

The Discipleship Gameplan: How to prepare your children for life and eternity

MAIN POINTS

What are God's priorities in terms of education? What are God's goals in education?

- God wants us to renew our minds according to His Word and will. It takes time to restructure an educational approach to the discipleship approach that Jesus set forth.
- We have different goals, values, objectives, priorities, values, content, methods, standards of excellence, and definitions of what is good in education than what the world presents to us. The goals of Christian education are humility, the fear of the Lord, to raise our children so that they give God all the glory, praise and honor for His great works, to prioritize seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and to nurture the faith of our children. The focal point of education as laid out in Scripture is the nurture of faith and character in the lives of our children.

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What does this Christian discipleship vision look like across 18 years of a child's discipleship at home?

- The Word of God and the Book of Proverbs are core curriculum in Christian education. The Word of God gives us a sense of what is important. We don't have to submit ourselves to the basic requirements that the world gives to us.
- Study the works of God in science and history (Psalm 78, Psalm 111).
- Scripture emphasizes music and singing, the only art form required by God in Scripture. Train the ear for music, and sing with your family and your church.
- The basic scope of a Christian-based education: your children need to read and write so they can read and write the Scriptures, they need to be able to sing, they need to have a basic understanding of science and history, and they need to be able to read some of what Christian writers have written through the centuries.

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What is an overview of focus and emphasis in these areas as it relates to the education and discipleship of their children?

- Parents need to respect the principle of individuality. Principal individuality is the principle that God is hardwired into each child as He created them. The world insists on national standards and imposes those on every single child. We need to move away from these standards because every child proceeds at different rates. But continue to bring in an age-integrated approach. Read aloud with all your children.
- Three basic levels distinguishable in Scripture: 1) the “Grammar stage” at which we are to tell our children stories of what God has done in history. Tell the stories of Scripture and the redemption story. 2) the “Critical stage” at which a person becomes more mature in faith, intellectual development and spiritual development such that they have the discernment between good and evil (Hebrews 5). Here, there is an understanding of God’s Word that leads to determining ethics, what is right or wrong. It is thinking more critically and applying the Word of God, the laws of God, and the commands of God to ethical situations. 3) the “Rhetoric stage” at which one can give an answer to any man who asks about the hope that is within them. 1 Peter 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” This is expressing one’s self in the fear of God and with humility. Our eyes continue to be on the character of our children at this point, watching for humility and the development of the fear of God.

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As we think about the opportunities that parents have, what are some practical things to focus on in terms of life preparation for boys and girls ages 1 through 18?

- Life integration is essential to the full-rounded preparation of a young person for life. Regular family ministry and family economy is important; it gives our children adequate opportunities for life integration of the material that they are receiving. Life integration may look like volunteer work, 4-H activities, ministry work, or hospitality. These opportunities for service and hospitality increase our children’s contact with the world, with reality, and with other people, and enables them to meet other people, find ways they can serve other people, and engage in various economic endeavors. School can be an island of nothingness, teaching children to know something but not to apply it. We need more hospitality, mentorship, and experiences that give guidance and opportunity that may merge our children into the calling that God has on their lives. This is the bigger picture.
- Think in terms of priorities. There is a lot of liberty in God’s game plan.
- First and foremost, study the Word, be in the Word, and read the Word. Then sing. Read classic Christian children stories out loud as a family. Then teach writing, math, and the wonderful works of God in science and history.

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How do I get my kids a solid Christian education without overly sheltering them? Don't they kind of need to know about some of these other classics?

- Start by giving your children the “good” money first, then show them the counterfeit. They need to get a feel for the good first, then they will be able to distinguish between what is good and what is counterfeit. Give your children the Word and the Christian classics first, then they will have a basic understanding of a Christian world and life view in order to better discern the ungodly classics.

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I don't have time to do all this, I'm just trying to keep up as a parent. And what you're describing here sounds like I might have to make this curriculum from scratch myself. It sounds really time intensive.

- Much is accomplished in an hour of Bible time. This is core—this is where 80%-90% of the growth happens. Here is where our children interact with the Word, memorize the Word, ask us questions about the Word and we answer them. Then we bring in the Christian classics and a Christian view of history, American history, world history, etc.
- When fathers and mothers interact with the material and apply the material, then close in prayer and worshipping God, we wind up with a discipleship program that results in more retention and more of an ability to interact with material.

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How do I get my kids interested in the kinds of books, worship, and life application you're talking about? After all, I think maybe my kids would just rather read fantasy and play video games.

- Pray for our children. Pray for a proper balance of all things. Children are easily driven to fantasy and

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escape literature. This is a spiritual battle. We need to strive for a tremendous measure of balance, a balance of work and play, a balance of fiction and non-fiction, a balance of reading out loud and reading on our privately.

- Engage your children in a missions trip or something that displaces the self-oriented escapist culture.

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Will focusing on these core subjects that you've talked about, really prepare my children for life in this world? Again, I don't want them to be so heavenly-minded, that they can't possibly be of any earthly good.

- The goal is to help our children find something they are gifted at, hone those gifts, and then plug them into the economy where they can serve Jesus and provide a product or service that could be a blessing to others.

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Closing Thoughts

- We need curriculum rooted in Biblical philosophy with a strong Biblical worldview undergirding it, where the focus is on the character and the faith of the child, the fear of God, humility, the worship of God, the glory of God, the praise of God.
- We need Biblical worldview-oriented, God-centered Christian curriculum, hearts of parents who love God, His Word, and desire to share His Word and worship Him, and the receptive hearts of students who love God, want to receive God's Word, and then give God the glory for all He has done. The tender, loving hearts of parents, and the open, receptive hearts of students only come by the working of the Holy Spirit.

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