

Parenting with Faith:

The Legacy of Discipleship

■ by Debi Mitchell, MS, LMFT

*Train up a child in the way he should go;
Even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)*

We struggle parenting children with a strong faith in a secular world, especially one that is becoming increasingly intolerant of Christian beliefs. We question the best way to help our children learn about, trust in and remain dedicated to God. **To help our children become spiritually strong, we must develop our own faith and deliberately, consistently disciple our children.**

Develop our faith

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith beautifully: “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Trust and faith mean similar ideas.

We cannot trust someone or something we do not know. If we desire to root our children in faith in Christ, we must first develop our own faith. First we must know him, and then we must believe that he wants our good (Hebrews 11:6). Our children’s faith grows the same way our faith does. Some ways to grow include:

Spend time in the Bible. “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” (2 Timothy 3:16-17, *ital added*). This includes parenting. Biblegateway.com contains over 150 different translations or paraphrases in 50 languages.

Pray. We must spend time sharing our heart and listening to God’s heart. Trust builds with the intimacy developed here. (Colossians 4:2; Psalm 46:10)

Learn God’s character. One way is to study the different names for God. In Biblical times, names defined character, and God revealed himself in this way. For example, Jesus is “The Good Shepherd” (John 10:11). Shepherds were the protectors, providers, etc. for sheep. I found lists online with scriptural references to use for devotions.

Spend time with a mentor. Mentors help when we struggle with life’s hardships and when we are confused about what to believe. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Listen to other Christians. I love reading and music. When struggling with the question “why?” I found unexpected peace in Corrie ten Boom’s biography “The Hiding Place.” Many love C.S. Lewis. Max Lucado stirs the soul while teaching. I remember scripture better when it has been set to music or passionately preached. (Colossians 3:16)

- Continued on Page 2 -



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Continued from Page 1

Research to find the truth. We must check that what we are learning is not contrary to scripture. Biblehub.com contains interlinear commentaries that can be helpful. (Matthew 7:15-17; Colossians 2:8; Romans 16:17-18)

Practice what we learn. No matter how hard we study or how many scriptures we memorize, if we ignore or forget it later, our children will never know it. (James 2)

Consistent and deliberate discipleship

“Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21).

Discipleship means training or study, which takes time and work. How do we train our children without discouraging them?

Be age appropriate. We frustrate our children and ourselves when we expect what they cannot give. Learn about child development.

Be individual. Remember that there are different genders, methods of learning and personalities that can be creating different reactions to our training attempts.

Pay attention. We get busy and ignore our children’s requests for time due to deadlines. How do we convince them the God who controls the universe pays attention if we cannot?

Allow for questions. As parents, we can become ingrained with a “Do it because I said so” mind-set. We forget that without questions, children cannot learn. It helps when we ask questions that guide them to answer their own questions themselves.

Maintain your relationship. We expect our children to talk to us, but they must know we will listen to them in order to do so. If a negative relationship exists with earthly parents, it also tends to be the lens by which our children view the Heavenly Father.



Our children’s faith grows the same way our faith does: by getting to know God through all the facets available. If we include them in some of our growth times - prayer, Bible study/devotions, sharing how we see God each day - our children will grow, too.

None of it matters if we fail in this: model our faith. In Matthew 5, Jesus said, “You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Be someone your children see as God-honoring that they will deliberately imitate.

Our children have free will, and no parent will be perfect. With God’s guidance and consistent, deliberate discipleship, we can influence our children so their lights shine brightly in a dark world. ■



Debi Mitchell is a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist and sees clients in our Schererville, IN location.

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