The Importance of Discipleship in Home Schooling

This article is an encouragement for you as a parent to take up the God ordained mandate to disciple your children. This task is not optional. You are ideally suited to carry out this role as no-one can disciple your children better than you.

Seven Steps of Discipleship

Sadly, discipleship is often the missing ingredient in modern church life. Older women who are to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-4) are often missing in action. Similarly, the pattern of faithful men training others (2 Tim 2:2) is not occurring either.

The process of discipleship is not well understood. Most Christians cannot clearly explain what discipleship is, and have never been discipled as adults.

There are several examples of discipleship in Scripture, including Joshua and Moses, Elisha and Elijah and Timothy and Eunice.

However the perfect model of discipleship is seen when we examine Jesus Christ and His 12 disciples.

The good news is that the home is one place where powerful discipleship can still take place, even if it is not taking place in your local church. Using the pattern Jesus used, I hope to explain how we can disciple our own children at home. The result is that your children are much more likely to become like you than their peers.

Step One: It requires a relationship

The Disciples lived and breathed Jesus for three years.

They saw him in the morning; they talked with him as they walked along the road, when they sat down for meals and last thing at night when he was exhausted.

Does that sound familiar? It should. It is almost a word for word rendition of Deut 6:6-7, which was a command given to parents.

Real discipleship can only occur when there is a strong relationship. It cannot be done by reading a book or over the phone. It requires a real life, hands on, time consuming relationship. Anything else is something else. It is not discipleship.

The parent-child relationship is the most powerful kind of relationship that there is. So give yourself a tick on that one. And give yourself another tick for having your children at home 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You definitely qualify on this one.

Step 2: It Requires Instruction

When we read the Gospels, we often see Jesus instructing the multitudes and then giving special further instruction to His disciples.

At home we give thousands of instructions to our children, from how to behave at the table, how to clean their teeth and how to pray.
Using our Christ centred curriculum, you are also instructing your children in Biblical character traits and how to view the world from God’s point of view. We call this teaching a Biblical worldview. Give yourself a tick for this one too.

This step is further enhanced when you study the Scriptures together in morning devotion or at meal times. As you bring the Scriptures to life to your children, and as they see how it affects your life, they too will learn to love the Lord Jesus, just as you do.

**Step 3: It requires example and observation**

So often we read of Jesus teaching, healing, caring and challenging. All the disciples had to do was watch. They were learning by observing Jesus example. In other words, ‘Watch me.’

Your children watch you; they listen to your tone of voice on the phone; they see your reaction to someone cutting in front of you on the road. Two little eyes absorb so much. They see whether you show respect to your husband. They see whether you go out of your way to serve and help your wife. You don’t have to say, “Watch me”. They just do it. It is part of that powerful parent-child dynamic.

Give yourself a tick on this one, but it comes with a warning.

As we all know, they see us as we really are. No filtered glasses here. If we want our children to become mature Christian adults and heroes of the faith, we have to be mature Christian adults and heroes of the faith ourselves. Sorry, no shortcuts here.

What if you say, “I am not sure how to be a hero of the faith”?

Perhaps you need to find a mature Christian believer and say, “I need to walk with God, so I can show my children how to walk with God. Would you please consider showing me how to do this?

Perhaps you need to start attending a regular fellowship of believers if your attendance has fallen away as of late.

If nothing else, you might like to discuss this issue with one of our staff. We will be ready to listen, for we know that we all need a little encouragement from time to time.

**Step Four: Let’s Do It Together**

Jesus not only performed miracles but got the disciples to be involved, whether it was the feeding of the 4,000 or walking on water or collecting the temple tax from the fish’s mouth or bringing in a bumper catch from Lake Galilee.

They also prayed together, walked together and ate together. This is the next step of discipleship when they learnt by doing as well as watching.

We encourage you to go shopping together, to paint the house together and go to the bank together. When they are young, they want to hang out with you. Let them. It is all part of discipleship. Let them put the credit card into the ATM and let them push the buttons on the mobile phone. (They also need to learn that no means no!)
With older children, the same principles still apply. You can still cook a meal together, or plan a holiday together. Just remember that the purpose is to have good fellowship! The task is secondary to fact that you are there to enjoy each others company.

**Step Five: Let them have a go on their own**

*After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Luke 10:1*

We should get to a point when we are confident that our children can do a task or be responsible without direct supervision.

We need to let them have a go.

It is like having a dog on a lead. At first you keep them by your side at all times. Then as they show that they will respond to your voice you will give them more freedom and a longer lead.

Knowing the appropriate time to lengthen the lead is not an easy decision at times. Yet we must head in that direction.

Sometimes giving your child extra responsibility will result in disappointment. Sometimes you will need to regain control, especially if your child shows he or she is not ready.

Nevertheless our aim is to encourage and promote responsibility. It is all part of the process of discipleship and preparation for adulthood. Being at home, you have many opportunities to allow your children to grow in this area.

**Step Six: Practice and Feedback**

*So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them… Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. Mark 6*

Exciting, wonderful times it must have been for the disciples. Sometimes the demons fled. Other times they did not. Jesus encouraged them and gave them feedback. This step leads naturally from step five when supervision is still fairly direct.

Our children will, as they get older, get part time jobs or do voluntary work for friends and neighbours. They will help out with various ministry opportunities at the local church.

You still have a vital role to play. Discuss with them any issues that come up. Take an interest in all that they do. Remember how much you thought you knew when you were 16? Pray with them for opportunities to share the gospel in a work situation or in ministry at church.

The power of the parent child dynamic is still very strong even as they move into the early twenties. Yes, the relationship is changing, but hopefully you will still have their respect because of your love and your dedication to their growth as mature believers.
Step Seven: Go and disciples others

*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.* 2 Tim 2:2

Jesus, as He came to the end of His earthly ministry spent more and more time with less and less people. He poured His life into His disciples, for He knew He was about to depart and that they would need to carry on the work and disciple others. “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.”

We are in the business of training. Our calling, as parents, is to train up workers for the harvest. Our prayer and hope is that our children will be witnesses for Christ, that they will stand firm in the face of temptation and that they will disciples others.

Our children are under our stewardship for only a short period of time. May we know our role and be committed to it.

The Lord bless you.

**In summary**

Jesus spent serious time with His disciples. He had a strong relationship with each one. He trained them; he taught them, they watched him; they helped him; he got them to the point where they went out two by two and reported back; he left them and they started the process all over again by making disciples themselves of the nations. That is discipleship in action.

May we, with the Lord’s help, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, do likewise with our own children.