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Family Life Discipleship
For Church and Family

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Introduction

There was once a perfect place for man and woman to live together and begin a family. Tragically, we will never know the love and peace of such a place until the Lord returns and establishes the new Earth. Until then, mankind has the difficult task of trying to raise a family and find some kind of fulfillment in a world that has become an enemy of the very Creator who began it all.

Family Beginnings and Foundations:

- The Family (The Beginning of family, Biblical foundations)

It all happened in Genesis. God established the first home with one man (Adam) and one woman (Eve). Prior to children or church or governments, God made marriage. He blessed the marriage and gave them the perfect environment to thrive.

- The Family Established and Defined (according to Scripture, the biological family and the church family, who is family)

As the families grew and chose a path of faith or a path of rebellion, God began the plan of redemption. God was faithful to establish His law in the hearts and minds of His people and give them wisdom and principles to live by. In the Old and New Testaments, we are introduced to families and relationships: Patriarchs, judges, parents of kings and prophets, Psalm 127, 128, Job, Proverbs 21, etc. The precepts and teachings of God are meant to be woven into the very being of the family. The key words found in Deuteronomy 6 reveal just how important this is to the family who will make God first in their hearts and homes: repeat them, talk about them, bind them, write them, tell him. The final verse states, “Righteousness will be ours if we are careful to follow every one of these commands before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.”

- Roles of Family Members – a biblical understanding (of the individual: husband, wife, father, mother, child, oldest child, youngest child, etc.) (of the church family)

Every member of the family had a responsibility. From those who watched sheep to those old enough to go to battle or take on responsibility. God always had someone available who was older/wiser to guide them. Psalm 127 and 128 give a wonderful snapshot of a family growing together. Proverbs provides great practical teaching and application to circumstances and chapter 31 is certainly a worthy goal of teaching young women who they can become in their future. Parents and grandparents have much to teach and model. The examples are also numerous when it comes to siblings: beginning with Cane and Abel and through the New Testament with Peter and Andrew. The rivalries, sorrow, joy, forgiveness, struggles, victories, adoptions... there is much to read and even more to learn. As the community of believers grows, so will the need for communication and unity in spirit.

- Worship/Discipleship/Ministry/Evangelism/Fellowship/Missions (in the family and as a local church family)

The families in Scripture who followed God did well. When they forsook God, there were major conflicts. The Bible is filled with examples. And even when we find a “successful” family, we also find they encountered difficulties and sin. Even the patriarchs and prophets, as faithful as they were and used mightily by God, had their moments of disobedience or conflict: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Jonah, Hosea. New Testament families had their moments also: Joseph, Peter, Andrew, Mary and Martha, James and John (and mother), Zachariah and Elizabeth. These are not exhaustive lists, but simply serve as a sample. Reading God’s word will introduce you and your family to the numerous circumstances and outcomes families found themselves navigating. Choose the wiser path. Their example is written for our instruction.

- Counter-Culture Family (doing “family” God’s way)

We are called to live differently. We as believers are called to live for Christ and one another. How will they, the outside world, know us? By our love for one another. A family loving and ministering and serving one another is a beacon, a light in a dark place. A family committed to Jesus Christ can change a neighborhood and community. A church made up of committed families can change and impact the world.

Genesis 1:27, 2:7, 15-25, 3:1-24; Patriarchs; Joshua; Psalm 127; Proverbs 31; Joseph/Mary; Acts 10 (Cornelius); 1 Corinthians 13

Session 1

Giftedness and Talents Incorporated and Developed into Family Life Family Interests and Skills

Biblical foundational truths:

- ⇒ Every believer has been given a spiritual gift to develop and use.
 - ⇒ Every believer has a unique talent that complements their interest and skillset.
 - ⇒ Parents and mature / discerning believers assist and encourage and teach through the process of maturing children and younger believers.
- Using spiritual gifts to move the family forward spiritually, mentally, physically, emotionally, etc.

What is the difference between the Fruit of the Spirit and Spiritual Gifts?

The Fruit of the Spirit is found in Galatians 5:22-23... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. That may seem like “more than one” at first glance, but it’s all inclusive. Similar to asking someone to describe the taste of a peach or strawberry: sweet, tart, juicy, etc. All one fruit, but many traits.

What are spiritual gifts?

Spiritual gifts are foundational spiritual abilities that are used in growing and maturing the believer and church body. Spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of the body. The more a gift is used, the stronger and more confident the believer becomes and those under his or her influence and ministry are grown and encouraged. Gifts should be used and developed as often as able. “We must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don’t give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.”

Which spiritual gifts are listed in Scripture?

The list can be found in

- *Romans 12* (Prophecy, serving, teaching, exhorting, leading, giving, mercy)
- *1 Corinthians 12* (vs 8-10: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, languages, interpretation of languages, vs 28-30: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healing, helping, managing/administration, various kinds of languages)
- *Ephesians 4:11* (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers)
- *1 Peter 4:11* (speaking, serving)

Practical ways of application in the family:

To put all of this in practice requires a brief explanation of what the gifts are all about. What does “prophecy” or “helps” mean in today’s world and in your family? Below are the gifts with a simple definition. There are great resources in your Bible’s concordance and in study Bibles. Find explanations on reliable websites: Living Waters, The Way of the Master, Grace to You, Desiring God, etc.

Prophecy – “A speaking forth.” Declaring the divine will, to interpret the purposes of God, or to make known in any way the truth of God that is designed to influence people.

Serving – (ministering) (we get the word “deacon”) Service of any kind: a broad application of practical help to those in need.

Teaching – Is analysis and proclamation of the Word of God: explaining the meaning, context and application to life. Clearly instructing and communicating the knowledge and doctrines of faith.

Exhortation/Encouraging – Calling others to heed and follow God’s truth to press on in weakness or in trials and comforting others through tough times.

Giving – Givers who joyfully share what they have with others: financial or material or time and attention. Concerned for the needs of others.

Leadership – Manages and guides other people in the church. Literally means “guide.” Rules with wisdom and example.

Mercy – Close to encouragement. Compassionate toward others who are in distress, sensitive, kind and cheerful.

Wisdom – This is a speaking gift. Someone who understands and speaks biblical truth in such a way as to skillfully apply it to life situations with all discernment.

Knowledge – Another speaking gift. Involves understanding truth with an insight that only comes by revelation from God. Those with the gift of knowledge understand the deep things of God and the mysteries of His Word.

Faith – Every believer has faith; it’s also a part of the fruit of the Spirit. Faith is a strong and unshakeable confidence in God, His Word, Promises, and powerful effective prayer.

Healing – Miraculous healings belonged to the apostles of the first century church to affirm their message was from God. On very rare occasions in unreached people groups does this gift manifest; an then for a brief time.

Miraculous powers – This is another temporary sign gift which involved performing supernatural events that could only be attributed to the power of God (Acts 2:22). This gift was exhibited by Paul, Peter, Stephen, and Phillip, among others.

Discernment – An ability to determine truth and deceptive or erroneous doctrine. This gift helps protect the church from false teachers.

Language/Tongues – Tongues/language was given to enable the Gospel to be preached throughout the world to all nations and in all known languages. It was divine ability to speak in languages previously unknown to the speaker. It authenticated the message of the gospel and those who preached it as coming from God.

Language/Interpretation – given so an interpreter could understand and communicate with an apostle even though he did not know the language being spoken. The tongues interpreter would communicate the message to everyone else, so all could understand.

Helps – Close to the gift of mercy. Aiding or rendering assistance to others in the church with compassion and grace. Also helps those who are struggling with doubt, fears, and other spiritual battles. Understanding and compassionate.

Back to Practical ways of applying spiritual gifts in the family and in the church family:

Discovering and developing spiritual gifts within a family, and especially in the local church body, can transform the way a family ministers to one another and to their neighbors. When parents and relatives begin the small conversations about the personality or characteristics or tendencies of children, those are clues to the areas God may develop once the child repents and becomes a child of God. Those personality and character traits that honor the Lord should be nurtured and reinforced/encouraged through Scripture and godly counsel. Comments that incorporate biblical truths and doctrine are excellent ways of communicating to the child the character and nature of God as well as teaching about how Jesus grew in stature and favor with God and man.

For example: suppose a child has a natural tendency or desire to help others or to give away toys or clothes. God desired so much for us to live with Him that He gave Jesus. God helps us through difficult times. When a child enjoys solving problems or settling disputes (a child that wants people to live in peace), they need to know that God was the one who remedied our sin problem and He gives wisdom and understanding to solve problems among ourselves. Children who enjoy reading and telling others what stories they read may need to know that the roll of the Holy Spirit helps us understand and know the will of God and that He gave the prophets and ministers the ability to share with others the teachings of God's Word. The child who has the tenacity to stick with a friend and encourage others to finish a project or drawing would certainly understand the teaching of faith in God and how God responds to those who have faith in Him. You may know of children who cry with one another, or others are drawn to them because of their sympathy, could be taught the mercies of God and how to express and share with others. Imagine what a church would become if parents and leadership understood how to nurture and simply talk about God's character when a child exhibits the same.

A family growing and developing their spiritual gifts will become a home of peace and grace. They will be used in an incredible way to minister to the church as they model spiritual maturity and wisdom. Knowing and practicing your spiritual gift reduces the amount of frustration believers face when trying to lead or serve in a capacity that is not characteristic in their giftedness. Scripture reminds us to “walk worthy of the calling you

have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting one another in love, diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds us. The is one body and one Spirit -just as you were called to one hope at your calling- one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

Spiritual gifts are given by God for us to serve one another. The perfect and first place of priority for teaching and growing gifts is in the family; godly parents and grandparents taking their God-given responsibilities to heart, obediently teaching. The local church is the prescribed next step; leadership willing to come alongside the parents, and at times, take on the role of the primary teacher when there is not a believing parent or relative present to teach.

- Using God-given talents to grow the family as a unified and “family with purpose” that will impact those within their sphere of influence.

Talents differ from spiritual gifts, in that believers and non-believers can share the same kinds of talents and develop, grow and excel at them. Talents are still gifts of God that He uses for His glory and purpose. When those talents are encouraged to be developed and refined for God’s purposes, many blessings are poured out: for the family and church.

As children discover their talents they can be encouraged and pointed/directed in the way they should go. Recall the passage from Proverbs 22:6... train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. There is so much more packed into this verse, so for now, think about the simple principle here: your child’s tendency and expectation to succeed in a particular area or skill can and should be coached as something to be used to please the Lord. For example, if your child enjoys and excels at music, then providing godly avenues for lessons or performance would prepare him for personal ministry involvement. If your daughter has a knack for vocabulary and writing, then coaching her along with writing and nurturing that desire would be beneficial for language study and writing for a larger audience. The same for science or technology. Some things really do come “easier” for different folk. And God has given abilities as He deems necessary. Many of those He even gives the ability to teach others in refining their talents and skills as He did that when the tabernacle was being built with all of its details and fixtures (Exodus 35:30-35). He continues to do so in His church.

How are some of the families known in your neighborhood or community or church? It shouldn’t come to anyone’s surprise that there are some families who are known for a particular skillset. Some are gifted in working with building and construction, some are mechanically gifted, some are the first to call if there is an electrical or technology issue. Some families are gifted in their own work or business and seem to always have additional resources to fund special ministries. There may be families who are the landscapers and facility managers. And there are some families who are simply always available to serve or teach or provide a meal to those in need. These are not reasons to be

jealous or envy one another, but even more a reason to praise the Lord that He continues to give the church what she needs: willing and talented believers who love Him and will be obedient to the task, and model appropriate involvement to others who are likewise gifted. Give thanks that the Lord continues to bless His church with the resources to accomplish His work.

Grow these families with love and discipleship and invest them wisely. Talents are not meant to be hoarded, but invested in the work of Christ.

- Networking with other families in neighborhood and church family; training with other family members in gifted or talent areas; etc.

Families who enjoy similar interests and talents can help one another refine skills as they grow. There is great fellowship and unity in a family or families who spend time with one another growing their talents and refining skills. This isn't a time for becoming prideful or establishing "cliques," but for being iron sharpening iron. And families who incorporate celebrations and competition and team-building can experience much joy while building memories that last a lifetime. Vacations and community events are excellent opportunities to refine and use a talent or to celebrate achievements in reaching a new level of expertise or actually investing in the lives of others as you express your talent. Where you spend time as family is important: museums, sporting events, camp grounds, missions, government buildings, libraries, nursing homes, state parks, local parks and community events, schools, hospitals or care facilities, local non-profit ministries, and even your local shopping centers or grocery stores. Once your family has an interest in developing talents and skills, God will direct you to the perfect place to get involved.

Talents and skills are a way to build community and fellowship with church, neighbors, and especially family members. Just like spiritual gifts, your talent can be used and invested in Kingdom work. Plumbing and electrical knowledge may not be a spiritual gift, but being available to assist a brother or sister in Christ with a need is a huge relief. (And while on that note, brothers and sisters should also be aware of not abusing the generosity of any professional who offers their service for free or a reduced cost! Love one another and be generous in helping one another). Gardeners, builders, financial experts, law, government officials, landscapers, sports/coaches, medical personnel, etc. Friends, there are hundreds of skills and talents that are at times sincerely needed by someone who may not be able to afford... when you have the opportunity to do good, do it. Let your youngsters learn by your doing. Coach them along when they want to be involved. When they make mistakes, let them make mistakes while doing good, not being rebellious. Let them build success one small step at a time. The small steps will build their confidence and help get them to the point of desiring more challenges. Teach them and lead them into growing their talents in serving the Lord as they serve family or strangers. One day we will be too frail or weak to do the work. Will we have faithful children who will know and do what is right and good? They will fill the gap; teach them to do so.

Romans 12: 1-21 (6-8), 9-18; Galatians 5:22-23; 6:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:27-30;
Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, 5:11-22;
1 Peter 4:7-11

Session 2

Active Life Training *Family Inventory of Personal Skills*

Everyone begins life-training as a part of a family. When a spouse is added, the dynamics begin to change rapidly, as training is transitioned into living and doing. Once children are added to the family, yet another transition begins. The growth and experiences of “family life” through the years will surely affect the dynamics, characteristics, interests and personalities of the family as well as each member of the family. Raising children is an exciting season of life to begin incorporating the skills and character that will propel them into becoming a well-balanced member of the family, their “some-day” family, and the extended family.

- The nuts and bolts and basics of life in the family.

There are some things that every family member needs to know and understand about their family. The first session regarding foundational truths have been covered. Here we discuss how to put this into practice inside the home, answering questions such as, “who is the leader,” “who makes final decisions,” “absolutes regarding the home/family character,” etc.

The Head of the House is a vital role in decision making and in delegating responsibilities. Too harsh and there is resentment and rebellion. Too accommodating and there is chaos and defiance. Numerous books have been written about finding balance in leadership in the home. A short list for starters: *Tender Warrior* by Stu Weber, *Parenting or Parenting Teens* by Cline and Fay, *Dare to Discipline* by Dobson, *Four Pillars of a Man’s Heart* by Weber, *Teaching Your Children Values* by Linda and Richard Eyre, there are dozens more. Ask your church leaders for recommendations for good books and websites to use are resources or gain encouragement.

For the family, there must be a leader. The children must know who to follow and how to follow. Children must know they can trust and rely upon their leader. Leaders must remember to use age-appropriate vocabulary when giving children a list of responsibilities or instructions they must follow. Making things simple to understand will help prevent miscommunication and misunderstandings. Always be willing to answer honest questions. There are certain “absolutes” you will be teaching in your family. How you teach and how you express those absolutes are important.

Decide early on the “resolutions” and character you will build in your home. Be bold in making and standing by these just as Joshua declared, “as for me and my house...” How will your home and family be known? Consider, resolve to make firm, teach it. What is your chain of command in the home and in certain circumstances? Taking a biblical approach, there may be some decisions that will not have to flow up the chain of command because the character and choice was made in teaching and discipling the family early on: friends and activities, party invitations, wardrobe, entertainment,

honesty, education/study, job/career choices, government/civic involvement, etc. If we are modeling godly behavior and choices and explaining to our children the “why” behind our decisions, then they will have a clearer understanding of expectations as they mature. Explain as appropriate for their age as soon as they begin asking. Let them know why we do and think as we do as believers. God’s word is meant to be taught (Deuteronomy 6:7-9)

How does your family dynamics adapt to circumstances? Who drives if the parent/s are unable? Who cooks and cleans? Pets? Chores? Seasonal tasks? Who gets first choice on holidays, vacations, outings, vehicles? When are trips taken and where? What is the depth of community involvement or school activities? Where are chairs placed around the table? If you are like most families, the everyday tasks of errands and school and work can dictate how much time the family spends together engaged in meaningful dialogue and planning and simply loving one another. Who is tasked with or allowed to say, “time out?”

- Planning and budgeting.

Every home needs a budget. That’s not a secret. Even secular economists will agree that every family needs an organized spending and saving plan. What does your family budget include? Do you have a plan? Who is contributing to the family budget? Is everything put into the same joint account or are there restrictions on who can use funds and for specific items? What are allowable “extras” that family members can spend money on that otherwise would be money saved or spent on items that last? (Spontaneous or extravagant spending; when is it appropriate?) What items are being budgeted that will need replacing or repairing? (vehicle maintenance, home, insurance, clothing, medical, etc.) Nothing lasts forever; is there a replace or repair plan?

Family members need to know and live within set boundaries of the income that is available. Living beyond available funds has been known to cause family and relationship problems that far outlast any accrued debt. According to the Bible, the man is the main “bread winner.” He was given the task at the beginning to take care of the woman and family. Proverbs 31 also offers the character of a woman who is known in the marketplace and has no fear for the security of her home. In your home, who will be the go-to in charge of establishing and teaching and modeling the financial boundaries? How will biblical teachings make their way into the financial model in your home? Who will establish and teach and model budget and financial boundaries?

- Understanding the importance of Life Skills: budgeting, life skills such as cooking, cleaning, fishing, ironing, hunting, simple home repairs, yard/garden, car maintenance or home maintenance, etc.

Modeling basic life skills in a positive way is the role of the parent. In everyday simple life-skills, there will be opportunity to teach how one decision can affect the next and the next. How does knowing how to iron affect cleaning or job interviews? How will

teaching hunter or fishing safety benefit what will be cooked or what is in the budget for meals? How to sharpen, or why sharpen, a kitchen knife and the benefits. What is the benefit of knowing how to organize a pantry or food items in a refrigerator? When is the right time to change the oil or rotate tires? What is the benefit? Will that help the budget? What if the mower doesn't crank? Is it the fuel? Spark plug? Air filter? When you are getting dressed for a job interview or night out with friends and a button comes off; what then? Hand writing and signatures, reading and understanding. There will always be directions to follow from someone older or "in charge." How our children develop in accomplishing those tasks and their attitude reflects on their in-home training. Every life-skill has an element of "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with excellence... as unto the Lord." (Ecclesiastes 9:10, Colossians 3:23)

Also, not to be over-looked: the positive influence of a grandparents, older siblings, believers who are maturing in Christ, and the Church. When basic life skills are taught and modeled, parents, and the family, will be closer to experiencing calmness through the many ups and downs of daily living. The Church family needs to be prepared to walk beside each family in producing a generation of godly men and women who are equipped to follow God through any circumstance. Joseph and Mary were able to be a day's journey away from Jesus because they trusted Jesus and the companions they were traveling with. Once they realized He wasn't with them, they went back to search. We sometimes think of them as being uncaring or inattentive, but when your family and culture can be trusted to care and desire the very best in training up children who seek after God, it's easier to understand how they could begin their travel back home. "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people" (Luke 2:41-52) How do you want your children to grow?

Children and "teachable" individuals should be welcomed when they ask to volunteer or ask to be taught or shown... let them learn. Give them age-appropriate tasks and explanations. Allow them to learn from experience and their mistakes. Training takes time; well invested time that can reap eternal rewards. Those with experience and skill should encourage those who are expressing an interest to join them often, so they can model and teach. Committees are a great place to start, as is special fellowship events or even some ministry events. (Special note regarding "ministry" or "evangelistic" or Mission trips: from experience, it is a better idea to allow a novice to be involved in training rather than on-the-job training. They can become overwhelmed and become a burden for the ministry team and a distraction to those who are lost. Train them and then allow them to go once they are proficient at the tasks that will be required.)

- Developing skills and knowledge: college, vocational training, apprentice, etc.

Every child has a "bent" toward a skillset or talent. Some are academic while others are hands-on. Music and Arts or Construction and Landscaping. College, vocational training, mentorship, apprenticeship, etc. should be encouraged as available options to refine and develop a skill/talent. Not every child will desire to undertake a formal education after high school, but every child can be encouraged to develop to their full potential through training with someone who is professional and available to train them.

A church having a ready pool of adults who will be available to help train a young person who has a skill is a rarity. Prayerfully develop your church; encourage your church; plead with your adults to be available to train the next generation... the generation that will grow and perhaps be busy working as the Lord returns. Don't let the skills of your older experienced adults waste away on the shelf. Pray they will be involved.

Prayerfully consider careers and the requirements needed (nothing is "free"). Understand the importance of financing the education: count the cost of time and funding and desire to follow through with required training. Invest in what will make a fulfilling career, not simply make the most money.

- Entertainment and free time. What to do with leisure time.

Although each moment can be filled with instruction, there is also great benefit from rest and recovering and simply having fun. Time spent in fellowship and building relationships outside of an "academic" atmosphere can build lasting memories while reinforcing everything that's good and right about family and life together. Plan for "down time" and entertainment. Enjoy family time. One day the children leave; what memories will they cherish to re-live and bring them home? It's more important to build memories rather than bank accounts.

Leisure time together is becoming rare for the family. Children and teens are involved in numerous activities, clubs, school, sporting events, events, neighborhood activities, and part-time work. Although it is important to be "salt" in our areas of influence, it is also important to spend time together as a family, building relationships and modeling godliness. Before joining groups or adding another activity, count *all* the costs! Time away from parents and siblings isn't always beneficial. Some trips and experiences need to happen in the family for the greatest impact and memory. Train your children on how to make the important decisions. There are numerous "firsts" that should be experienced with the family rather than apart. It isn't always possible, but the more the family experiences together, the sweeter and longer lasting the memory.

What is the difference between leisure time and foolishness? Being productive. Your family time can be productive. Leisure time refreshes and relaxes your heart and soul and allows family members to spend time with one another without expectations of "performance." Easy, casual learning, not rushed; simply spending time as a family rather than going separate ways.

Once a family understands and experiences being relaxed and refreshed through times of refreshment and resting, parents and children begin to understand better the importance and benefits of a proper amount of rest and sleep. Some children or parents may require more or less time depending on the season of life and circumstances.

Daniel 1; Proverbs 1:7, 3:11, 14:1, 31; Ecclesiastes; Luke 2:52; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 5:5; Titus 3:14; Exodus 35; Luke 22:10-12; John 2:1-12; Philippians 4:8

Session 3

Crisis in Seasons *Family Organization Plan*

Everyone faces crisis and challenges. Those who have a plan face those moments with hope and are not fearful. Not all family members measure the same crisis with the same ruler... thus, the need for communicating a plan. Circumstances will vary, so a plan that is adaptable and easy to understand and implement should be communicated and modeled in daily life.

- Planning for crisis

First things: pray, rest in Christ, know God is near; He is not unaware. Crises will occur. When the foundation of the family is Christ, we are reminded that He is unmovable. We can stand firm with resolve and hope and security. Before a crisis occurs, it is important for children and family to know where your hope and trust rests. This is a sobering reminder that not all family trust in the Lord. They may know about Him and pray or rely upon God's goodness, but they do not have a saving relationship with Him. Your children need to know whom you trust. They need to see you model reliance upon the Lord. They need to hear you pray with them and for them.

Remember the moments so you will be able to share as others experience similar events; for their peace and hope, not for "one-upmanship." Remember that everyone measures crisis by their own ruler; your spiritual maturity and faith are for their encouragement. Be willing to train and encourage others as well as rely upon their strength. We can receive a blessing from others who have weathered the storms too!

Familiarize yourself with some of the first crises a young couple or family will encounter. Know the references or begin memorizing passages from God's word that speaks to issues and circumstances. When you are speechless, God's word, His Promises, can offer encouragement and hope in difficult times. Write those passages down in prominent places where family and children will see and know them!

- Emergency planning; call list; meeting place/safe place; will; neighbors; insurance contacts; living will; financial security in emergencies; keys; etc.

No matter where you live, there is one common denominator vital during and after every emergency or crisis: communication. Your family communication and contact information should always be up-to-date and be accessible. Keep a copy in a secure location where family or close friends can locate. Today's computer and cellphone technology, along with social media, has distracted many families from understanding the importance of "hard copies" of names and numbers. How will you communicate if there is no phone or computer service? A call list with current information is important.

Where is your family's safe place or meeting place should an emergency or crisis occur? Do your children have the confidence to know and go? Have you rehearsed? Are your neighbors or close friends or extended family aware of your plans? Where will you meet if you're not at home? When the family is separated for minutes or hours or days, everyone needs to be able to know the plan with confidence or know who to ask. How is your church family connected in your plan? Are there two or three close families who are available to host your children or check on your spouse during an emergency? Cultivate relationships with other families in your church so your children will already have a relationship with a trusted couple or family before a crisis. An older couple can bring a lot of joy and security to a young child waiting on parents to arrive.

Your church or trusted brother or sister in Christ can refer you to an attorney who can assist you with a simple will. The loss of a spouse or parent is tough enough; not having a will prepared makes that loss even more difficult. It may seem unnecessary now, but remember, your Bible is just like mine: it reminds us that no one knows the time or day when we will meet God. Contact a trusted local attorney who will assist in formulating a will and a living will. Make the tough decisions now so your family will not be forced into that circumstance.

Do your children or spouse know your insurance agent and where all the policies are located? Where will the children find the combination to the safe? You mentioned to them "a few years ago" that you had a policy and they are in the safe... you just forgot to mention where the safe was located and the combination. Communication, remember? It may seem frivolous now, but when you have opportunity to write instructions and relay information, do so. Part of the calmness and confidence families have during emergencies or a crisis is knowing they are prepared. Your allowing them access to plans will be very reassuring and build their confidence.

Don't abandon your friend or your father's friend, and don't go to your brother's house in your time of calamity; better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away. Proverbs 27:10 There is comfort and security in knowing your neighbor and being a good neighbor. Having a welcome, friendly and trusting relationship with your neighbors can remedy a host of issues during a crisis. Living by biblical standards and establishing a godly, welcoming home could transform your neighborhood. When your neighbor is a trusted friend a crisis is much easier to handle. How is your relationship with your neighbor?

During an emergency is not the time to begin financial planning or work on a budget. Most financial planners will encourage you to have enough saved to cover one or two months of living expenses and up to a thousand dollars or more of cash. During a community or regional emergency, you may not have access to banks or an ATM. Knowing you have an envelope with cash just in case of emergencies or unexpected needs is a huge help. Start small and grow the amount as your expenses and family grows. Keep cash in a secure location.

Keys, codes, and passwords. We've all lost or forgotten them. During a crisis moment is not the time you want to realize you forgot or misplaced a key or code. Share the information when your child is old enough to handle the responsibility and train them on access and how to use information.

Who is in charge and making decisions during an emergency? Parents? Older sibling? When the leader is known, there is confidence and peace. Knowing our circumstance is familiar to God brings comfort and hope. The one in charge can lead more effectively when those who follow are united in one hope and one God. He knows our every need. Trust Him. Follow the one/s He has given to lead through difficult times.

If you have enlisted another family as an emergency contact, let them know of expectations and their responsibilities. Let them know your plan and be ready to answer questions to clarify your specific needs. If there are medical or diet restrictions they should be aware of, share them. Once they know, let them do their ministry and serve your family. You wouldn't have enlisted them if you didn't trust them as approved caregivers. Trust they will care for you or your family as their own.

Get to know your church family while investing time with them: you will soon discover the richness of God's people. Each one has a wonderful story and testimony of how God brought them through difficult times or circumstances. The church is an incredible resource for brothers and sisters who serve and love one another. As a neighbor, and especially as a brother or sister in Christ, we are to do good. (Galatians 6:10) A believer with experience and be a valuable guide or serve as a reference of where to begin planning.

Psalm 31:10-31; Proverbs 21:5, 27:12; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Corinthians 9:6; 1 Peter 5:8; David and Jonathan met; disciples met; Rahab knew where to stay; Luke 14:28-30; Galatians 6:1-10

Session 4

Family Rules/Boundaries

Family Rules (Rules for Different Age Group/s)

Boundaries and rules are biblical. And when a specific rule or boundary isn't spelled out, remember there will always be a biblical principle. Read God's word often. Become familiar with the stories and teaching and principles that are applied. Know the Word and you will be led by the Holy Spirit to the principles that will guide you through establishing your family rules and boundaries. When you know and understand the precepts of God's word, you find each story, no matter the subject or outcome, has a principle and truth for every age. Families have rules: consequences are expected.

As your child matures, each Bible story takes on stronger meaning and more specific principles. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you in training and discipling your children. For example: The story of Adam and Eve teach the youngest child that God loves them and has created the world for them to live in and enjoy and take care of. For a child beginning to understand sin, they will not be surprised when they face consequences for disobedience. Older children will begin to understand the importance of understanding the rules and boundaries, so they can avoid disobeying. Still older children will be able to listen to rules and use those for encouragement to battle temptation because they know the parents (or those with authority to enforce rules) have placed over them. As the children gain understanding, they begin to understand the love of the parent who has given rules for protection and instruction. Every rule can have an age appropriate response. Parents will be delighted when, in due time, their older children with experience begin encouraging siblings to obey... be patient and continue to pray.

- Rules and Boundaries within the family unit: discipline; defiant or foolishness

Laughter in the home is pleasant to the ears! Your home is your safe place to simply "be." How does that actually happen? Parents are making difficult choices every day regarding the bending or breaking of a child's will to conform or obey with a good attitude. Children will be childish and act their age, no doubt. But there is a difference between willful disobedience and childish misbehavior. The parents who are prayerfully prepared are wise to have a plan for the seasons ahead. (Numerous books have been written on training up girls and boys; ask your minister or trusted brother and sister in Christ which has been the most helpful. Focus on the Family has some great resources, and your church may have several available also.)

When boundaries and rules are established using biblical principles, the explanations and consequences are more easily understood by children (and thus easier for parents and other authorities to help the child understand God's principles). Teaching children the character and person of God is rewarding and establishes a great precedent in where a parent's authority and accountability lies. The family rooted and grounded in God's word will find navigating life a little easier when there are higher expectations and rewards for those who persevere through the various seasons of family life.

Defiant and rebellious behavior that isn't confronted quickly has the potential to undermine future training and correction. Have compassion, be firm. Share your disappointment, but immediately remind the child of God's expectations and possible outcomes of future "bad behavior." Your child will begin to understand that their actions are not only "getting them in trouble with mom or dad," but more importantly, their actions are against God. Yes, that does seem frightening, but "fearing the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One." (Proverbs 9:10-12, and many other passages!)

Discipline is not merely correcting wrong behavior, but approving and acknowledging good behavior and wise choices. Proverbs is an incredible resource for parents and children: passages ready to be used in the countless encounters with temptation and trials or encouragement and challenge. Fathers and mothers, God's word is powerful. In a recent internet search of "what the Bible says to parents," there were nearly 1 million responses! Of course, thousands of those were the same passage, but a good chain reference Bible will serve up several passages that will be familiar: and many are easily committed to memory. Here are a few to begin with:

- Proverbs 1:5 A wise man will listen and increase his learning, and a discerning man will obtain guidance
- Proverbs 1:7-9 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline. Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and don't reject your mother's teaching, for they will be a garland of grace on your head and a gold chain around your neck.
- Proverbs 3:11-12 Do not despise the LORD's instruction, my son, and do not loathe His discipline; for the LORD disciplines the one He loves, just as a father, the son he delights in.
- Proverbs 4: 22-23 Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life. Don't let your mouth speak dishonestly, and don't let your lips talk deviously.
- Proverbs 6:16-19 The LORD hates six things; in fact, seven are detestable to Him: arrogant eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet eager to run to evil, a lying witness who gives false testimony, and one who stirs up trouble among brothers.
- Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is tangled up in the heart of a youth; the rod of discipline will drive it away from him.
- Proverbs 29:17 A rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a youth left to himself is a disgrace to his mother.
- Proverbs 29:17 Discipline your son, and it will bring you peace of mind and give you delight.
- Hebrews 3:12-13 Watch out, brothers, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that departs from the living God. But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception
- Matthew 6:33-34 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

- Ephesians 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land. Fathers, don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
- Colossians 3:20-21 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they won't become discouraged.
- Exodus 20:(2-17) 12 Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
- Hebrews 12:11 No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
- 1 Peter 5:2-3 Shepherd God's flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but willingly, as God would have you; not out of greed for money but eagerly; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

The Bible is rich! And powerful for the family. Incorporate God's word into your conversation with family and especially your children.

Boundaries and rules for those visiting your home, and appropriate responses to other parents, must be discussed. Friends and family will "test the limits" at times with conversation, entertainment, or general behavior. What is a believing home-owner to do? How will you respond to parents who may not share your values? Who can discipline, and how? You may desire to open your home as a haven for kids and teens or young couples: Is it possible for believers to host family and friends with enthusiasm and fellowship while maintaining a home of hospitality and godly character? Yes! Your home may be the only safe home a child's friend knows. You may be the only godly influence some children and families will ever know. The boundaries and rules you establish in your home are for everyone's protection; especially your guests. The other parents may know your home simply as a "good and moral" place where children can play and have fun without fearing for their safety, but they will also understand you have gotten there through enforcing the house rules and not compromising on established boundaries. Character and consistency matters.

When other parents ask about plans, be ready to give details and provide answers. Let them know who you are and what the agenda includes. Invite other parents to stay and get to know you. Let your attitude and godly character and hospitality shine. Being salt and light in your neighborhood is important too! Know when to adjust the rules and when to step in for the teachable moments. Many a slumber or birthday party could have ended poorly if a godly parent refused to intervene. Be the light. Show compassion and model the behavior you expect. But remember, you are the adult, you are the one who will give an account.

- Away from home: vacations; date/courtship; entertainment; sports or activity involvement; school; overnights

Values and character never take vacations; your testimony is always on display. When your family is enjoying time away from home, what are appropriate activities and wardrobes? Is it too over-reaching to police what you and your children will wear or do or watch while on vacation? Remember that with today's immediate access to social media, you and your family's life is even more so ever-present to the world. Something to think about. God doesn't vacation, but will does travel with us on ours.

What are the plans for your children as they mature and have a desire to "date" or attend community functions where the values of those in charge are not your own? The opposite sex will become attractive soon enough, how are you preparing them? There are numerous really good resources available, but none so effective as a godly parent and God's word rightly expounded. Pray. Seek God's will for your children and be available for wise counsel and to answer every question in the most biblical and age-appropriate way.

Every activity has a cost: vacations, sports, camps, community events, school and church events and clubs. Your family interests will influence where and how you plan. When you begin creating a family budget, remember to make provision: begin saving, every little bit helps. Know your community and region too. Sometime a "staycation" can be sufficient when saving for a dream.

Where are the "safe homes" your children are allowed during the day or overnight? Do the families share your values? Are they of like faith? Ask questions and be wary when parents or children who are unsure of plans or times or expectations. When your children are away from home, is there a key "panic" word or phrase to text or say over the phone to alert you they are afraid or simply ready to be home? Be wise. The enemy would have us asleep.

- Wardrobe/appearance

Rules and boundaries in appearance and wardrobe can be a challenge to establish or enforce over the course of child rearing. While there are certainly cultural or event dress codes, more often in other circumstances, the standard has been known to be compromised. This topic can become a heated debate in nearly any size organization, secular or religious. How do you disciple a child in discerning their personal appearance and wardrobe when the world continues to focus on the latest trends and social status? Your children are going to be influenced and tugged by media, peer pressure, and constant commercialization. Have they the tools to know what pleases the Lord? There are principles in Scripture for our appearance and our wardrobe.

Appearance is important. When God made Adam and Eve, they were the perfect human. They were naked and unashamed. While it is true they were unashamed in a sense of being sinless, they were also "completely" unashamed. God fashioned them to live

outside in the Garden. A physically fit and able body to walk and accomplish physical labor. The health and fitness industry invest millions to make billions; mankind wants what was lost in appearance after the fall. How will you keep your family active physically? What will your family's nutritional and healthy diet look like? The internet and book stores are filled with suggestions on how a family can have a lifestyle for "eating right and exercise." Your body is a temple, and so is your child's. Teach them godly principles in maintaining the vessel of their soul. Diet can have a profound influence on the body and skin. Use the resources available to understand; ask a nutritionist or physician who attends for helpful hints and wise counsel.

Wardrobe. Parents should make time to discuss the biblical principles of modesty. The first wardrobe was a result of extreme guilt; fashioned after man sinned. Adam and Eve sewed leaves together: God made something more appropriate, at the expense of His creation. Just knowing the cost of what the first appropriate covering was for mankind should remind us of the importance in honoring God in how we represent Him. This doesn't require us to spend outrageous amounts for clothing and "outward adornment," but it should remind us to prayerfully consider what is appropriate as a Believer and what is reasonable regarding the financial resources He has provided. Everyone in your family has a wardrobe that has a cost. Do your wardrobes honor Him or serve as a distraction or hindrance to your testimony? Wardrobes are not the total sum of the individual, but whether at home or away, your clothing will give a first impression. Hindrance or encouragement? Something to think about. (And old family photos will one day be viewed by your children and grandchildren. What will those photos reveal about your walk with Christ?)

- Social media

Social media has benefits as well as dangers. It's a very fluid and dangerous world on the internet and social media. Who is making the decisions on what is being seen or heard? Parents must set boundaries and rules sooner than ever because of today's technology. The boundaries and rules should be shared with extended family and close friends as well; protecting the privacy and sanctity of your home and your children. Parents should be present when setting up accounts with any social media and have access to computers and electronic devices that are used by children. Build awareness and train your children on the dangers. Technology will forever be a part of their culture. Prepare to learn; know what's out there. Stay informed through newsletters and websites that help parents understand the most current trends that lead the innocent astray.

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18; Hebrews 13:1-2; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:1-10; Psalm 128:1-4; Ephesians 6:1; Proverbs 10:1, 12:1, 20:11, 21:5; 31:17; Psalm 139:14; 1 Peter 3:3-4, 5:5, 5:8-9; Genesis 3:7,21; Luke 2:52; Romans 12:1; Proverbs 7:10; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 9:24-27; Philippians 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:9; 2 Timothy 2:5

Session 5

The Church Family

Church Family Network (building your family's network)

The church is made up of brothers and sisters; older, younger, mature, immature, skilled, unskilled, experienced, naive, wise, silly, faithful, stubborn, outspoken, quiet, etc. Those are just a few of the common characteristics you can find in Scripture. Likewise, there are certain roles found in Scripture family members will fill, as well as spiritual characteristics that all will share (fruit of the Spirit). The church family is just as wonderful and unique as you could imagine! Get to know your family.

- Incorporating the families into the One Family of God: inside the church walls (relations, walking together; sharing; rejoicing; training; worshipping; discipling; fellowship)

Imagine the inside of the church walls as an “incubator for families.” A safe place where brothers and sisters in Christ can learn, ask tough questions, “practice responses,” have modeled for them the correct/appropriate manner to handle God’s word and how to worship and how to pray. A place to learn and experience how to offer and ask for forgiveness.

Every member of the church body is important: special in the eyes of God and a sheep to be cared for. Through each season of life, we have an opportunity to grow and disciple others as we learn. God has given such an incredible variety of personalities to make each one’s spiritual giftedness thrive and multiply. How are you getting your family involved in the lives of the many brothers and sisters who would find joy, encouragement and challenge simply by spending time with you? The church family is a vast resource of men and women who can model and teach what “following Christ” looks like outside the walls of the church building. Inside is where the instruction happens; a safe place to ask deeper questions and teach and pray and grow and celebrate.

At some point in personal involvement, everyone will have opportunity to be a part of a ministry team, serving and ministering with one another. This strengthens the bond and love and comradery of the fellowship and family. Children see modeled before them how to cooperate in ministry and mission. These lessons can be difficult at times because of pride and ego; but the family that confronts and resolves such negative behavior will have a much more successful and Christ-honoring ministry. Families who see real issues confronted in a biblical manner have a reliable example on how to do what is right when facing similar issues outside the church. We are called to be unified and we are stewards of the Gospel of reconciliation: peacemakers.

Unity of spirit. (One spirit, one faith, one baptism...) Learn together and be encouragers of one another, because outside the church walls, things can become overwhelming for any family member no matter the age or experience. When your children see or greet a trusted adult teaching and reinforcing what they are hearing taught in their home, it can

help establish deeper spiritual root. When church leadership, volunteers and the regular member in the pew are of one spirit, there is confidence in the teaching and the fellowship among families begin to increase. As a family of Christ, we can accomplish ministry more efficiently as we are led by the Spirit. While you are able, get to know your church family; let the family get to know yours. When hard teaching approaches, know that you are not alone; there are others who believe as you do, and they are ready to offer encouragement or simply pray your family through the tough times. When there is unity, church family is always near.

- Incorporating the Family of God outside the walls (relations, walking together; sharing; rejoicing; training; worshipping; discipling; fellowship)

When your inside-the-church-relationships have deep roots, stepping outside the walls doesn't seem as intimidating. Knowing there is a brother or sister in Christ who really does "have your back" and will help you in crisis is a huge blessing! "Better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away...." Walking together in the schools, marketplace, community, or any outside activity makes a difference. If everything we do is to be done "as unto the Lord" and "with all of our might," then we need the encouragement and cheers from our brothers and sisters in Christ. When times are difficult, someone needs to remind us of "the main thing." It isn't about us. There is a cloud of witnesses listed in Hebrews 11, and Hebrews 12:1-2 reminds us that in addition to those in heaven, we have our brothers and sisters among us who cheer for us and encourage us to press on also. We are the same Team. May the church be known even more so outside the walls of the buildings.

You may have noticed reading the New Testament, that most all of Jesus "public ministry" was IN THE PUBLIC. Jesus was faithful to the synagogue, but His ministry was to those outside the church walls. Likewise, if we have been faithful to teach and disciple our families inside the church walls, they are ready to be in the public arena. They are confident; equipped. When answers are not readily available, they are not easily discouraged, but will seek to find the answers and return. When believers see one another in different settings or out of town or vacations or any number of places, we know there is a God who unites us. We may not have a common language or culture or home town, but we do have the same Christ who dwells in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Your children and your family will know this freedom and power when they have been equipped and disciplined in their local church.

- The Church in the marketplace, school, and community events

The marketplace, school and community are where believers put into practice those things they have been taught and mentored in the "incubator of the church." Popular phrases such as "business is business" and "it's not personal, it's business" are put in proper perspective because brothers and sisters in Christ understand that that kind of belief and practice has the potential to create unnecessary compromise with biblical doctrine.

It's important to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" and to be at peace with man. Schools and education systems usually have a set of standards that are "moral" but they also allow teaching that doesn't align with Scripture. Community events have been known to push the limits in what should be morally allowed or legal; therefore, families and those participating should be aware of the dangers, but also the opportunity to be involved to share the Gospel.

The marketplace should not be relegated to "business as usual" for the believer. While there are many who promote their business as "Christian," it's important they know they will be held to a higher standard of service and fairness. Likewise, it's also important for believers who are the consumers to maintain their testimony throughout any purchase or complaint.

- The Church and local government/social involvement in the community

Believers must be engaged in their community. Encourage those who are qualified to run for office and support them. You are training and educating the next generation of voters and elected officials. Don't be discouraged in this endeavor. If godly men and women are to be elected, then they must be prepared and seasoned. If your children have a heart to be involved in the election process, teach them. If they desire to serve in a public office, prepare their heart and mind and lead them to godly men and women who can offer counsel. The church must not forsake involvement in government.

Luke 15; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:5-11; Romans 12:3-8;
Colossians 3:14-17, 4:2-6, 3:12-17; Joshua 24:15; Proverbs 31;
2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Romans 12:10-13; Acts 2:42-47; John 13:34-35;
Exodus 18:21; Romans 13; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 13:1-7;
2 Timothy 2:15-21, 3:14-17; Hebrews 11, 12:1-2