid.

202 See Appendix A.

203 See Appendix B.
of the LORD. Fathers should supplement their Bible teaching by taking their families to church. In a study conducted for this project, a question was asked of Christian families regarding their church attendance. The question asked was, “During an average month, how many Sunday morning worship services does your family attend?”

11% of the Christian families polled said they attend worship two times or less during an average month. That means 89% of Christian parents are taking their families to Sunday morning worship services 3 or more times in an average month. While this sounds encouraging, the cumulated statistics do not. When 45% of the families surveyed said they do not have family devotions along with fact that 50% of those same families do not pray together, perhaps 89% in not so impressive. It appears parents, especially fathers, are expecting someone else to be the priest of their families.

It is time to stop the cycle. Dads must reclaim their God-given responsibility. It is time for fathers to become the prophets and priests their families so desperately need. Dads need to go to God and pray for their family, especially their teenagers. Dads should be the first on their knees in intercession for their teens. Patrick Morley, in his book *The Man in the Mirror*, gave this list as an offering to fathers to use in their prayer time for their teens. He listed:

- Pray for a saving faith if they don’t know the LORD
- Pray for a growing faith if they’re immature
- Pray for an independent faith as they get older
- Pray that they will be strong and healthy in mind and body and spirit

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204 See Appendix A.

205 See Appendix B.

206 Ibid.

207 Ibid.
• Pray for a sense of purpose and destiny in their life
• Pray for a desire within them that they will have integrity for a call to excellence
• Pray that they would understand the ministry God has for them
• Pray that they will set aside time to spend with God
• Pray that they will acquire wisdom
• Pray for protection against drugs and alcohol and premarital sex.  

God has given men a crucial task. It is time for dads to step up and fight for their children, especially if their children are teenagers. The Bible says, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” This statement could not be more true, especially for teenagers in this day and time. The question must be asked, “If parents do not pray for their children, who will?” Parents, especially dads, must pray for their teens, because they are being preyed upon.

When the family is connected to a local church there are many opportunities for the father to supplement his teaching and give his family the chance to worship with other believers. When the father is in the forefront leading the way, teenagers are able to connect the Bible, church, and life together in a healthy way. The father must be his teenagers’ prophet and priest now, more than ever.

King

The Bible considers the father to be the family king. In the Old Testament, the role of the king was to be the highest authority over the region. Kings had the responsibility to take care of those who lived there. They were to spread God’s bounty to the people of the kingdom. Additionally, their role was to provide protection for the

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209 1 Peter 5:8 (New International Version).
people. In essence, the king was to serve the people because that is what a good king does. Bad kings, on the other hand, forced people to serve them. Bad kings lived in luxury and had all their desires met no matter the expense or the stress it put on their subjects.

The Bible says, “And the child (Jesus) grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.”\textsuperscript{210} This verse describes the great care Mary and Joseph gave Jesus as He was growing up. “Jesus was given every opportunity to grow and become strong. His home environment provided a healthy incubator for physical, emotional, and spiritual growth.”\textsuperscript{211} Because of Joseph’s position as the prophet, priest, and king Jesus was filled with wisdom and God’s grace. Obviously, Mary and Joseph (especially Joseph) made sure they provided for Jesus. The Bible says, “Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”\textsuperscript{212} Joseph was a great model and displayed how a father was to serve and take care of his family.

Most men would agree that they are the ones responsible to be the provider for their families. However, in today’s culture there has been an unhealthy and twisted interpretation of the title: “provider.” According to Bruce Johnson, founder and executive director of JH Ranch, he said, “I think the definition of ‘parent’ in our culture is the professional provider. The definition of ‘children’ in our culture is the professional


\textsuperscript{212} 1 Timothy 5:8 (New International Version).
Johnson’s statement alludes to the idea that there is an unhealthy overemphasis of provision by the parents. The Bible is clear that the responsibility of provision rests primarily on the dad’s shoulders. However, when parents, specifically fathers, are reduced to only being a dispenser so that the child can be the user, in essence, men are condensed to one single task, “a slave.” Men are in bondage by their own children. Over time, this causes men to feel unimportant and unchallenged. In his book, *The Myth of Adolescence*, Black discussed the expectations of dads during the time of Christ versus the changes that have taken place today. He said,

Think of the responsibilities a father shouldered back then. He was volunteering to perform at least seven functions to prepare his child:

- Production – He would make furniture, the clothing, and maybe even the house. Now that’s been taken over by industry.
- Religion – This has been transferred to the church or ignored altogether.
- Education – The schools have assumed this one.
- Protection – This function is now the responsibility of the police.
- Affection – This involves nurture and child rearing, and is about the only function left delegated entirely to the home.
- Recreation – This has been taken over by TV, movies, and public functions.
- Edification – California’s infamous self-esteem courses base self-esteem on humanism rather than Scripture.

No wonder men today feel they have less status and challenge in life. No wonder they pour themselves into their work, looking for something to challenge their male longing for importance and purpose!214

The LORD expects more from men. Regrettably, many fathers have succumbed to social pressures instead of holding to a Biblical mind-set.

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There seems to be great confusion in the minds of many fathers today. Dads are faced with the constant pressures of keeping employers satisfied, endless schedules of community activities, and relentless expectations of social trends. Men are constantly bombarded with responsibilities outside the home so when they get home, there is little left for them to give to their families. Culture has re-engineered what dads are supposed to look like; however, the LORD has not changed.

It is time to stop the cycle. Dads must reclaim their God-given responsibilities. It is time for fathers to become the prophets, priests, and kings their families so desperately need. Today, fathers are seen by the LORD to be the “good kings” of their family. Dads are given the responsibility to provide for their families the things they need to prosper and flourish. This provision does not necessarily mean earthly wealth, but it does mean basic necessities. These basic necessities are a positive and stable home environment, a healthy and growing understanding of God, food, and shelter for their families. It is the father’s job to make sure the needs are met so that teenagers can have the chance to be “filled with wisdom, and the grace of God”\(^\text{215}\) will be on them.

The Big Adjustment

God’s heart is for every home to have a dad that is the prophet, priest, and king. In order for teenagers to have the best chance to be filled with wisdom and have God’s grace abound in their lives, there are three key myths that fathers must refute. According to Rod Copper men believe:

Myth # 1 – To succeed means to have a dynamic career
Myth # 2 – I am doing this for my family

Myth # 3 – Money will solve my problems

These are three of a long list of common myths that preoccupy fathers. However, dads who are pursuing personal holiness can overcome each of these myths and become the prophets, priests, and kings of their families.

Myth # 1 has taken many men captive in today’s culture. Men feel that, ‘if you want to be successful you have to be the best at what you do.’ This mentality has many pitfalls that will drain a father’s most valuable resource: his time. Too many men think success revolves around their career. This is not the case. The truth of the matter is, “Work alone cannot produce a success that matters.”

No one knew this truth better than the wisest man to ever live: King Solomon.

The Bible says,

I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man’s heart. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

The reality of this passage is that no amount of achievement can possibly attain fulfillment. Dads need to understand that God has placed them in charge of their

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216 Rod Cooper, “Being the Leader God Wants You to Be: Finding Honor and Respect at Home” (sermon, Lakeview Baptist Church, Hickory, NC, September 8, 2006).

217 Ibid.

218 Ecclesiastes 2:4-11 (New International Version).
families, which means, their families have to be their first priority. Fathers can overcome this myth by placing their families as the priority not their careers. God defines success as a father leading his family as the prophet, priest, and king.

Myth # 2 is another fallacy that has taken many men captive in today’s culture. Some men feel that in order to justify myth # 1, they must use myth # 2 as an excuse. This perspective is totally false. “What our families really want is more of us.” To put it simply, they need more of the best of their fathers. However, the reality of life is that when men get home from a busy day, they have little to give. Rod Copper stated, “The number one issue I see in counseling teens is that 90% are suffering with depression. The reason they are depressed is because they have no one to connect to.”

This cycle has to stop. Fathers can overcome this myth by not hiding behind this excuse. Dads need to get back into the home, to be mentally present, and to be physically engaged. God defines success as a father who spends quality time with his family and strives to be the prophet, priest, and king his family deserves.

Myth # 3 is another erroneous belief that has taken many men hostage in today’s culture. Without question, families have to have money; however, families have to avoid letting money control them. When dads allow money to control their thinking, many problems can arise. The biggest problem that surfaces, according to Rod Copper, is the “Creeping Decimal-ism” mindset. Copper said, “Creeping decimal-ism means I have

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219 Rod Cooper, “Being the Leader God Wants You to Be: Finding Honor and Respect at Home” (sermon, Lakeview Baptist Church, Hickory, NC, September 8, 2006).

220 Ibid.

221 Ibid.
$10, then I want $100, next I have $100, then I want $1,000 and so on.” In reality, more money only creates more problems than they can possibly solve. King Solomon again provides wisdom in this area. The Bible says, “Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them? The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep.” The bottom line is that success is not defined by a career or money. No amount of money can possibly compensate for failure at home. Money is to be used for provision not to be stockpiled. Fathers can overcome this myth by seeing money as a tool that ultimately belongs to God. Families need fathers to pursue being their prophets, priests, and kings not to pursue monetary gain.

**Conclusion**

The LORD has called men to be the prophets, priests, and kings of their homes. A man’s role as prophet is to instruct his family regarding the truth of God’s Word. From the husbands’ standpoint, fathers are instructed to “Love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” From the fathers’ viewpoint, dads, not moms, are instructed not to, “Provoke your children to anger, but bring them up by training and

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222 Ibid.

223 Ecclesiastes 5:10-12 (New International Version).

instructing them about the LORD. As the family priests, fathers have the responsibility of interceding on behalf of their families and leading them into the presence of God. The family priest’s battle cry should be that of Joshua when he said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” As the family king, fathers are commanded to be the providers of their families. As the highest authority over the family, fathers have the responsibility to take care of their families and spread God’s bounty to their children.


CHAPTER V

MAKING GOD KNOWN TO YOUR TEENAGER

The teenage years are very exciting times in a student’s life. Adolescents are full of surprises, challenges, joys, and heartbreaks. During the ages of 13 to 19, teens are going through several major developmental changes. Teenagers are developing mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, morally, and spiritually. For most teens, these changes are like riding an out-of-control roller coaster. The whole family feels the flux teenagers experience. Parents especially get to enjoy the highs but have to take on the brunt of the lows.

Along with the roller coaster of changes, as teenagers get older they are experiencing new freedoms and the responsibilities that go with them. Teens are given more independence at home, school, and in public. Teenagers get to explore new areas of life such as dating, having a driver’s license, church involvement, employment, and sports. They are looking to the future regarding choices in a career, military or college. They are discovering characteristics they want in a mate. The possibilities are limitless and exciting. Parents, on the other hand, are given the responsibility to help their teenagers navigate through these developmental changes, freedoms, responsibilities, and their future as they venture through adolescence. God has given teenagers their parents to lead them in the way they should go.
The developmental changes combined with the new freedoms, responsibilities, and choices can be disastrous if parents do not handle them carefully. Christian parents need to bathe every aspect of their teen’s life with prayer. They should examine God’s Word and seek godly counsel in every phase of their child’s life. Parenthood is challenging, and every parent wants to succeed.

In the middle of all the growth pains, choices, jobs, sporting events, educational opportunities, and future planning there is one area of a teen’s life that is superior to all the rest combined. Parents need to realize that all other aspects of teen life pall in comparison to this one. The most important area in a teen’s life deals with his or her preparation for eternity. Ultimately, nothing else belongs at the top of the list. Therefore, parents should make their child’s salvation paramount in their thinking. James Merritt spoke from the heart when he said to fathers, “Fatherhood is more than conceiving a child, feeding, clothing, and educating him, and sending him out on his own. Dad, we have the responsibility of preparing that child for his eternal destiny of meeting God. We are to make sure our earthly sons are prepared to meet their Heavenly Creator, assured of spending eternity with Him.”

To give students the greatest opportunity to make Jesus Christ the LORD and Savior of their lives there are three areas upon which parents need to focus. Parents should live out a faith that matters, comprehend modern culture and biblical salvation, and anticipate and fortify their teenager’s decision in making Jesus Christ their LORD.

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Living Out a Faith that Matters

The Bible is clear regarding the parents’ duty and roll in the home. In addition, they are given special responsibility in the upbringing of the gift God has placed in their hands. The special task parents have is to make God known to their children. More specifically, God wants every child of every home to come to a saving knowledge of His son. That is why the Bible says, “He does not want anyone to perish, but wants everyone to repent.”

To accomplish this assignment, the LORD desires parents to live out an authentic faith in front of their teens. In the home, at the grocery store, at church, at the neighbor’s house, or at the ball game teens are watching every move their parents make. They are looking for someone to model. George Barna stated, “Our research suggests that behavioral modeling is the most powerful component in a parent’s efforts to influence a child. It appears that as our society becomes increasingly secular, our children are developing a hypocrisy detector – an internal sensitivity to actions, attitudes, values, and beliefs that are inherently contradictory to words that have been uttered as instructions.”

Therefore, living out a faith that matters is essential. This idea may seem insurmountable to many parents; however, it can be accomplished by applying the Joshua 1:8 principle (J1.8). The Old Testament leader stated, “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to

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228 2 Peter 3:9b (International Standard Version).

229 George Barna, Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003), 85.
do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."\textsuperscript{230} The LORD expects parents to live out a faith that matters in two distinct ways.

**J1.8 Principle of Conversation**

First, based on the J1.8 principle, God expects parents to talk to their teenagers about the faith and hope they have in the LORD. "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth."\textsuperscript{231} In Deuteronomy 6 God has directed parents to talk to their teenagers about His commands when they sit together, walk together, at bedtime, and when they get up each morning. While parents intentionally spend time with their children, they should make God a natural part of their conversation. God is not suggesting that parents are to force a spiritual discussion. On the contrary, the LORD expects parents to love Him so much that they make their love a normal expression of their lives. Believers are to be so focused and filled with love for the LORD that it overflows in every aspect of their conversation. When the home is filled with spiritual dialogue, teenagers will notice.

**J1.8 Principle of Study & Obedience**

The J1.8 principle says, "meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it."\textsuperscript{232} In other words, study and diligently obey God’s commands. Parents are expected to sincerely display their faith in the LORD in all their

\textsuperscript{230} Joshua 1:8 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{232} Ibid.
actions. When parents openly demonstrate obedience to God’s commands, they are showing their authentic love for Him. As parents reveal their love for the LORD, they constantly talk about God, think about God, and carefully obey Him. This display of faith does not escape the eye of teenagers. Mark Holman and Dave Teixeira explain this idea when they say, “What you do, how you live, the faith in and relationship with Jesus Christ that you have does not simply impact you, but it’s carried over into the lives of those you love. As parents, we pass on things to our children every day. They’re watching us, learning from us and emulating us. The question is not are we passing things on to our children, but what are we passing on to our children.”

Teens are very attuned and drawn to a life of authenticity. To be clear, teens are not expecting perfection, but they are looking for genuineness. Teens want someone real to follow.

When parents live out their faith based on the J1.8 principle the results are phenomenal. The LORD seals the J1.8 principle with a promise. God says, “Then you will be prosperous and successful.” In short, God says people will be blessed when they follow His Word.

When parents strive to authentically talk about and show their faith around their teens, the chances are greatly increased that the teens will make Jesus Christ their LORD and Savior. Simply put, if parents want their teen to have the faith that will lead them to heaven, they need to live out a faith that is leading them to heaven. The goal for all Christian parents is to be able to say with Joshua, “But as for me and my household, we...

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234 Joshua 1:8 (New International Version).
will serve the LORD.” When parents live out their faith by serving the LORD, their teenagers will be affected.

Comprehend Modern Culture and Biblical Salvation

The 21st century teenager lives by the word “variety.” Teenagers are used to having billions of Internet sites at their fingertips, hundreds of channels on their TV’s, dozens of menu items at any drive-thru restaurant, and a vast number of stores at the local mall for shopping. They love variety. Teens, in today’s culture, are accustomed to having numerous choices when it comes to religion. Teenagers see having options regarding spiritual matters as open-minded and socially acceptable. They think that having a smorgasbord of alternatives to God and salvation is something to embrace.

Walt Mueller confirms this idea when he stated,

In today’s postmodern world in which the culture (and many teenagers) wears Spirituality on its sleeve, your children will encounter a variety of Spiritual options, faith systems, and combinations thereof that seems quite appealing. In addition, our culture’s emphasis on pluralism, diversity, and tolerance has created an environment in which different Spiritualities aren’t seen as mutually exclusive. In fact, our culture sees it as being wise and broad-minded to embrace and combine elements of different Spiritualities into your own personal belief system.

This mindset is unbiblical and only leads to confusion regarding true biblical salvation. The Bible is clear. Real saving faith is mutually exclusive. Teens are bombarded by culture from numerous directions and on every level when it comes to the Bible. Therefore, parents have to be ready for the onslaught of misunderstood information that

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235 Joshua 24:15b (King James Version).

swirls around teen culture and ultimately in their teens’ minds. Their teen’s eternity depends on it.

Before parents can be ready to combat the cultural flood of misguided information directed at teenagers pertaining to spiritual matters, they first need to understand where the wrong information originates. A teen’s primary influence is the media. Media is a powerful force in a teenager’s life and, unfortunately, shapes how they think in many ways. The Internet, TV, movies, and music flood the minds of teenagers daily with inconsistencies, negativity, and false information regarding religion. Tom McGrath compares several of the mixed signals students receive from the media with respect to the message Jesus proclaims in Figure 2.

**Media vs. Jesus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You deserve a break today.</td>
<td>Take up your cross and follow me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have sex anytime, anywhere, with anyone.</td>
<td>Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfy every appetite as soon as possible.</td>
<td>Not by bread alone do you live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look out for number one.</td>
<td>Seek first the kingdom of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance is everything.</td>
<td>Blessed are the pure in heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you’re angry, it’s OK to be violent.</td>
<td>Turn the other cheek.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odd people don’t belong.</td>
<td>Whoever does the will of my Father is my brother and sister and mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t acknowledge that a quarter of the world is starving tonight.</td>
<td>Whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me.²³⁷</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2. Media vs. Jesus

McGrath points out the vast difference and startling reality of the two viewpoints. It is

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clear that the media encourages a narcissistic mindset while the Bible promotes an opposite, selfless attitude and way of life. In addition, public education, peers, and cults are also influences impacting teen culture when it comes to spiritual matters.

Unfortunately, there is more to the problem. Researchers have found that teenagers are misguided by cultural opinion because of their lack of knowledge regarding the terms used for biblical salvation. Christian Smith discussed this point in detail. Smith interviewed a number of teenagers and found that they lacked “central religious and theological ideas.” He stated,

When teenagers talked in their interviews about grace, they were usually talking about the television show *Will and Grace*, not about God’s grace. When teenagers discussed honor, they were almost always talking about taking honors courses or making the honor role at school, very rarely about honoring God with their lives. When teens mentioned being justified, they almost always meant having a reason for doing something behaviorally questionable, not having their relationship with God made right.

Smith summarized his analysis by saying,

In short, our teen interview transcripts reveal clearly that the language that dominates U.S. adolescent interests and thinking about life, including religious and Spiritual life, is primarily about personally feeling good and being happy…This, we think, has major implications for religious faiths seriously attempting to pass on the established beliefs and practices of their historical traditions.

Since teenagers do not have a biblically based point of reference of salvation, they are easily captured by cultural ideology.

Based on these findings, the conclusion is simple. Culture and ignorance are to

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239 Ibid., 167-168.

240 Ibid., 168.
blame for today’s tragedy. Teenagers have been misguided by culture in such a way that teens feel they can just pick and choose what seems right to them and determine their own way to heaven. Feelings trump truth. Teens’ minds are flooded by pop culture. Having a proper biblical knowledge, basic theological beliefs, and terminology regarding salvation never get consideration. These fundamentals are seen as antiquated. Teenagers are inundated by culture’s false messages regarding salvation and left to decide for themselves what it takes to have eternal life. Parents are left with teens that do not have an adequate understanding of the fundamental subjects such as God, faith, sin, grace, and Jesus. Parents need to understand today’s culture, to live out scripturally based salvation, and to apply and discuss these truths.

There is a major lapse of proper knowledge and understanding about biblical salvation. What are parents suppose to do? The Bible has the answer. Parents need to take on the philosophy of two obscure people groups found in the Bible in order to overcome this problem. In short, parents need to have a clear picture of culture like the people of Issachar and be students of the Bible like the Bereans.

Tribe of Issachar

The tribe of Issachar was a special breed of people. The Bible says, “From Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do.” Scripture describes this tribe as having the gift of discernment. God had given them the ability to understand the culture in which they lived and to know what they needed to do in order to have success. Parents need to embrace the Issachar philosophy and study the culture.

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This understanding will enable them to relate to their teenagers.

Bereans

The Bereans were followers of Christ who lived in the Apostle Paul’s day. They were exceptional students of the Word and ferociously studied the scriptures to understand God’s truth. The Bible says, “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”242 Parents need to adopt the Bereans’ tenacity regarding the study of scripture so they can know biblical terminology concerning authentic salvation.

When parents decide to combine the Issachar and Berean mindsets concerning culture and the proper terms associated with biblical salvation, God can use them in a mighty way. Therefore, it is critical for parents to do three things so they can prepare themselves in order to properly introduce their teens to Christ. First, they need to be students of culture and its influences on teenagers. Second, they need to know and understand the meanings of basic terms used for biblical salvation. Third, they must be able to naturally discuss the biblical terminology with their teens regarding salvation.

Being a Student of Culture

Studying the culture can be a difficult task for many parents. Often parents get left behind or lost in teenage culture. The language teens use, the technology they have, and the ways they view the world have little to no similarity to what parents experienced.

during their teenage years. These differences often intimidate parents. However, that is no excuse. In order for parents to be good students of teen culture they need to be immersed in what shapes teen-age thinking. They should know the words they use, the movies they watch, the music that is popular, the bands that are topping the charts, and the latest clothing trends. Parents ought to be aware of the latest TV shows, the hottest videos on the Internet, the most popular video games, and the popular pop icons. In addition, parents should know where their teenager spends their time, the friends they are with, and how they use their money. Basically, parents must be involved in their teens’ lives. Parents should never make the mistake of attempting to fit in with their teen’s culture. Nor should parents adopt their children’s slang words or clothing trends, however, they should have a grasp of them. All these elements have major influences on a teenager’s life. When parents are purposely aware of these aspects, they will be able to discern the effect on their teenager and better understand how they can relate to their teenager in spiritual matters. Parents must study teen culture so they can properly apply the truths of biblical salvation to their child’s life.

Know and Understand the Meanings of Terms

There is no task more important for a parent than introducing their child properly to Jesus Christ. Parents do not need a seminary degree to lead their child or other people to Christ. However, there are some basic points to biblical salvation that parents must understand and be able to articulate. The Bible teaches several central tenets regarding God’s free gift of eternal life. Below is a summarized list of sixteen basic terms regarding biblical salvation. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Nevertheless,
these terms will give parents a working knowledge of the fundamental terms of salvation.

**God**: He is the creator and ruler of the universe. He is eternal, immutable, Holy, redeemer, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, just, loving, the sustainer, all sufficient, self-existent, infinite, immeasurable, perfect, good, righteous, jealous, and sovereign, just to name a few. He is the heavenly Father and the one true God.

**Jesus**: Jesus is God in human form. He is God’s one and only son. He came from heaven to earth and lived a sinless life. He willingly went to the cross and gave His life for man’s sin. He was buried, but after 3 days, God brought Him back to life. He lives in heaven with the Father.

**Holy Spirit**: He is the third person of the Trinity. He calls people to Christ, convicts believers of sin, and brings peace and comfort to those in need. He brings assurance to those who belong to the LORD and has placed a seal on every believer until Christ returns. He empowers believers to live a life that is pleasing to the LORD.

**Faith**: Faith, according to the Bible, is simply defined as, “Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” In short, faith is knowing and trusting in someone or something that cannot be readily seen. Faith is confidence.

**Sin**: Sin is “any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.” In short, the Bible describes sin as rebellion against God and His character. Simply put, sin is disobedience.

**Mercy**: Mercy is the term used to describe God when He does not give people what they deserve. People have sin in their lives and are imperfect. Therefore, they do not deserve to go to heaven, which is a perfect place. Sinful people actually deserve hell. However, God gives His mercy to people who put their faith in His son and promises them eternal life. The Bible says, “But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions” Simply put, mercy is compassion.

**Grace**: Grace is the term to describe God’s favor that He gives to people who are not deserving of His grace. God allows common grace to all people in many

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forms. He gives sunlight, rain, oxygen, etc... to all people. However, there is also special grace. Special grace is given to people who put their faith in Jesus Christ as their LORD and Savior.

**Sacrifice:** Jesus died on a cross 2000 years ago to pay for man’s sin. Jesus was without sin; therefore, His death was able to pay for sin. The Bible says, “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith.”²⁴⁶ It is up to man to accept this act of grace and believe.

**Resurrection:** Three days after His death, God brought Jesus back to life in physical form. Currently, Jesus sits in heaven on the right side of God.

**Repentance:** Repentance is the heartbeat of salvation. The Greek word used in the Bible is *metanoeō*. The word means to change one’s thinking, will, and attitude. Through the intellect, a person must come to the realization that sin is wrong. Through the will, a person must admit his sin. Through the attitude, a person must desire obedience. All these aspects combined reflect a proper view of repentance. Repentance is change.

**Forgiveness:** Forgiveness means to pardon. God has the ability to not only pardon but also to not remember anymore. The Bible says, “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”²⁴⁷ Forgiveness is not being held responsible for sin.

**Conversion:** Conversion means to turn from one point or perspective to another. The Greek word used in Scripture is *epistrephō*. The word means to turn from one direction and go into the opposite direction. The Bible says, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”²⁴⁸

**Regeneration:** Regeneration describes a new birth rooted in real faith in Christ. A believer is made new in God’s eyes. Eugene Peterson states, “But when God, our kind and loving Savior God, stepped in, He saved us from all that. It was all His doing; we had nothing to do with it. He gave us a good bath, and we came out of it new people, washed inside and out by the Holy Spirit.”²⁴⁹

**Justification:** Justification describes what God does in believers’ lives when they

²⁴⁶ Romans 3:25 (New International Version).


²⁴⁹ Titus 3:4-5 (The Message).
put their faith in Christ. God declares the new believer “not guilty.” God accredits Christ’s goodness to the believer. The Bible says, “Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him?”\(^{250}\) Justification means to be made right.

**Reconciliation:** There is a war between God and man. The Bible says, “The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”\(^{251}\) Reconciliation is described as the two warring parties, God and man. Now there is peace between them because Jesus stepped in between the two.

**Redemption:** Redemption means to buy back. Jesus paid the ultimate price on the cross with His blood to purchase man back.

These terms, and many others, are an important foundation in understanding biblical redemption. They are not just religious words but truth God has established to bring people to a saving knowledge of His son.

**Naturally Discuss the Biblical Terminology**

After parents have a basic foundation of teenage culture and ascertained a solid base of the terms related to biblical salvation, God expects them to teach this truth to their teens. The LORD has given parents the perfect formula to train their children. Based on Deuteronomy 6, parents can discuss these biblical terms with their teenagers while they are sitting together, walking together, at bedtime, and when they get up in the morning. Even with the cultural chaos in a teen’s life these subjects can be naturally interjected into the daily life of the family. Hemphill and Ross pointed out, “Teenagers tend to

\(^{250}\) Romans 5:9 (New International Version).

\(^{251}\) Romans 8:7 (New International Version).
embrace the faith of parents who spend focused time with them.”252 No matter if their teenager is a believer or not, parents should have a working knowledge and be able to discuss these important biblical facts. When parents have this knowledge, they can promote accurate thinking, lead people to salvation, and dispel confusion that emanates from culture.

**Anticipate and Fortify a Teen’s Decision**

Parents have their plates full during the adolescent years. There are numerous changes occurring in their teen’s life, and parents have to cope with the chaos. At the same time, this is prime time regarding a teenager’s salvation. Obviously, a teenager falls into one of two categories regarding salvation: lost or saved. With teens who have not put their faith in Christ, parents need to focus on some important tasks while they are waiting. Likewise, with teens who are saved, parents should be diligent to reinforce and fortify their teenagers’ decision about salvation.

Parents need to know how to lead someone to Christ. The Roman Road is only one of many tools to utilize. FAITH, Evangelism Explosion, and The Four Spiritual Laws, just to name a few, are great to use as well. There is no right or wrong plan of salvation as long as it is Biblical. The key is to be comfortable in discussing the verses of the Bible that can lead a teenager to a genuine relationship with Christ. At the same time, it is equally important that parents teach their teens who are believers how to share the plan of salvation with others.

Once parents know how to present the plan of salvation, it becomes vital to take

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the many biblical terms pertaining to salvation and combine them together. Blending the plan of salvation with biblical terminology will help parents easily lead their teens to true salvation when their teenagers are ready. As an example, many of the biblical terms can be seen when compared to the plan of salvation known as the Roman Road. The Bible says, “All have sinned and continue to fall short of God’s glory.”\(^\text{253}\) This verse confronts the issue of sin and the need of redemption. After that, the Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in union with the Messiah Jesus our LORD.”\(^\text{254}\) This verse describes the punishment for sin and the need of reconciliation through Christ. Next, the Bible says, “But God demonstrates His love for us by the fact that the Messiah died for us while we were still sinners.”\(^\text{255}\) In this verse God’s mercy and grace are extended. Subsequently, the Bible says, “If you declare with your mouth that Jesus is LORD, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”\(^\text{256}\) This verse describes repentance, sacrifice, resurrection, and conversion. The last verse of the Roman Road states, “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”\(^\text{257}\) This verse points to conversion and regeneration. Joining these elements together helps parents and teenagers see God’s marvelous plan of redemption and how it works. Whether a teenager is a follower of Christ or not, seeing and understanding the connection of the plan of salvation and the biblical terms is


\(^{254}\) Romans 6:23 (International Standard Version).

\(^{255}\) Romans 5:8 (International Standard Version).

\(^{256}\) Romans 10:9 (International Standard Version).

\(^{257}\) Romans 10:13 (International Standard Version).
important. A teen needs to know how God has designed redemption, thus minimizing teenager’s mistaken beliefs.

After parents have become students of teen culture, biblical terminology, and plans of salvation, they should take a step back and understand how these elements fit together. In other words, they need to put all the pieces together. The Bible is a metanarrative about God and His plan to bring people back to Him. Many people think that the Bible is just a compilation of various stories. That is not the case; it is so much larger. According to an online dictionary “A metanarrative is a story about a story, encompassing and explaining other “little stories” within totalizing schemes.”\textsuperscript{258} It is important for parents to know the overall theme of the Bible.

Scripture describes how God perfectly created everything and put man in charge. Man disobeyed God, and sin entered into the world. As a result, everything changed. The relationship Adam and Mrs. Adam enjoyed in the garden with God would never be the same. However, God made the way for man to still have a relationship with Him. In Genesis 3, God spoke to Satan and told him, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel.” The LORD, in this verse, told the deceiver that He would raise up One, through the seed of woman, who would bring ultimate defeat to him. Isaiah prophesied that this One would crush the head of Satan. He foretold, “He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace

was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”\textsuperscript{259}

In the New Testament this foretelling was fulfilled when God “became flesh and made His dwelling among us.”\textsuperscript{260} During His 33 years Jesus had only one goal in mind: He was destined for the cross. From the cross the Bible says, “When He had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”\textsuperscript{261} The Bible informs us that Jesus was placed in a grave. For three days all hope seemed lost, but God was not finished. Some women went to the tomb of Jesus to properly anoint His body and were greeted by an angel. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay.”\textsuperscript{262} Jesus’ resurrection crushed Satan. Jesus was seen in various places by hundreds of people over the next 40 days. Then the Bible proclaims, “After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was taken up into heaven and He sat at the right hand of God.”\textsuperscript{263}

God has made the way back to Him possible. He offers everlasting life to anyone who will put his or her faith in His son. When parents take the time to learn the biblical terms regarding eternal life and the plan of salvation in conjunction with the metanarrative of Scripture the picture of God’s deliverance is made clear. It is up to parents to combine these elements and communicate God’s story of redemption to their

\textsuperscript{259} Isaiah 53:5 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{260} John 1:14 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{261} John 19:30 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{262} Matthew 28:5-6 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{263} Mark 16:19 (New International Version).
teenagers so they have a chance to receive God’s invitation of eternal life. In addition, parents who already have teens that are followers of Christ should solidify the metanarrative of the Bible firmly in their minds. As a result, this will minimize misconceptions and promote truth.

Another important task for a parent to consider is to welcome questions about spiritual matters. Whether their teens are believers or not, parents need to gladly receive any questions regarding the faith. It is important to provide an open and nonthreatening atmosphere when their teens come to them with religious questions. Let teens discuss their questions, concerns, misconceptions, and doubts about God, faith, and salvation. It is proven that “Teenagers tend to embrace the faith of parents who maintain open communication with them.”

When confronted with a difficult question, do not be afraid to say, “I don’t know.” No one knows all the answers. Parents should honestly say, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out.” Students are interested in spiritual matters, and wise parents take advantage of these opportunities.

Next, make prayer a daily priority. Parents should pray diligently for the teenagers in their lives, especially for teens who have not given their lives to Christ. The Bible says, “Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelis is that they may be saved.”

The word Paul used to describe the word “prayer” means, “to beg God.” Paul sets the perfect example for parents to employ. Parents need to beg God for the salvation of their teens. Additionally, parents need to teach their teens that are

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followers “to beg God” for the salvation of people they know are lost.

Lastly, parents need to remember that spiritual growth is a process. Allow the Holy Spirit to do His work. Never rush or press for a decision about eternal life. Parents need to keep in mind, “Teenagers tend to embrace the faith of parents who relate to them with grace.”\(^{266}\) Also, keep an open mind, be patient, and remember the promise of Proverbs 22:6. The Bible says, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”\(^{267}\)

**Conclusion**

To give a student the greatest opportunity to receive eternal life, parents need to focus on these three important areas. Parents should live out a faith that matters. Parents should comprehend modern culture and Biblical salvation. And parents should anticipate and fortify their teenagers’ decisions to make Jesus Christ their LORD. These three areas should be nonnegotiable when it comes to the eternity of their teenagers.

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\(^{266}\) Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross, *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group), 81.

\(^{267}\) Proverbs 22:6 (King James Version).
CHAPTER VI
A NEW MODEL TO DISCIPLE YOUR TEENAGER

The LORD has placed in every parent’s life a special gift. The Bible says, “Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from Him.” With this gift comes responsibility. Each parent is given the ominous task of being the primary discipler of the children in his home. King Solomon gave special instructions to parents when he said, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” As the chief disciple maker, the LORD expects parents to produce a craving in their children for Him as they mature and get older. Especially during adolescence, God desires parents to cultivate a solid faith foundation in their teenagers. Having a solid foundation will give them the ability to have a long and prosperous life that will be pleasing to the LORD.

To make this foundation solid, parents need to focus on five important aspects of discipleship. Parent should firmly plant in their teens’ lives the desire to know God’s Word, to live lives of prayer, to practice spiritual disciplines, to share their faith, and to serve others. The essence is to love God and to love others. In order to solidify this foundation, parents should utilize the biblical tool called “The Discipleship Growth

\[^{268}\text{Psalms 127:3 (New International Version).}\]

\[^{269}\text{Proverbs 22:6 (King James Version).}\]
Guide (DG²).” Parents will be able to utilize this tool to assist them in guiding their teenagers’ spiritual growth in the five areas. The DG² is not a discipleship program or Bible study; rather, it is a way the discipler can biblically direct the overall process in the disciple making effort.

Parents can cultivate these five areas in their teenagers’ lives when they sit together, walk together, at bedtime, and when they get up in the morning. While parents intentionally spend time with their children, they make these five areas a natural part of their conversations. As primary disciplers, parents will encourage their teens in these five important aspects to ensure proper spiritual growth. The five areas are:

1. Bible Reading
   A. Daily Bible reading – A disciple should read God’s Word every day. The Bible says, “As I opened my mouth, He gave me the scroll to eat, saying, "Son of man, eat this book that I am giving you. Make a full meal of it!" So I ate it. It tasted so good—just like honey.”
   B. Yearly systematic Bible reading – God’s Word should be comprehended as a whole not just in parts. The Bible says, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”
   C. Scriptural processing – God expects the disciple to not just read the Word but to live it out. The Bible says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

2. Prayer Time
   A. Daily prayer time – A disciple should set aside time during each day to have a conversation with God. The Bible says, “Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”
   B. Prayer focus – A disciple should pray with adoration. The Bible says,

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270 Ezekiel 3:2 (The Message).
271 2 Timothy 2:15 (New International Version).
272 James 1:22 (New International Version).
“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” 274 A disciple should pray for forgiveness. The Bible says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 275 A disciple should pray with thanksgiving. The Bible says, “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.” 276 A disciple should pray for their needs. The Bible says, “Give us today our daily bread.” 277 A disciple should pray for others. The Bible says, “pray for each other so that you may be healed.” 278 

C. Prayer application – God expects the disciple to spend significant and quality time with Him. The Bible says, “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings.” 279

3. Spiritual Disciplines
A. Scripture memorization – A disciple should put God’s Word in his memory. As a general rule, a person should have at least 2 verses of Scripture memorized for every year they have been a follower of Christ. The Bible says, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” 280

B. Tithing – Believers are commanded to give back to the LORD a percentage of what He has allowed them to receive. It is not about how much a person gives; rather, it is about how much he keeps. The Bible says, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.” 281

C. Fasting – God expects the disciple to fast occasionally from entertainment, the Internet, food, or other things. Fasting provides an opportunity to set aside distractions and focus solely on God. The Bible says, “But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward

275 1 John 1:9 (New International Version).
276 1 Chronicles 16:34 (New International Version).
278 James 5:16 (New International Version).
281 Malachi 3:10 (New International Version).
4. Witnessing
   A. Be specific – Disciples should have a list of people for whom they are praying. They should be praying for their friends, family, and others who are lost. The Bible says, “Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.” Paul’s word for prayer means to beg. Disciples should beg God for their friends, family, and others salvation.
   B. Prepare to lead others – Disciples must learn to lead others to Christ. The Bible says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”
   C. Talk about God – God expects the disciple to share the good news of the gospel. Disciples regularly talk about God in their conversations and invite people to discuss spiritual matters. The Bible says, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

5. Ministry
   A. Know their gifts – Disciples must know the gifts the LORD has given them. The Bible says, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith.”
   B. Use their gifts – God has entrusted believers with gifts to serve others. Gifts are not designed to be hidden or to be used selfishly. The Bible says, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others.”
   C. Focus on love – God has given believers gifts to serve others in love. The Bible says, “Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way.”

Parents need to keep in mind the real goal of discipleship. “A disciple is one who

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284 1 Peter 3:15 (New International Version).
286 Romans 12:6 (New International Version).
287 1 Peter 4:10 (New International Version).
follows Jesus, is being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus. As a result, a disciple loves God and loves others.289 DG2 gives parents what they need to provide the fundamentals to promote genuine spiritual growth. DG2 can help them lead their teens to pursue Christ daily, be transformed in Christ completely, and surrender to Christ ultimately. When parents use these five important areas in their discipleship efforts, they can confidently know their teenagers will have a solid foundation as a disciple now and “not depart from it”290 when they get older.

The Missing Element

There is no doubt parents are given the distinct privilege of discipling their teenagers in the way they should go. By having the five areas of DG2 as their focus, parents gain the assurance they need to know they are leading their teenagers on the right track. However, discipling in these five areas can be challenging and difficult if not approached properly. Parents know that no two teenagers are exactly alike. Of course there are similarities, but the differences in their personalities, abilities, and intellect far outnumber their likenesses. Whether comparing a teenager to the kid across the street or to a sibling, each one is different.

As parents strive to lead their teenagers in the way they should go with the DG2 strategy, knowing how to overcome the many differences can be overwhelming. These variations are limitless and may result in frustration and disappointment in any discipleship effort. All teenagers receive and process information in different ways. In

289 Jim Putman, Building Churches that Make Disciples: Real Life Discipleship (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 44.

other words, people have their own unique learning style. Emily Graham, of
schoolfamily.com, made a very important point when she said, “Educators have long
been aware that learning is not one-size-fits-all. In a typical classroom, some kids
process information best by hearing the teacher explain it, some learn by seeing what’s
on the chalkboard, and others learn through hands-on exercises.”

Many times parents neglect this one area of the discipleship process. How a teenager receives and processes information is extremely important. Therefore, parents must adapt the implementation of
the DG strategy to each individual teen’s way of learning in order for them to grow spiritually.

**Making the Connection**

Looking back to chapter 1, it is important to remember the fatherly advice
Solomon gave parents regarding their task as the primary disciplers. The Bible says,
“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from
it.”

The word “Train” in the original Hebrew language is *Chanak*. According to
David Jeremiah this word has a unique meaning. He said, “An Arab midwife would rub
crushed dates on the palate of a baby’s mouth to stimulate the instinctive action to suck,
so that the child could be nourished. Over time the concept of training up came to mean
‘to create a thirst or a hunger within a child for the godly things of life.’”

It is evident that God holds the parents responsible to produce a hunger and a thirst in their teenagers’

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291 Ibid.

292 Proverbs 22:6 (King James Version).

293 Ibid., 71-72.
lives regarding spiritual things. How are parents supposed to create a spiritual appetite for the LORD in their teens, implement the DG$^2$ strategy, and, at the same time, deal with their teenager’s unique way of learning? The answer, of course, is found in the Bible.

Interestingly enough, the answer is found in the same verse. The phrase translated “in the way” is the Hebrew word Derek. According to blueletterbible.com the phrase means, “Way, road, distance, journey, manner, road, way, path, journey, direction, manner, habit, way, of course of life (fig.), of moral character (fig.).” Chuck Swindoll in his book, Parenting: From Surviving to Thriving, gave excellent insight into the word Derek. He said,

One visual image associated with derek is that of an archer’s bow, which has a natural curvature to it...Each child, like a bow, comes with a shape, or a bent, that is natural to him or her. If a bow is to be useful, it cannot remain in its natural, relaxed state. An archer must work with the bow’s characteristic curvature, so he can bend the wood in the right direction, and string it so that it might become a source of power.

Not only are parents responsible to produce a hunger and a thirst in their teens in the process, the Bible commands that they create this desire through their natural “bent.”

John White, of Bible.org, made this statement concerning Proverbs 22:6. He stated,

Solomon urges parents to learn well the unique traits of their children. He knew that spiritual training, to be effective, must be “coded” differently for each child so the child will embrace it and, as he or she matures, be shaped by it. Does such an understanding render this great verse toothless? Hardly. What it does is give parents the challenge of their lives—to shape God’s truth into a well-aimed arrow

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that hits the mark deep in the heart of a child!  

His commentary sheds a new perspective on the word Derek. Each teenager has a unique coding that enables him or her to learn. Parents should study their teen’s natural makeup, tendencies, and habits of learning and then customize the DG² strategy. As primary disciplers, it is critical that parents discover their teen’s natural bent as a learner in order to know how to best disciple their teenager.

God has designed every person uniquely, and He loves for people to gain knowledge about Him, the world, and themselves. However, people receive and process information differently. Teens gather information in one of three basic ways called learning styles. Educators describe the three learning styles as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. These different learning styles are explained in detail below:

**Visual** learners process new information by reading, looking at graphics, or watching a demonstration. Children with this learning style can grasp information presented in a chart or graph, but they may grow impatient listening to an explanation.

**Auditory** learners prefer listening to explanations over reading them and may like to study by reciting information aloud. This type of learner may want to have background music while studying, or they may be distracted by noises and need a quiet space to study.

**Kinesthetic** learners learn by doing and touching. They may have trouble sitting still while studying, and they are better able to understand information by writing it down or doing hands-on activities.

The LORD has given each individual a different learning style, or bent, when it comes to receiving and processing information. It has been determined by educators that a

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teenager normally learns best by using a blend of the different learning styles, however, one learning style is oftentimes preferred over the other two. One thing needs to be clear. Learning is not about how smart a teenager is. Learning is about the bent God has given a person to use as he learns. The Purpose Associates state, “The learning styles theory implies that how much individuals learn has more to do with whether the educational experience is geared toward their particular style of learning than whether or not they are “smart.” In fact, educators should not ask, “Is this student smart?” but rather ‘How is this student smart?’” Therefore, a teenager’s bent is vital information for parents to discover. Finding out a teen’s bent is not rocket science, but a science nonetheless. There are numerous methods accessible on the Internet to aid in this endeavor. (See Appendix C). Parents should take the time to determine which learning style best fits their teen so they can properly implement the DG$^2$ strategy. Learning can be made easier and more valuable when the teen’s bent is known and the proper learning technique is utilized.

**The DG$^2$ Implementation**

When parents face the challenge of being the primary discipler and implementing DG$^2$ according to their teenager’s bent, the task can seem overwhelming. Below are a few suggestions of how parents can combine their teen’s bent to DG$^2$ in order to train their teens in the way they should go.

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Visual Bent

For a teen that has a visual bent, parents can easily implement the DG² strategy. They like to use pictures, maps, charts, and other visual aids to learn about God and His Word. Also, a teenager that has a bent toward a visual learning style needs to be able to see the actual passage in the Bible. They have the tendency to remember where certain verses are located on a page. Parents need to encourage their teens to set aside time each day to get alone with their Bible and read it for themselves. In addition, a wise parent will recommend that they keep a prayer journal of how God is working in their lives. Memorizing Scripture and learning an evangelistic presentation are not difficult for visually-bent teens. These attributes can easily be processed in conversations with teens when parents “sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

Bible Reading – Students with a visual bent like pictures. Parents should encourage their teenagers to picture biblical scenes in their minds and imagine what they could have looked like. Parents should help teens visualize the people, the things they were doing, and the items they were using. This will help teens experience the scene in their minds and promote proper learning of the Bible. This process can be used with almost every passage in the Bible. Parents should promote the use of highlighters and note-taking when their teens study. It is also important for teens to go to a quiet place when they read the Bible.

Prayer Time – Teenagers with a visual bent are usually organized and like to see things to learn. Parents should encourage their teens to write out their prayers or prayer list. They could prompt them to categorize their lists into logical sections to help them systematize their thinking. As they pray daily, parents should encourage teens to visualize the people and places they have listed. This will help them to connect their hearts to their lists.

Spiritual Disciplines – A teen with a visual bent will excel at scripture memorization. Visual people tend to picture words and remember them well. Parents should have their teens write verses on cards and regularly look at them for memorizing purposes. Parents should encourage their teens to break down verses into sections. As they

learn each part, they will be able to memorize the verse more easily. Tithing, fasting and other spiritual disciplines should also be encouraged by the parents.

**Witnessing** – There are a number of witnessing methods and plans of salvation a teenager can learn. Parents should encourage their teenagers to memorize several of these ways of leading people to Christ. Then parents should help their teens imagine witnessing situations and help them roll play encounters. As God gives them the opportunity to share the gospel, teens will be more confident and better prepared.

**Ministry** – Teens who are visually bent thrive in a ministry atmosphere where they can be on the front end of the planning stages of events or activities. Parents should encourage their teens to use their gifts to help with planning or organizing.

**Auditory Bent**

For students who are more geared with an auditory bent, parents can easily apply the DG² strategy. Moms and dads should create an atmosphere in the home that welcomes open discussion. These teenagers excel when they can process theology by talking it out or in a debate. Parents should encourage their teens to participate in Bible study and prayer groups, memorize scripture, listen to Christian music, and subscribe to podcasts of their favorite Bible teachers. Afterwards, parents can help their teenagers process their discoveries when they “sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”³⁰⁰ Teens with an auditory bent make excellent evangelists and servants in ministries.

**Bible Reading** – Auditory teenagers learn best when they hear information verbally, even if it is their own voice. Parents should encourage their teens to read the Bible out loud daily and listen to podcast sermons or an audio Bible regularly. Each day, parents should set aside time to have discussions with their teenagers on what they are reading. Auditory learners are typically talkative and enjoy discussions to process what they are studying. Parents need to encourage lots of questions from their disciples.

**Prayer Time** – Teenagers with an auditory bent are usually good with rhythms. Parents should encourage their teens to daily pray out loud or sing their prayer to

God. Teens should make it a habit to verbally praise God, confess their sin, give thanks to the LORD, and personally pray for others. This type of learner can also grow spiritually by singing songs to the LORD as a prayer.

**Spiritual Disciplines** – A teen with an auditory bent is proficient when it comes to memorizing scripture. Parents should encourage their teens to sing scripture. Auditory learners can do well with memorization when they put it to music or in a rhyme. They need repetition for memorization. Parents should also encourage tithing, fasting and other spiritual disciplines.

**Witnessing** – Auditory teenagers can present the gospel well because of their good oratory skills. When equipped with an easy to remember gospel presentation, an auditory teenager can be used by God to share the plan of salvation effectively. Parents need to help their teens practice presenting the gospel to give them confidence and make them more proficient.

**Ministry** – Teens who have an auditory bent thrive in ministries that allow them to use their speaking ability. They can be used in a variety of public speaking opportunities. Teenagers with this bent do well at remembering conversations. Wise parents will encourage their teens to use their gifts in public and the church.

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**Kinesthetic Bent**

Parents with teenagers who have a bent toward kinesthetic learning have their work cut out for them. Fortunately, experts from ldpride.net indicate that only a small portion of individuals have this learning style as their primary bent. However, there are some helpful ways to make implementing the DG² strategy possible. As the primary disciplers, parents can utilize skits, object lessons, and movies to help their students know more about God and His Word. Trips to religious sites or institutions also help in their learning experience. Parents can solidify their teens’ knowledge by using beats or clapping rhythms to help clarify information and memorize scripture. The key is making it hands on. It is important that teens with a kinesthetic bent be active in evangelism and ministries in their church. As a result, moms and dads can help their teens process their experiences when they “sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie
down and when you get up.”\textsuperscript{301}

**Bible Reading** – Students with a kinesthetic bent like experiential activities. Parents should create an atmosphere that allows hands on discovery of the scripture. Parents should use objects and props to teach their teens and help them relate to the Bible. This technique can be applied in practically every part of scripture. Parents should also promote the use of highlighters and note taking when their teens study the Bible. Parents must be aware that teenagers with a kinesthetic bent need to take frequent breaks when they read their Bible because they can easily get bored or distracted.

**Prayer Time** – Teenagers with a kinesthetic bent are usually good at imitation. Parents should let their teens hear them pray and give them opportunities to pray along with them. Since kinesthetic students have a hard time sitting still they should change positions frequently or move around when they pray each day to avoid getting bored. Parents should encourage their teens to hold objects or use hand motions when praying. Moms and dads should also suggest prayer walking to their teenagers.

**Spiritual Disciplines** – A teen with a kinesthetic bent can excel at scripture memorization as long as they are able to be physically active. Activities such as fiddling with objects or being in an unconventional position help teens focus. Parents need to be aware that kinesthetic teenagers need frequent breaks when memorizing scripture. This will reduce their propensity of getting bored or distracted. In addition, tithing, fasting and other spiritual disciplines should be encouraged by the parents.

**Witnessing** – Kinesthetically bent teenagers can do well with evangelism when they are able to watch a demonstration. They are usually good imitators. Parents should take their teens witnessing as many times as possible either with the church or as a family. Parents should also take their teens on mission trips whenever feasible.

**Ministry** – Teens who are kinesthetically bent love to act things out and be physical. Parents need to involve their teenagers in the churches drama or creative arts ministry. They can be of great benefit to a church because they tend to gravitate toward expressing themselves through acting things out. Wise parents will encourage their teens to use their gifts in public and in the church.

**Conclusion**

The LORD declares that parents are the primary disciplers of their children. They have an exciting yet difficult task when it comes to training each child in the way he or

\textsuperscript{301} Deuteronomy 6:7 (New International Version).
she should go especially when it comes to the teenage years. When parents discover their teen’s bent and implement “The Discipleship Growth Guide (DG²)” to direct their teenager’s spiritual growth, the journey can be prosperous and successful. Bill Hull put all these strategies and bents in perspective when he said, “A discipler must have neither a fixed idea of what a disciple looks, talks, and acts like nor a static idea of how to “make a disciple.” No program or person will ever make a disciple. Only God makes disciples.”302

CHAPTER VII
WAYS OF MAKING THE HOME AN ATMOSPHERE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

In the beginning God created! He created the heavens, earth, plants, stars, sun, and animals. The Hebrew word used in Genesis 1 for God’s handiwork is bara' (בָּרָא). Bara' is used four times in the first chapter alone. The literal translation of bara' means to make something out of nothing. John Calvin stated in his commentary, “He (Moses) moreover teaches by the word “created,” that what before did not exist was now made; for he has not used the term “yatsar,” which signifies to frame or forms but “bara,” which signifies to create. Therefore his meaning is, that the world was made out of nothing.”303 Only God can create this way.

At the culmination of His creation, God created man with a crescendo. The Bible says, “In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”304 Adam and woman were given life. However, God was not finished creating. He brought His image barriers together in a special way. God the Father was the best man of the groom, the Father of the bride, and also the official of the first wedding. Adam and Mrs. Adam


were united in marriage and “they became one flesh.”\textsuperscript{305} Thus, He created the family. Earth, heaven, marriage, and family are all God’s ideas.

Just before Mrs. Adam was created and the family was established, one verse that often gets overlooked describes a very important factor. God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden and gave him special instructions. The Bible says, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”\textsuperscript{306} Adam was in Paradise and first told to “work it.”\textsuperscript{307} God created Adam to work the garden not just to sit idly by. Matthew Henry said in his commentary, “The Garden of Eden, though it needed not to be weeded (for thorns and thistles were not yet a nuisance), yet must be dressed and kept. Nature, even in its primitive state, left room for the improvements of art and industry.”\textsuperscript{308} But there is one more thing to note. God not only told Adam to get to work, He also gave Adam specific instructions to “take care of it.”\textsuperscript{309} Put another way, God gave the garden to Adam and said to him, “I’ve created you to work this place. If things are going to turn out good then it is up to you. If they don’t then it’s your fault. Your job is to create an atmosphere that will allow things to grow. It is in your care.

\textsuperscript{305} Genesis 2:24 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{306} Genesis 2:15 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{307} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{309} Genesis 2:15b (New International Version).
You create the atmosphere. I’m leaving it in your hands.”\(^{310}\) In essence, the LORD was commanding Adam to be an imitator of Him and create.

In comparison with Adam, God calls men today to be creators. Instead of creating an atmosphere of growth in a garden He calls men to create an atmosphere of growth in their homes. He gives the command for a good reason. Through a variety of surveys, Promise Keepers determined that men are the most influential people of the home. According to Rodney Cooper of Promise Keepers he said, “The person who impacts the home more than any other person is the man of the home. Men are the ones that are the thermostat. They set the temperature. Men are the ones who create a particular atmosphere in the home.”\(^ {311}\) The atmosphere of the home determines the attitude of the people within the home. If the atmosphere of the home is negative, critical, or unkind then it creates people that are negative, critical, or unkind. On the other hand, if the atmosphere of the home is positive, loving, and caring then it creates people that are positive, loving, and caring. “A happy home doesn’t just happen; it’s the result of giving the LORD top priority and investing time and attention in the family.”\(^ {312}\) Simply put, God may be saying to fathers today, I’ve created you to work in your home. If things are going to turn out good then it is up to you. If they don’t then it’s your fault. Your job is to create an atmosphere that will allow things to grow. It is in your care. You create the atmosphere. I’m leaving it in your hands. In order for fathers to create an

\(^{310}\) Rod Cooper, “Being the Leader God Wants You to Be: Finding Honor and Respect at Home” (sermon, Lakeview Baptist Church, Hickory, NC, September 8, 2006).

\(^{311}\) Ibid.

atmosphere where spiritual growth can flourish, fathers need to focus on three things. They need to focus on loving God completely, loving their wives sacrificially, and loving their children openly.

**Love God Completely**

As discussed in chapter one, just before Moses died, he gave one of the greatest sermons documented in the Bible. In chapter 6 of Deuteronomy, Moses gave explicit instructions to the families of Israel called the Shema. The Jews would recite these verses two times a day in order to keep the ideas of these verses fresh in their minds. John MacArthur verifies this point when he stated, “The Shema (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41) was the most familiar scripture to all Jews because they had to recite it twice a day.”

In the New Testament, Matthew gives evidence that the Shema was alive and well in Jewish culture. Jesus recites a portion of the Shema to a group of religious leaders that were trying to test Him and His authority. Jesus was approached by a group of Pharisees trying to trap Him with a question concerning the greatest commandment. The Bible says, “One of them, an expert in the Law of the Old Testament, tested Him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’” Jesus brilliantly condensed the whole Law of Moses into two points when He said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is

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the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as
yourself.’”\(^{315}\) Once Jesus made this statement all the Pharisees could do was to walk
away speechless.

The principles of the Shema apply to every follower of Christ today. Therefore, it
is important that we understand the full meaning of Jesus’ words. MacArthur gave his
interpretation of this passage when he said,

The Hebrew word for love in Deuteronomy 6:5 is *aheb*, which refers primarily to
love exhibited by the will, mind, and actions rather than love exhibited by feelings
or emotions. It is the highest kind of love, for it motivates you to do what is right
and noble no matter what you may be feeling. It is akin to the *agape* love of the
Greek language, which is the love of intelligence, as opposed to *phileo*, which is
the love of emotion, or *eros*, which is physical attraction. The love Jesus speaks
of in the greatest commandment is the noblest, purest, and highest form of self-
sacrificing love that each person is commanded to have toward God.\(^{316}\)

When seen through the context of the New Testament, every follower of Christ is
commanded to have an unrestrained, unadulterated, and surrendered *aheb* love of God.

When believers, especially fathers, unapologetically have a genuine *aheb* type of love for
the LORD, their lives are transformed. With that transformation, the people around
them, in particular their family, are the benefactors. When a father loves the LORD
completely with all his heart, soul, and mind, God enables him to create an atmosphere of
spiritual growth in the home. There are three key areas upon which the father should
concentrate his efforts.


\(^{316}\) John MacArthur, “Jesus Silences His Critics: The Great Commandment,”
*Bible Bulletin Board*, available from: http://www.biblebb.com/files/mac/sg2358.htm,
Teens Should See Their Fathers Study the Bible

The old saying, “Monkey see, monkey do” certainly applies when it comes to parenting. The teenager of the home sees every move a parent makes. Nothing escapes a teen’s radar even when he is simultaneously surfing the Internet, texting a friend, and listening to music on his iPod. As a result, teens are quick to mimic all that is done, whether good or bad. Parents have an enormous responsibility to be careful of everything they do. David Jeremiah stated, “Modeling is incredibly important in the process of parenting. We learn far more from what we see in our home than what is said there. Long after our children have forgotten what we have said, they will remember what we do. Images – both negative and positive, pleasant and unpleasant – will be burned into their memories for a lifetime.”317 There are many things a father can do to help encourage a positive and pleasant image in his teenager’s mind. However, there is nothing more important than the father letting his teenager see him reading, studying, and ingesting God’s Word. This one act has the potential to produce an atmosphere of spiritual growth within the home that could last into the next generation. There is no better way to show love to the LORD and to the family. The Bible says, “Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For those who find me find life and receive favor from the LORD.”318 Teenagers need to carry into adulthood the image of their parents giving high priority to Scripture. The results can be life changing for generations.


Fathers Should Lead the Family in Worship

Men, for the most part, find leading their family in worship most intimidating. By in large, men have not taken leadership as the family worship leader of the home. It is time to stop the cycle. The Bible says, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Notice the Bible says explicitly “fathers” not mothers. It is time for fathers to step up and be the one who leads their families in worship.

Voddie Baucham in his book, *Family Driven Faith*, asked parents a poignant question regarding worship in the home. He asked,

> Why are we here? Does our family exist to prepare children for the Major Leagues? If so, then baseball will be the center of our family’s universe, and everything will bow to the whims and wishes of the baseball god. Does our family exist to produce socialites? If so, then our family must revolve around the social calendars of our overloaded teenagers and their hectic schedules. However, if our family exists to glorify and honor God and to lay a Biblical foundation in the lives of our children, then we must not allow anything to interfere with our commitment to family worship, prayer, and Bible study.

The key is determination. It is up to fathers to make family worship a regular reality in the home. No matter where the father is spiritually, there are countless resources available at any Christian bookstore. When a father succumbs to the LORD’s desires and lovingly leads his family in worship God can do extraordinary things. Arthur Pink gives evidence of this point when he said, “The advantages and blessings of family worship are incalculable. First, family worship will prevent much sin. It awes the soul, conveys a sense of God’s majesty and authority, sets solemn truths before the mind, brings down

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benefits from God on the home.” Therefore, without a doubt, fathers need to lead the family in worship. There is no better way to put their love for the LORD on display. As a result, an atmosphere of spiritual growth within the home has the potential to explode when the father leads the way.

Fathers Should Lead the Family to Worship

Fathers should make it their goal to not only lead in worship but to lead their families to church as well. All believers are commanded to take part in growing in their faith with other believers. Dads especially should take their families to church and be active participants in church events and ministries. The Bible says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” However, there is a problem. Many fathers have neglected, even ignored, leading their families to church. As a result, the mothers have picked up where the fathers have left off. More and more, moms are taking the leadership of their family’s spiritual growth because the fathers have stepped back from their God-given responsibility. According to Alan Melton and Paul Dean, they stated, “In a typical week, mothers are more likely than are fathers to attend church, pray, read the Bible, participate in a small group, attend Sunday school, and volunteer some of their time to help a non-profit organization. The only faith-related activity in which fathers are

321 Ibid., 143.

just as likely as mothers to engage is volunteering to help as a church.”

This is a sad reality, and it is time to stop the cycle. Parents, dads especially, should be at the forefront in leading their family in worship at home and at church. Not only should dads get their family to church, they need to get engaged in the events and ministries the church offers and encourage the rest of the family to volunteer as well. Teenagers are more than capable of serving in the church. When all is said and done, they just need an example to follow. They need fathers who are in love with the LORD and want to please and honor Him with their leadership of the family. When fathers, not mothers, lead the family to worship an atmosphere of spiritual growth has the potential to permeate the home.

Simply put, God may be saying to fathers today, I’ve created you to love me completely. If things are going to turn out good in your home then it is up to you. If they don’t then it’s your fault. Your job is to create an atmosphere that will allow things to grow. It is in your care. You create the atmosphere. I’m leaving it in your hands.

**Love Their Wives Sacrifically**

Secondly, Scripture also helps the father see another important aspect of creating an atmosphere where spiritual growth can flourish in his home. Today, as in the Garden of Eden, God unites the husband and the wife and makes them one. When the LORD brings two people together He gives the man of the relationship very explicit instructions. The Bible says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any

323 Alan Melton and Paul Dean, *Disciple Like Jesus For Parents: Following Jesus’ Method and Enjoying the Blessings of Children* (n.p.: Xulon Press, 2009), 77.
other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself."\textsuperscript{324} When fathers obey this passage and make it the heartbeat of their lives it is noticed by everyone especially teenagers. Teenagers need to see healthy, loving, and growing married relationships lived out in front of them. One of the greatest advantages of a healthy marriage is the effect it has on the teenager of the home. When teens see their parents genuinely loving each other, they feel a sense of security. David Black supports this idea when he said,

The relationship between a husband and a wife is the foundation on which children build their sense of security. A child’s greatest desire is that his or her parents love each other and thus model Godly love and fidelity. Dads and moms need to covenant before God to remain married, to love each other selflessly, and to allow the love of God to permeate their home. The fidelity of our love for one another will transfer to our children, who will, by our example, learn to exhibit fidelity in everything they do. Children need to know that they are loved by both parents and feel the security that parental love provides in an unlovely world.\textsuperscript{325}

As a long-term benefit, when parents have a healthy marriage it provides teens with a living example of how to model their own future marriage relationship. There is no stronger message parents can send to their teens.

There are two distinct areas through which husbands show their families how much they love their wives. These are non-negotiable aspects to every successful marriage that deals with how they communicate with their wives. As a result, husbands are given the opportunity of creating an atmosphere of spiritual growth in their homes that every teen needs to experience.

\textsuperscript{324} Ephesians 5:25-28 (New International Version).

Verbal Communication

Husbands are given the privilege to verbally display their love and devotion to their wives. There is no better way to create an atmosphere of growth in a home than with positive and affirming words. Warm greetings, expressing sweet sayings, and using the words, “I love you” all communicate feelings from the heart. Teenagers analyze every word and action their parents say and do. Therefore, dads should never talk down or use coarse words to their wives. Husbands should never use degrading language or try to put their wives down in any way. Instead, husbands should use language of encouragement toward their wives. They should always try to build up their partners in some way everyday. The Bible says, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.”

Husbands should always display positive and neutering conversation toward their wives. Of course, parents will have disagreements from time to time. However, both parents should always strive for an environment of reconciliation no matter what the cost. This is vital, not only for their marriage now but also for their teenagers’ future marriages. Parents need to realize they are modeling for their teens today what their sons or daughters could carry into their own marriage tomorrow. When parents exhibit this attitude they are putting real love on display that encourages an authentic atmosphere of spiritual growth.

Non-Verbal Communication

Just like verbal communication, non-verbal communication can speak loudly and clearly as well. Husbands can display their actions in many ways that will tell their wives

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326 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (New International Version).
how much they truly love them. One of the ways men can demonstrate that love is by implementing the 3 D’s of marriage. The three D’s are dialog daily, date weekly, and depart monthly.  

**Dialog daily** – Dialog is two-way communication. Contrary to popular belief, in an average day women do not use more words than men. ABC News “Found that women spoke 16,215 words a day, while men spoke 15,669. Although women speak slightly more words than men, statistically, the difference is insignificant.” Therefore, husbands need to put that myth to rest and be good talkers and listeners with their wives daily.

**Date weekly** – Every husband needs to take his wife out alone weekly. A meal, movie, or a walk allows time to reconnect and reestablish the relationship without the interruption of anyone else.

**Depart monthly** – Getting out of town for an afternoon or overnight has great benefit mentally and physically. When couples take time to get away together they are able to renew their commitment to each other. This renewal allows them to keep the spark alive in their marriage.

Another positive way to communicate non-verbally is for the husband to help with housework and other household responsibilities. When husbands take the time to wash the dishes, vacuums the floors, or clean the bathrooms, their actions speak on many levels. Husbands are communicating that housework is not just women’s work. They are saying to their spouse “I value you, your time, and your ability.” In short the husband is saying, “I love you.” It also allows the husband and the wife to work together on the responsibilities of the home. In addition, husbands need to take every opportunity to pamper their brides. The husband could occasionally buy small gifts, open doors, help put on her cost, and many other small gestures. In essence, husbands should treat his

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wife like a queen at all times.

Interestingly, these actions do not go unnoticed by the teenagers of the home. As they see the interaction and closeness that these verbal and non-verbal actions communicate it gives them a taste of what their future relationship should be like. As a result, when these actions are sincerely demonstrated, they have the potential to promote an atmosphere of genuine spiritual growth in the home. Simply put, God may be saying to fathers today, I’ve created you to love me completely and love your wife sacrificially. If things are going to turn out good in your home then it is up to you. If they don’t then it’s your fault. Your job is to create an atmosphere that will allow things to grow. It is in your care. You create the atmosphere. I’m leaving it in your hands.

**Love Their Children Openly**

Children, especially teenagers, are gifts from the LORD. They are strategically and unmistakably placed in the lives of parents. On the day a child is born, the LORD gives the mother and father a mandate to love, nurture, and care for their baby. As the baby grows older the LORD expects the parents to bring the training of their child in the way he or she should go. This responsibility cannot be taken lightly because there is no one better suited for the job. Melton and Dean list four distinct reasons why God gives parents this important task. They said,

- There is no one who has the availability to disciple your children like you.
- No one else loves your children like you do.
- No one naturally knows your children better than you and your spouse.
- Most importantly, no one else is commanded by the LORD to disciple your children.329

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329 Alan Melton and Paul Dean, *Disciple Like Jesus For Parents: Following Jesus’ Method and Enjoying the Blessings of Children* (n.p.: Xulon Press, 2009), 59-60.
God has uniquely called each family, especially the father, to create an atmosphere in the home where spiritual growth can occur. That is why the Bible specifically says, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”\(^{330}\) (emphasis added) No one is more qualified for the task than the dad. However, the father cannot do this alone. The father needs to rely on the LORD and love Him with all his heart, soul, and mind. The dad needs to do whatever it takes to be the one who fosters an atmosphere of growth in the home. In order to accomplish this monumental task, the father needs to meet his teen for a meal, know how to talk to his teenager, and affirm the teen regularly.

Meet Teens For a Meal

According to a local survey \(^{331}\) of Christian families sit together for a meal 5-7 times per week. In addition, a national survey by *Parade Magazine* said, “One out of four families eats together every night, and an additional 34% do so most evenings.”\(^{332}\) Jim Burns in an article published by Focusonthefamily.com discussed the importance of families eating meals together and the long-term benefit of investing in this opportunity. He stated, “Children regard your presence as a sign of care and connectedness. Families who eat meals together, play together and build traditions together thrive. Does your family eat together at least four times a week? If so, there is a greater chance your kids


\(^{331}\) See Appendix B.

will perform better in school and be less likely to exhibit negative behavior.” Contrary to popular belief, teenagers need parents in their lives, and an easy way to accomplish this contact is sitting at a dinner table. For many families today carving out the time necessary to have a meal together can be difficult. Even though preparing a meal takes planning and preparation, the benefit far outweighs the negative aspects. *Parade Magazine* also added,

A recent study from the University of Minnesota reported that teens who had regular meals with their parents had better grades and were less likely to be depressed. From Harvard came word that chances are slimmer—by 15%—that children will be overweight if they eat with their families. Researchers at Emory University found that preteens whose parents tell family stories at dinner have higher self-esteem and better peer relations during adolescence…. And 12- and 13-year-olds with limited family dinners are a staggering six times more likely to have used marijuana. The study also revealed that 84% of teens said they’d rather eat with their parents than alone.  

Time around the table eating a meal together is immeasurable. Parents should count the cost and invest whatever time is needed to regularly share time together. There is little doubt that an investment of this magnitude has the potential to enhance every relationship between family members. As a result, this action has the potential to produce an atmosphere of spiritual growth within the home that could last into the next generation.

Know How to Talk to Their Teenagers

Parents will often have to fight with everything they have in order to create an

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atmosphere of growth in the home. If parents are going to utilize the benefits associated with eating a meal together they need to know how to talk to their teenagers when they have them there. In the book of Proverbs King Solomon said, “The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.”

Before parents engage in a conversation with their teenager it is helpful to remember to talk “to” their teen instead of talking “with” their teen. “Communication is not a monologue; it’s a dialogue.”

In order to have a proper dialogue that will enhance the atmosphere of spiritual growth in the home, parents need to consider these four important areas when talking with their teenager.

**Eye contact** — Body language speaks volumes. Parents should never underestimate the importance of looking at their teenagers during their conversation. When parents make eye contact, it communicates more than just words. Looking into their eyes says, “I’m interested in what you’re saying.” It also helps to reduce confusion and to show them respect.

**Listening** — Listening to teenagers can sometimes be a challenge for parents. They may have a different vocabulary that can be hard to decipher. Regardless, parents need to get educated on teenage vocabulary so they can communicate with them. When parents give their full attention to their teen, a teenager will feel a sense of significance in the eyes of their moms and dads. If parents are reluctant to work on listening skills, it could cost parents more than they want to pay. Christine Field of Lifeway.com stated,

> When we shut them off, I believe a small door closes in their hearts. If enough of those doors close, soon their hearts will be bolted shut to us when we want them to talk to us and when they most need to talk to us. They’ll find someone else to share their life with. A friend, a girlfriend, a boyfriend. That door will stay closed until they are ready to let us in again.

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Focus – Actions speak louder than words. When parents are having a conversation with their teen it is vitally important to focus on them during the discussion. Parents should stop what they are doing or set aside whatever they are working on and give their teen their full attention. This action speaks volumes to teenagers and sends them the message that they are valued and are worth listening to.

Careful response – Parents need to be wise in their responses back to their teenagers, especially in the area of sin. Parents should never condone any gossip, wrong ideas, crude talk, or sinful behavior. The world looks at sin much differently than the Bible does. However, parents should exercise great caution when they respond to their teenager. Parents need to make sure that when they speak to their teen they keep their points brief and biblical. The Bible will always have the right answer when addressing any situation. The Bible says, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Keeping the lines of communication open between a parent and teenager cannot be overly emphasized. Wise and loving parents will do whatever it takes to make sure they do their part and know how to make the right connection with their teens. This extra effort can potentially produce an atmosphere of spiritual growth within the home that could last beyond the next generation.

Affirm Them Regularly

Words are powerful! Words can be used positively or negatively. The Bible says, “The tongue has the power of life and death.” Bill Bennett in his booklet, Don’t Be a Dude, Be a Dad, stated, “It was Shakespeare who said, “Sticks and stones may


break my bones, but words will never hurt me.’” A statement with this magnitude of falsehood only shows that Shakespeare was not always inspired when he wrote. 340

Because words have such power, parents must be conscience of everything they say to their children during their teenage years. The Bible says, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”341 James Merritt also added, “Dad, I urge you, be firm with your children and never allow them to use profane or filthy language. And I implore you to set the example by the kind of language you use. I’ve never done a scientific study, but I’m certain you’d find 98 percent of the teenagers and young people who use foul language heard it first at home.”342 Parents should speak lovingly with encouragement. They should use words that build up their teenager. In other words, wise parents make sure they watch and weigh every word before they speak it to or in front of their teens. Calvin Coolidge once said, “I have never been hurt by anything I didn’t say.”343

Another, and possibly the most significant, way parents can affirm their teenager is by genuinely using three simple words. The words “I love you” have incredible value in a teen’s life. In a culture that is void of the real meaning of love, teenagers need to authentically hear and feel what real love is. The Bible says, “And now these three

340 Bill Bennett, Don’t Be a Dude, Be a Dad (n.p.n.d.), 4.

341 Ephesians 4:29 (New International Version).

342 James Merritt, In a World of...Friends, Foes, and Fools: Fathers Can Teach Their Kids to Know the Difference (n.p.: Xulon Press, 2008), 46.

343 Ibid., 37.
remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."\textsuperscript{344} Parents, especially dads, need to exhibit and verbalize love in the home in order to create an atmosphere of growth. From a larger perspective, saying and meaning the words “I love you” do have immediate consequences. However, these words can also have an eternal consequence.

Bill Bennett stated,

> When a child hears the words, “I love you,” or “You are important” come from his earthly father, he is more able to recognize and respond when the same words come from the Father above. If the child only receives silence from the father, then perhaps he assumes that God is silent and unconcerned. If a child hears only belittling words from the father, then perhaps he assumes God is just there to judge and condemn.\textsuperscript{345}

Parents should model their lives after the Heavenly Father. Saying and meaning the words “I love you” cannot be more important in a teenager’s life. There are no greater words a parent can use that have the ability to build and enhance the atmosphere of spiritual growth in the home. God may be saying to fathers today, I’ve created you to love me completely, love your wife sacrificially, and love your children openly. If things are going to turn out good in your home then it is up to you. If they don’t then it’s your fault. Your job is to create an atmosphere that will allow things to grow. It is in your care. You create the atmosphere. I’m leaving it in your hands.

**Conclusion**

Adam was made accountable to create an atmosphere of growth in the Garden of Eden. He failed! Today, God gives the same duty to dads, and there is no excuse for failure. Fathers must create an atmosphere where spiritual growth has the chance to

\textsuperscript{344} 1 Corinthians 13:13 (New International Version).

\textsuperscript{345} Bill Bennett, *Don’t Be a Dude, Be a Dad* (n.p.n.d.), 5.
flourish. However, fathers must understand that it cannot be accomplished alone. An atmosphere of spiritual growth can only be possible when the dad is totally surrendered to the LORD and loves Him with an *aheb* type of love. Fathers need to love God completely, love their wives sacrificially, and love their children openly. Then an atmosphere of spiritual growth will be possible.
FINAL CONCLUSION

Scripture is unmistakably clear concerning what the parents’ primary job is regarding their teenager. According to Deuteronomy 6, 11, and Proverbs 22:6, parents are the primary disciplers in their teen’s life. According to scripture, there is no one better suited for the job; however, being a disciple-maker is not an easy task. It takes time, dedication, and a strong conviction. These aspects can sometimes be in short supply for parents. With the constant demands of life, parenting is stressful, tiresome, and often a thankless responsibility. Parents are faced with the constant pressures of keeping employers satisfied, endless schedules of community activities, and relentless expectations of social trends. As a result, parents find themselves frustrated and depending on pastors to become the disciplers of their own teenagers.

To make matters worse, parents say they are unable to be the discipler their teenagers need for many reasons. They feel they have little influence over their teens and they cannot compete with the peer pressure affecting their teens. Parents feel that the media is too powerful in their teens’ culture and discipleship is not worth the fight. Furthermore, parents will declare they are unable to be the disciplers their teenagers need because their own walks are not strong enough or because nobody discipled them. There is a tremendous amount of truth to these feelings and concerns; however, parents need to remember that when the LORD gives a command He always makes a way.

Based on this thesis, it should be clear that the cycle has to stop. It is time for
parents to stand up and take charge. God desires every person to come to a saving
knowledge of His son. His desire is to have every believer become a dedicated disciple
and, as a result, develop into a disciple-maker. The fulfillment of this desire should be
the focus of all believing parents regardless of their feelings or concerns. Therefore,
parents need to make their decision. Are they going to follow the LORD’s mandate or
not. It is up to them.

If parents make the choice to respond to God’s command, the previous chapters
can be a valuable resource. Each chapter systematically walks parents through a step-by-
step process to become the disciplers their teenager need to have. First of all, the church
and the parents are to become a team and work together in every aspect of the training
process. Parents should allow themselves to be educated so they can become the trainers
their teenagers need to have. Parents should put themselves under the authority of a
godly pastor so they can be taught the Word of God. As a result, parents will be
equipped to handle scripture and know how to discover answers to the most difficult and
challenging questions. Parent should use family and church members to assist in the
discipleship process of their teenagers. Since God has given parents the task of being the
primary disciplers of their teenagers, God will give them everything they need to be
successful. As an instrument in the hand of the LORD, parents will be the greatest
disciplers a teenager will ever need.

Parents have a massive and unappreciated job to do in bring up their teens in the
way they should go. They are busy and far from perfect. Nevertheless, God expects
parents to run after personal holiness with all their hearts, souls, and strength at all costs.
Parents are to pursue personal holiness by reading and studying God’s Word and striving
to live pure lives. Personal holiness may require parents some or a great deal of adjustments in their schedules, priorities, thinking, attitudes, speech, and actions. Regardless, God desires parents to place personal holiness above all other aspects of life because of the impact it can have in their own lives and the difference it can make in the lives of their teenagers. That’s way the Bible says, “The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them.”

In addition, God has called men of their homes to be the prophets, priests, and kings. Their role as prophet is to instruct their family regarding the truth of God’s Word. As a husband, men are instructed to “Love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word.” As a father, dads are instructed to not, “Provoke your children to anger, but bring them up by training and instructing them about the LORD.” As the family priest, dads have the responsibility of interceding on behalf of their family and leading them into the presence of God. The family priest’s battle cry should be that of Joshua’s when he said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Lastly, as the family king, men are commanded to be the providers of the family. As the highest authority over the family, fathers have the responsibility to take care of their families and spread God’s bounty to their wives and children.

Parents have no greater responsibility than to lead their teens to a saving

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knowledge of Jesus Christ. In order to give teenagers the greatest opportunity to receive eternal life, parents need to focus on three vital areas. Parents should live out a faith that matters, comprehend modern culture and Biblical salvation, and anticipate and fortify their teenagers’ decisions in making Jesus Christ their LORD. These three aspects should be considered as nonnegotiable when it comes to the eternity of their teenagers.

Since the LORD affirms the parents as the primary disciplers of their children they are given explicit instructions to train each child in the way he or she should go. According to Proverbs 22:6, parents are given the mandate to understand and disciple according to their teen’s learning bent. As discussed earlier, parents should implement the Discipleship Growth Guide (DG²) based on their teen’s bent to direct their spiritual growth and ensure their journeys to be prosperous and successful.

For a teenager to be prosperous and successful in their discipleship journey it will require parents to implement all the elements mentioned in the previous five chapters. However, there is no greater challenge for a parent than what is discussed in chapter six. Creating an atmosphere where spiritual growth has the chance to flourish can be difficult if not approached properly. First, fathers must understand that it cannot be accomplished alone. God is the initiator. Next, an atmosphere of spiritual growth can only be possible when the dad is totally surrendered to the LORD and loves Him with an aheb type of love. When these aspects are in place, fathers need to love God completely, love their wife sacrificially, and love their children openly. As a result, an atmosphere of spiritual growth can be possible.

The Bible is unquestionably clear that the parents’ primary task is to be the primary disciplers of their teenager. Moms and dads need to surrender to God’s
command, implement the principles associated with this thesis, and allow the Holy Spirit to empower them. As a result, the current trends will change, discipleship will flourish, and God will be glorified.
APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONS USED FOR PROJECT

1. Have you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your LORD and Savior?  Y/N
2. How many children do you have?  (1 to 6)
3. How many children do you have living at home now?  (1 to 6)
4. Choose the age(s) of your child(ren) that live(s) at home?  (1 to 21)
5. How long have you been a believer in Christ?  (0-3 years to Over 30)
6. How long has your spouse been a believer in Christ?  (0-3 years to Over 30)
7. Rate your Spiritual maturity.  (Non-Believer to Mature)
8. Rate your spouses Spiritual maturity.  (Non-Believer to Mature)
9. During an average week, how many days do you read your Bible?  (Never to 7)
10. During an average week, how many days does your spouse read their Bible?  (Never to 7)
11. During an average week, how many days do you personally pray?  (Never to 7)
12. During an average week, how many days does your spouse personally pray?  (Never to 7)
13. During an average week, how many days do you specifically pray for your child(ren)?  (Never to 7)
14. During an average week, how many days does your spouse specifically pray for your child(ren)?  (Never to 7)
15. During an average month, how many Sunday morning worship services does your family attend?  (None to 4)
16. Does your family sit together during the Sunday morning worship service?  Y/N
17. During an average week at home, how many times does your family sit together and eat breakfast at the kitchen or dining room table?  (Never to 7)
18. During an average week at home, how many times does your family sit together and eat lunch at the kitchen or dining room table?  (Never to 7)
19. During an average week at home, how many times does your family sit together and eat dinner at the kitchen or dining room table?  (Never to 7)
20. During an average week at home, how many times does your family pray together before eating breakfast?  (Never to 7)
21. During an average week at home, how many times does your family pray together before eating lunch?  (Never to 7)
22. During an average week at home, how many times does your family pray together before eating dinner?  (Never to 7)
23. During an average week at home, how many times does your family read the Bible
24. How would you best describe your Bible reading time together? (Choose one)
   - Hit and Miss
   - Devotional Study
   - Random Scripture Reading
   - Question and Answer
   - Open Discussion
   - Reading Through the Bible
   - Book Study
   - We don't do any Bible reading together

25. During an average week at home, how many times does your family pray together? (Not including meal times) (Never to 7)

26. Who typically leads the family devotion time? (Dad, Mom, Child, Alternate, None)

27. On average, how many times a week do you have discussions with your children about Spiritual things outside of family devotion time? (Never to 7)

28. Based on your answer to the above question, please briefly describe:
   1. The last subject you discussed...
   2. What you were doing when the subject came up...
   3. How long you spent in the discussion?

29. Have you encouraged your student(s) to memorize any Scripture in the last 30 days? Y/N
APPENDIX B

SURVEY RESULTS – MOM & DAD

1. Have you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your LORD and Savior?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How many children do you have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
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<td>Four</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. How many children do you have living at home now?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Choose the age(s) of your child(ren) that live(s) at home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
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<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How long have you been a believer in Christ?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<th>Dad</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>4-6 Years</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10 Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-14 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-21 Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-25 Years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-29 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or more</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. How long has your spouse been a believer in Christ?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10 Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14 Years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18 Years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-21 Years</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>22-25 Years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-29 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or more</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Rate your Spiritual maturity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non Believer</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>Mature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Rate your spouses Spiritual maturity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non Believer</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>Mature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. During an average week, how many days do you read your Bible?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>%Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>%Dad</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. During an average week, how many days does your spouse read their Bible?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>%Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>%Dad</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

11. During an average week, how many days do you personally pray?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. During an average week, how many days does your spouse personally pray?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
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13. During an average week, how many days do you specifically pray for your child(ren)?

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>%Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>%Dad</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>68%</td>
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</table>

14. During an average week, how many days does your spouse specifically pray for your child(ren)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. During an average month, how many Sunday morning worship services does your family attend?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>%Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>%Dad</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once per month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice per month</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three times per month</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four times per month</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<td>We do not attend church together</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Does your family sit together during the Sunday morning worship service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. During an average week at home, how many times does your family sit together and eat breakfast at the kitchen or dining room table?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. During an average week at home, how many times does your family sit together and eat lunch at the kitchen or dining room table?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. During an average week at home, how many times does your family sit together and eat dinner at the kitchen or dining room table?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. During an average week at home, how many times does your family pray together before eating breakfast?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. During an average week at home, how many times does your family pray together before eating lunch?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. During an average week at home, how many times does your family pray together before eating dinner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. During an average week at home, how many times does your family read the Bible together?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>%Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>%Dad</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
24. How would you best describe your Bible reading time together?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hit and Miss</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devotional Study</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random Scripture Reading</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question and Answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Discussion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Through the Bible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Study</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We don't do any Bible reading together</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. During an average week at home, how many times does your family pray together? (Not including meal times)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>%Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>%Dad</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. Who typically leads the family devotion time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>%Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>%Dad</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Alternate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We don’t do family devotion time</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. On average, how many times a week do you have discussions with your children about Spiritual things outside of family devotion time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>%Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>%Dad</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-7 times per week</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times per week</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per week</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. Based on your answer to the above question, please briefly describe:
   1. The last subject you discussed...
   2. What you were doing when the subject came up...
   3. How long you spent in the discussion?
Responses from Moms

- We were in the car and drove up on a really bad wreck. Michael, my youngest, all of a sudden said that someone died because of the wreck. This lead into a discussion on wrecks, that someone could or could not of died and what the meaning of all of this was.
- Piety and how well meaning people can come off "holier than thou" and unintentionally hurt the very people they are trying to witness to. In church and someone got up and walked out at the end of service because they didn't want to talk to an individual. 3. 20 - 30 minutes
- How God provides in ALL things. Booking a last minute plane ticket to go take care of my mother and I got interrupted while booking and when I went back later the ticket had been reduced by about $135. My family had experienced quite a few unexpected expenses and this was another one and we just discussed how God provides in even the little things like booking a plane ticket. We just spent a few minutes discussing.
- Weekly Family Devotional Time Cut off your hand if it causes you to sin. Temptation pulls us away. Then we sin and sin leads to death. It was one of the dare 2 share devotionals. 30 minutes to an hour
- Integrity and honesty. Discussing a decision made. 7-10 mins
- Helping friends come to know Christ. Having family time. 3. 30 minutes or so
- Need for church attendance in order to stay connected to other Christians, in God's will. We had just dropped off a friend whose family has stopped attending church. Talked about ways to get the teen back to church. 5 minutes
- My daughter was sharing that she really didn't have any Christian friends or really any good friends at all and was talking about being accused of something she didn't do. We went to my room "to talk." About 40 minutes
- After a college visit, we had a 15 minute discussion in the car concerning God's will and direction for college.
- My son led his friend to Christ on the playground. I was talking to him about what he said to him and encouraging him to invite him to AWANA with us. We were in the car waiting for my daughter to come out of school. About 15 minutes>
- We discussed the families that the kids met while on the summer mission trip and whether they will be going to see them at Christmas. 2. We were fixing breakfast and then they ate breakfast. 3. We talked for about 15 to 20 minutes.
- Living a Christian life so others will want to know Christ. Talking in the car. 20 mins
- Homosexuality in the church
- God's purpose in our lives and how important each decision we make leads to what the road our lives will take whether that is related to drugs, sex or grades. Talking about a boy in school who got busted for drugs at the middle school. About 30 to 45 minutes.
- That we are blessed and have all things that we need-food shelter clothing and so much more. Lots of people in the world and without many basic necessities be thankful for what you have/ Most likely one of the kids was asking for something/ 3 minutes
• homosexuality 2. texting and sitting in the bedroom 3. 45 minutes
• Lying: We have been trying to teach our child that even untruth stories is a form of lying. We been talking for 2 weeks on the subject for about 15 mins a day.
• We were in the car. Spent a few minutes, discussing how doing the "right" thing is often difficult and unpopular.
• How do we live our faith and make our faith known in the presence of unchurched people. 2. Sitting on bed just before going to sleep 3. Approx. 1 hour

Responses from Dads
• Forgiveness - issues at school. 15-30 minutes, maybe more.
• Love your neighbor as your self, Leaving the house in our vehicle, 5 minutes
• living by Christ example
• The moon and how round it was and also how bright the sun is. Driving with my children and two other as we were headed to church for Wednesday night. Probably five minutes. (until I notice the kids start talking about something else amongst them selves)
• The last major subject we discussed was peer pressure, spiritual influence & the impartance of keeping yourself clean as a part of your personal testimony. The subject came up based on a Bible study and we spent aproximately 30 minutes.
• 1.SHARING FAITH AT SCHOOL 2.THROWING FOOTBALL IN YARD 3.15 MINUTES
• apologetic - Why the XN faith from non-biblical view. 2. dinner table and again in car 3. 8 + or - minutes
• We discussed being accepted by friends and the world and how Jesus has given all the acceptance that she will ever need. We were driving. About 10 minutes.
• Drugs, discussing friends, 10 minutes
• my son wants to go to a particular college but needs 1 pt on act score for scholarship he says he cant do any better i said God can submit and commit God answers specific prayer not general requests hes not limited by resources but by your lack of radical faith trust in him not u
• Negative actions & attitude of a classmate. Making dinner. About 15 minutes.
• Honoring God by doing your best even if others are taking short cuts. Talking about school work and sports and how some people don't work hard and still get benefits. About 30 minutes.
• Profanity when texting 2. Going through the text my child received and sent. 3. 15 minutes
• Talked about the book of Acts, because I was preparing for Bible Study at Church. Couple of minutes.
• Subjects such as abortion, stealing, and others will come up. Most of the time something on the TV will appear that spark a discussion. The time usually depends on our time and what we are doing.
• staying close to god in a daily walk,studying and looking at gods blessings on us
• 1 - Faith 2- Driving 3 - 5-10 minutes
• Victory in Christ and dealing with the disappointments in life 2-Crying about our favorite team getting killed in their bowl game 3- 10 minutes
• How we live our faith while around non-Christians. 2. Sitting in the bedroom just before going to sleep. 3. Aprox. 1 hour

29. Have you encouraged your student(s) to memorize any Scripture in the last 30 days?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>%Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>%Dad</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

LEARNING STYLE “BENT” SURVEY

Skill: How You Learn
Directions: In each section, check each description that applies to you. Leave the others blank.

Section A
1. _____ If I need to spell a word correctly, I write it down to see if it "looks" right.
2. _____ I can remember names if I see them written on name tags.
3. _____ I enjoy reading books and looking at the pictures.
4. _____ I would prefer to read the directions or look at the illustrations before beginning a project.
5. _____ To remember what my teacher says in class, it helps me to take notes.
6. _____ I usually write down all of my assignments to help me remember them.
7. _____ A good way for me to practice vocabulary words would be to use flashcards.
8. _____ I like my desk and locker to be organized.
9. _____ I can sit still to watch TV or work on the computer for a long time.
10. _____ I understand things better when I read them than when I listen to them.
11. _____ I like for my folks to make a list of the chores I need to do rather than just tell me.
12. _____ I can picture things easily in my mind.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHECKS IN SECTION A _____

Section B
1. _____ If I hear someone's name, I remember it easily.
2. _____ I prefer to listen to a book on audio tape rather than read it.
3. _____ I can pay attention and remember easily when my teacher reads aloud to us.
4. _____ I use jingles and songs to help me memorize things.
5. _____ If I were lost, I would stop and ask someone for directions rather than look at a map.
6. _____ In reading, I can best remember a story if we have a class discussion about it.
7. _____ I remember songs after hearing them only a couple of times.
8. _____ I often read and study by repeating information aloud to myself.
9. _____ I am distracted by background noise (like pencil tapping) when I am taking a test.
10. _____ I like to study for tests by having someone quiz me aloud.
11. _____ I like to talk and listen.
12. _____ I work math story problems by talking through them aloud.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHECKS IN SECTION B _____

Section C
1. _____ It is hard for me to pay attention when I must sit still for a whole class period.
2. _____ I enjoy sports and being active.
3. _____ I count on my fingers or with other objects when I do math problems.
4. _____ My favorite classes are those where I can move around a lot.
5. _____ I would almost always choose to play outside rather than sit inside and read a book or listen to tapes.
6. _____ I have a hard time staying neat and organized.
7. _____ I am good at skills that require precise movements like walking on a balance beam, serving a volleyball or playing ping-pong.
8. _____ I prefer to learn a new activity by being shown how to do it rather than reading about it or listening to a tape about it.
9. _____ I would like to act out stories rather than talk about them.
10. _____ I have a good sense of balance and rhythm.
11. _____ I can learn new dance steps or athletic skills after only trying them a few times.
12. _____ I would like to study my multiplication tables by saying them in rhythm while I jumped rope.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHECKS IN SECTION C _____

Now write your section totals in the spaces below.

A=                    B=                            C=

A. If your highest total is in section A, you are likely a SEEING learner. You remember best by using your eyes.
B. If your highest total is in section B, you are likely a HEARING learner. You remember best by using your ears.
C. If your highest total is in section C, you are likely a DOING learner. You need movement or activity while you study to remember best.

Now fill in the blanks below:
I am strongest as a ___________ learner.
My second area of strength is as a __________ learner.

Adapted From Kelley Wingate Publications 1996
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VITA

Mark E. Smith

PERSONAL
  Born: February 12, 1964

EDUCATIONAL
  D.Min., Liberty Theological Seminary, 2011. (Pending)

MINISTERIAL
  License: October 26, 1997, Cornerstone Baptist Church, High Point, North Carolina.

PROFESSIONAL
  Student Pastor, Lakeview Baptist Church, 2005 – Present.