

Discipling Your Family for Success
Pastor Joe Oakley
GFC – 7/3/22

We've been in a series on discipleship called Forward in Faith. We've spent months teaching on what it means to be a disciple. The goal of discipleship is that we come to know the Lord better, we become more like Him, and we disciple others to know Him and become like Him.

Two weeks ago I preached on Discipleship Begins at Home. I talked about how we need to disciple those in our home before we can disciple the nations.

We saw how God gave parents the responsibility to disciple their children. Proverbs 22:6 says:

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Training a child means to disciple our children. So, I'm preaching a message today entitled Discipling Your Family For Success.

We all want our children to succeed in life. We don't want them to fail. We want them to succeed in school, at work, in their own marriages and families. But first we need to teach them the right definition of success.

Here's how the dictionary defines it: Success is attaining a desired outcome, to reach a goal, to attain wealth fame or power. The world always seems to define success in terms of wealth, fame or power. But you can be wealthy, famous or powerful and not be successful in God's eyes. Success is much more than that.

I believe success is becoming who God wants you to be and doing what God wants you to do. It doesn't matter what else you accomplish in life – if you miss the will of God – you are not a success in the eyes of God.

By the way, I think parents make a mistake when they tell their children they can be anything they want to be. No they can't. They can be anything God wants them to be.

So - how do we disciple, teach and train our children in the ways of God?

First, we disciple our children by grounding them in the faith. In 2 Timothy 1:5 Paul told Timothy:

I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

Timothy was a man of sincere faith because He saw sincere faith in his grandmother and his mother.

Parents, you have the responsibility to live a life of sincere faith before your children. How do you do that? First by your example. Our families learn to follow Christ by following us. In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul said:

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Parents, whether you like it or not, everything you say and do is being observed. You're an example in all your actions and inactions and attitudes.

I used to turn into another person when I get behind the wheel of a car. I would go Nascar. I didn't want anyone passing me or cutting in front of me. I'm better than I used to be. I used to yell at people when they drove badly. I really wasn't aware of it until my children started to yell at people in the car. I said, "Where did you learn to do that." They said, "From you."

Parents, your children learn by watching you.
 Your children learn how to love God by watching you.
 Your children learn how to love people by watching you.
 Your children learn how to be spouses and parents by watching you.
 What are your children learning?

We must intentionally disciple them by using everything that happens in life as an opportunity to teach them about God and His ways.
 Teach them to pray by praying as a family.
 Teach them the word by studying it as a family.
 Teach them to rejoice in all things.
 Teach them truth and train them in skills for a successful life.

Secondly – we train our children for success by teaching them the word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:14-15 Paul told Timothy:

Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Knowing the scriptures from infancy has a great influence on our children's salvation and success in life. What could be more important?

So I want to go over some behaviors from the Bible that parents need to instill in their children. There are way more things than I have time to cover today.

Your children will not just automatically learn these things – you must disciple them. 1 Corinthians 13:11 says:

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

The Greek word for “put away” means to make entirely useless, inactive and inoperative – to abolish, destroy, do away with, make of no effect, stop, put an end to, bring to nothing, to unemploy.

Putting away childish things requires effort.

It does not mean you will automatically grow out of it.

In fact, the meaning here is that childish things will not go away on their own!

You can’t outgrow Bible ignorance – you must study the Word.

You can’t outgrow prayerlessness – you must start praying.

You can’t outgrow sin – you must repent of it.

Childish things must be put away!

I want to talk today about a few of the childish things we need to put away and we need to teach our children to put away.

1- Children put themselves first.

Mature adults put God first, then family, then themselves.

Childishness is synonymous with selfishness, having to be the center of attention, expecting everyone else to meet your needs. There’s nothing wrong with that because that’s the way God designed babies. But there’s something very wrong when those who ought to be mature in the faith think the world should revolve around them.

It’s important that as we grow up in Christ, we get away from being self-centered and that we become centered in Christ and on others. We must be an example to our children in this.

2- Children want everything now. Mature adults are patient.

Not only does a child always think about themselves - they also have a short attention span and an inability to delay gratification. Anybody who has taken a trip in a car with children and has heard the question, “Are we there yet?” 157 times knows what I mean. The concept of hours of waiting just escapes a child’s mind. A child thinks short-term. They want what they want and they want it now!

Immature Christians can’t wait for anything. They keep asking God, “Are we there yet?” They want what they want and they want it now. Over the years I’ve seen many people turn against God if they did not get what they wanted when they wanted.

But, in order to mature we must start to see beyond the immediate, beyond today - and they start to think long-term – even eternally. We must choose to wait on God. We must trust His timetable.

And we must teach our children how to wait and how to persevere.

3- Children put play before work. Mature adults put work before play.

Children spend most of their life playing and they work occasionally.
Adults spend most of their life working and they play occasionally.

Boys think work is bad, but men know work is good. Why is work good? Because God created it and everything He created He called good! 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 says:

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Parents, we must teach our children to work at home. We must give them age-appropriate tasks and responsibilities. As I was growing up I got more and more chores to do. Make the bed, clean the room, wash dishes, mow the yard.

When I was a junior in high school I came home from school one day and my dad said, "I got you a job." So, I started work at a 5 and dime called SS Kresge. I worked every day after school and all day Saturday. When I got paid I gave my mom my earnings and she gave me back what I could have. I was being trained to work and take responsibility for my family.

If you don't train your children to work, you do them a huge disservice. Training your children to work means there must be consequences for not working. 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 says:

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

I had to do that with my son when he was a teenager. I raised my kids to work – they had chores around the house. My son got to an age when he announced he would no longer do any chores. I said, "OK, but the Bible says if you don't work, you don't eat. So if you refuse to work, you cannot eat meals with the family. You can fix yourself a sandwich or something, but you won't eat what your mom cooks for us." Do you know how many meals he missed? One! And our children are successful because they work hard to this day.

4- Children rebel against authority. Mature adults submit to authority.

One of the first words a child learns is "NO." "Eat your vegetables." "No!" "Go to bed." "No!" "Pick up your toys." No! And as a parent, dealing with that stubbornness requires a great deal of love and persistent discipline.

Rebellion is a difficult trait to deal with in a child. It's even more difficult when it's a child of God rebelling against the authority of their heavenly Father. A childish attitude says, "I know what God's Word says, but no, I'm not going to do it. I know God says this is bad for me, but I like doing it, so I'm going to do it my way anyway."

To grow to spiritual maturity, we must stop stubbornly saying NO to God. And we must help our children mature by training them to choose to submit to the authority of God. And that involves discipline. Discipleship always involves discipline. And if we don't discipline our children, they will be disciplined by others or by God.

We disciple our children by establishing age-appropriate standards and boundaries and consequences for not obeying the standards. Some parents think they should protect their children from any consequences of bad behavior. That never works! That's why Proverbs 22:15 says:

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

I grew up when you got spanked at home and at school. I believe in spanking – but there are other forms of discipline like grounding or by taking away a phone or tablet for an appropriate time. Some people think that discipline is mean, but it is an act of love. Proverbs 13:24 says:

He who spares his rod [of discipline] hates his children, but he who loves them disciplines them diligently and punishes them early.

In other words, if your child starts disrespecting you, sassing you, talking back to you – it's much easier to deal with that when they are 6 than when they are 16! That's why Proverbs 23:13-14 says:

Don't fail to discipline your children. They won't die if you spank them. Physical discipline may well save them from death.

The Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament says: this means that he who administers corporal chastisement to the child, saves him spiritually; this does not refer to death in general, but to death falling upon a man before his time, and in his sins. In other words, disciplining your child can keep them from going down a road in life that leads to their destruction.

That's why we must teach our children to honor those in authority. It starts at home because Ephesians 6:1-3 says:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" - which is the first commandment with a promise - "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Many young people set off to pursue dreams only to run into destruction and the simple reason is they don't honor their parents. The Bible teaches if you want to live a long and prosperous life, you must honor your parents. Don't think you can dishonor your parents and be blessed by God.

Unfortunately, things are much different today than when I was growing up. Back then, there was a culture of respect and honor. I was taught to say, "Yes, sir" and "Yes, ma'am" to adults. Children honored parents and teachers. Husbands and wives honored each other. People honored their leaders: pastors, teachers, policemen, and bosses.

Now, our culture leans more toward disrespect. Children talk back to their parents. Students disrespect their teachers. Employees disrespect their bosses. Husbands and wives dishonor each other.

Dishonor is rampant in our society. But God commands us to honor those He puts in authority. Authority is meant to work for our good and blessing. And you only receive that blessing when you honor those in authority.

5- Children live to get. Mature adults live to give.

Children speak about wanting, getting, and taking. When we become adults, we need to put away childish things. We need to speak less about getting and more about giving.

Parents, we need to teach our children how to handle money. My parents did not teach me how to handle money. When I got married, I didn't even know how to write a check. All I learned was how to get into debt easily. We struggled financially until a leader in the church actually sat down with us and helped us make a budget. That changed our lives forever!

We must disciple our children about how to handle money. Getting into debt is way too easy in America. We don't want to say NO to ourselves – we don't want to wait for anything – we just charge it. Our children will never learn to say no if we never tell them no. They won't learn to wait and save up for purchases if we don't ever make them wait.

They won't learn to tithe and save if we don't teach them to tithe. I encourage you to teach good money habits from early childhood. If a child gets a dollar – teach them to give 10 cents to God and save 10 cents and spend the rest. Then the rest of their lives, it stays the same. 10 cents of every dollar belongs to God, 10 cents goes to savings and you live on the rest. If they do that from an early age, they won't get into the money problems some of us have gotten ourselves into.

6- Children are controlled by their emotions. Mature adults control their emotions.

Listen – emotions are not bad. But being controlled by your emotions is a horrible way to live.

Most children are ruled by their emotions. They only want to do what they feel like doing. Maturity is about doing what is right, no matter how you feel. It's childish to be totally controlled by your emotions.

If you don't control your emotions, your emotions will control you. The opposite extreme is stoicism – being emotionless. Parents try to get their children out of emotionalism by saying things like, "Big boys don't cry." And "sticks and stones..." Some people think that truly spiritual people have no emotions. Both of these extremes are wrong! As adults we want to avoid the extremes of either being controlled by emotions or being emotionless. We want to find a biblical balance. For instance – Ephesians 4:26 says *Be angry but do not sin.*

We take from that the principle that we should experience emotions AND express them appropriately. We cannot use emotions to excuse our sin. Children excuse their sin by saying, "You made me angry." Mature adults take responsibility for their actions and their responses.

7- Children blame others for their actions. Mature adults take responsibility for their actions.

We all have a tendency to blame shift. That tendency goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:11-13 when God asked Adam and Eve why that ate the forbidden fruit. *The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."* Notice how Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed Satan. If you think about it - Adam actually blamed God.

To grow spiritually, we must take responsibility for our own actions. Being a man or woman of God does not mean we never sin or fall. It means we take responsibility – not by placing blame or covering up – but by admitting our own sin and repenting of it. Proverbs 24:16 says:

A righteous man may fall seven times, but he rises again.

I don't know how you've fallen or how many times you've fallen. But I do know you can always get back up! Don't let the devil win the battle! Don't let him trip you up and keep you down! Don't let him condemn you. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! You have victory through the cross! You have victory through the blood of Christ! You have victory through the word of God!

You need to walk in victory and train your children how to walk in victory. So stop making excuses and start being conformed to the image of Jesus and then disciple your family to do the same in Jesus' name!