



# CORNERSTONE

C H U R C H

## Family Discipleship Packet

Gather

Weekly

Grow

Daily

Give

Cheerfully

Go

Faithfully

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# Family Discipleship

## Introduction

Cornerstone Church places an abundance of weight and effort on family discipleship and it affects what you will experience here. Our thoughts on biblical family discipleship affects how we see family ministries, nursery or children ministry offerings, congregational worship and many other things. We would like to share with you how we see family discipleship and how that plays out in the home and church. Before we do that, we must discuss the goal of family discipleship and three areas we feel are crucial in the process. This is the key to understanding everything we do as a church and the reasoning behind our passion for it.

## The Goal

The goal of family discipleship is the same goal as our mission statement. We believe that both individuals and family units exist to make known the supremacy and glory of Jesus Christ. We desire to see this in Mid-County and then advance God's purposes to the ends of the earth. We believe that we start close, in the home, so that we can bring the gospel far outside of our local context.

Cornerstone Church Mission Statement:

*Cornerstone Church exists to make known the supremacy and glory of Jesus Christ in Mid-County and to advance His purposes to the ends of the earth.*

God does not simply give us kids, but rather He gives us eternal souls to guide and care for. You should see yourself as a *steward* of a gift from God. We are called, as parents or guardians, to influence life for God's glory that extends far beyond just our homes. God's plan is for all believers to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18-20). This is the best framework for biblical family discipleship. We disciple our kids, with the purpose to make disciples as a family unit on mission for God's glory! The culmination of this is when we launch our children from our homes like arrows into the world for God's purposes and glory.

## Three-Part Process

1. Prayer-filled and Spirit-lead. At the end of the day, strategies will only get us so far. We as a faith family must be on our knees in constant prayer for family discipleship in the church and in the home. We must trust God to lead us every step of the way.
2. Parents are primary. We absolutely want to be well-trained and confident in our theology and beliefs, but we do not have to obtain a seminary degree to carry out family discipleship. This is because it is primarily about a divinely designed relationship from God between parents and their children. It might seem like "professional ministers" could disciple your family better than you, but no individual can impact the life of a child like their parent or guardian. We also have the biblical command to do so.
3. Church supported. Do not be nervous or fearful about the task ahead. We desire to come alongside parents to equip and train them to be the primary disciple-makers in the home. You are not alone and we are all here walking this journey together!

## **Family Discipleship Strategy in the Church**

### **Family-Equipping Ministry Model**

Our desire is that every aspect of our ministry is intentional so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, trained and seen as the primary disciple-makers in their children's lives. We see huge biblical command and support for parents taking the lead in the spiritual formation of their family. For this reason, we intentionally may not have as many children's programs as seen in some churches. Parents do not just have the biblical responsibility to be the primary disciple-makers of their home, but they also have the biggest opportunity to do so and have the biggest influence over their children. So, we are not saying that we will not have any children's ministries; we want to love kids well by helping them grow! We are simply saying that we will be sensitive to the amount of time children could spend away from their parents, and intentional to make that time count.

### **Multi-Generational Family Integration**

What this means is that we believe it is crucial for kids to start attending bible studies and services with their parents, and others from every age group, as early as possible. This would include our Sunday morning worship gatherings, midweek Community Groups, and church-wide prayer meetings. We encourage this as early as parents are comfortable with, but we obviously understand that children at certain ages could be a distraction to their parents or others. To help with this, we currently offer children's discipleship classes during our Sunday morning worship gathering for children through Pre-K. Once a child is in kindergarten and above, our desire is to see them participate in our services to experience the joy of multi-generational worship. If your child has any specific needs and you believe they are not ready for the worship gathering, please contact Stephen Brentlinger and he would love to discuss this with you and make every effort to accommodate your specific situation! When it comes to midweek Community Groups, childcare and integration is handled and set a little differently by each group, so feel free to visit the different groups and see what works for your family!

### **Discipleship & Community for Children**

While we find it crucial for children to worship and grow alongside their parents, we also see a huge need for them to build community and friendships with others of similar age or life-stage. We also recognize that some children may come to us without Christian parents to disciple them and instruct them in the ways of the Lord. So, we also want to do our part to pour into the children God brings to our faith family. Cornerstone Kids is our ministry and effort to help children establish friendships among each other, while teaching them to how to *Know* Christ, how to *Grow* in Christ, and how to *Show* Christ to others.

We currently offer discipleship classes about twice a month on Sunday mornings for children in kindergarten through high school, which are held prior to the Sunday morning worship gathering. We also offer a more relaxed time of fellowship and Bible study for children in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade through high school, which generally is held on the third Wednesday evening each month. For more information about Cornerstone Kids and the most up to date class times, please refer to the Cornerstone Kids Ministry Offerings document.

## Young Children in the Sunday Morning Service

For many parents, even when we understand the huge benefit of worshipping together on Sunday mornings with people of every age, it can still leave us worrying about how our younger children may be a big distraction to us or others. Also, sometimes we can feel stress as parents when we are trying to keep our children quiet or from running around the church! So, why would we ask parents to go through such an experience? While we understand these fears or hesitations, we sincerely believe having children worship alongside their parents for years throughout their childhood is dramatically better for their spiritual growth than segregating them into another age-specific service. The years spent of children watching their parents worship God in song, actively sit under teaching, and commit to attending services will impact children in a deep way as they watch parents live out their faith in active obedience. Most often, your model of the pursuit of holiness will have greater impact than a Bible story taught by a minister or leader. So, if your child has experienced a “children’s church” atmosphere, this will be a little bit of an adjustment that pays off in God-honoring ways in the future.

So, will children sometimes be a distraction in church? Sure they will! However, we desire to foster an atmosphere of grace and love for all that attend our services, especially the children! You will find our members love seeing younger children in the service and are more than willing to put up with any noise they may come from your child. Often times, parents will be much more distracted by their children than anyone else will be. This also can lead to great conversations about why we, as parents, expect good behavior and active participation in the services! We can begin to point their little hearts toward God every chance we get.

### *Four reasons to have your younger child with you in the Sunday worship gathering*

1. Discipleship. We will talk more about this in how Family Discipleship impacts the home. For now, just see that hearing the gospel preached and seeing its effects in the worship of the local church is a powerful way to make disciples. Let them experience life with disciples of every age.
2. Education. Moses tells God’s people that God’s Words should be on our heart and that we should teach them to our children in all circumstances (Deut 6:6-7). Starting the practice of learning from teaching in a Sunday gathering early will pay off as they grow.
3. Opportunity. Younger children will not understand everything they encounter during the service. However, your closeness to them during the service allows for your explanation as it is going on. Also, it leads to great opportunities after the service is over to continue talking about what took place.
4. Inclusion. Children are a part of the body of Christ and are given as gifts to the church, just as adults are. Children need to be included to see godly examples worshipping, but also are included to participate actively as a member of the body of Christ!

### *Suggested resources and ideas to help younger children*

1. Sermon Focus. Often the sermon is the hardest time for younger children. We provide the My Church Notebook for free for this reason. These notebooks are provided, free of charge, to allow children to have their own notebook for the service. They can be used

with any sermon in an attempt to help children learn to listen and either take notes or draw something they hear. Feel free to use other resources!

2. Focus on the service during the week. Talk about the Sunday morning worship gathering with your children and the privilege and importance of it.
3. Model the excitement. Let them see you truly worship and be excited about what is taking place. Wake up and prepare before the service, let them see your joy and excitement.
4. Implement family worship at home. If you are doing family worship times at home where they experience song and Bible study, they will do better when the same thing takes place on Sunday mornings.
5. Sit near the front. Think about the best seating place for your children to be able to see what is taking place up front. It might be harder for them to pay attention if they are sitting in the back and do not feel engaged in what is taking place.
6. Affirm your children. When you leave a service, or even during a service, make sure to let your children know when they are participating in the way you desire them to.
7. Have realistic expectations. Your kindergarten child will most likely not pay attention to every worship song and be able to recite the sermon afterwards! Be patient with your children and show them grace. It takes time to learn what you expect from them. Do not compare your child to other children, each is different!
8. Stop worrying! Finally, stop worrying about it. We know that is simple to say and harder to do. However, as you can tell from this document, we truly believe what we are saying. Your child is a welcomed part of our faith family, distractions and all. We have weighed and prayed about the options, and we would rather have your child and a few distractions in the service than for your child to be missing.

## Family Discipleship Strategy in the Home

Regardless of your family makeup, this simple framework can help you think through all of the needed areas for biblical discipleship. We believe there are a couple of factors that go along with intentional family discipleship. We already mentioned that prayer must be constant and intentional for all of our efforts. Alongside prayer, we also encourage you to think through the following two areas below.

1. Be a living example. Parents must model the desired faith and obedience they hope to see in their children. Children should be able to see parents as the goal for which they are aiming in their spiritual journey. Obviously we are not perfect, but our children should see parents that are loving God with their entire being and constantly pushing to mature in their faith. They must also see us being obedient to God's Word and living out the commands and truths we will be teaching them. Our children will hopefully remember our words, but they absolutely will remember our actions and reactions.
2. Husbands called to lead. Both parents are called to be the primary disciple-makers of their children. Each has different roles and parts to play in the spiritual life of their children. However, the Bible gives specific instructions to the husbands to lead out as the spiritual head of the household. Husbands are to do so willingly, intentionally, and sacrificially. Children do not need to see power-hungry dictators, but rather they need to see a father that sacrificially gives himself up for the sake of his spouse and children. So, husbands and fathers we ask that you would step into your God-designed role and be the driving force behind family discipleship in the home. If your home does not currently have a Christian male influence, do not let this stop your efforts. We desire to come alongside you and help your family in any way that we can!

### Four Main Areas of Family Discipleship

We would recommend that families think through the following areas when it comes to family discipleship.

1. **Gather** as a Family
2. **Grow** as a Family
3. **Give** as a Family
4. **Go** as a Family

The following pages will give a detailed explanation of each main area and some examples when helpful. All of the examples are just suggestions, so obviously you have the freedom to apply them however you find best in your specific family.

## 1) Gather as a Family

Your family should gather regularly with Cornerstone Church by attending weekly services, engaging in gospel-centered community, and remembering and celebrating Christ in communion upon salvation. It is crucial that you recognize that our children will notice our level of commitment to the local church and mission of such (*Ps 84:4-10; Acts 2:42-47; Titus 3:14; Heb 10:23-25*).

Your family should also gather together to grow your love for each other, away from the distractions of everyday life. These times can feel difficult to develop, but these are healthy rhythms that can grow your love for each other in life-giving ways.

Think through the following examples for how to gather well as a family and develop them to fit or come up with new ones.

### *Family Nights*

Plan a time each week, or at least monthly, for your family to spend all night together for a time of family, food, fun, and your faith! Examples would include movie nights, game nights, restaurant nights, and things of that sort. Anything you enjoy doing as a family that can lead to intentional time and conversation.

### *Family Meals*

Plan times when you can have meals around the dinner table. Use this time to talk about the highs and lows of your day and how God can supply all we need. Also, have fun and engage your children in intentional ways while they are not distracted by other things.

### *Saturday Family Days*

Pick a day, for most a Saturday possibly, where the family puts away phones and spends the day together having fun doing different activities. No TV, social media, electronics, or anything else. Make a big deal of these and put them on the calendar. Let the kids pick a few activities to do that day. It doesn't have to cost a lot of money, your time is more important than the cost.

### *Worship Service*

Go to church services and gatherings together and then talk afterwards about what was learned or how you can be obedient to what was heard.

### *Parent-Specific "Date Nights"*

For families with multiple children, find times for each parent to get away with a single child once a month. This could be as lengthy as an entire night or for an hour over coffee or ice cream. Allow your child to be heard and loved as an individual. Share your need for Jesus and reliance upon Him. Also speak about your love and care for them individually.

## 2) Grow as a Family

Each member of the family should pursue the Lord Jesus Christ on their own in personal discipleship by reading the Bible, praying, living in community, and practicing spiritual disciplines (*Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor 9:24-27; Eph 5:1-12; 1 Thess 5:12-22*).

Also, we should strive to pursue God as a family and make sure we are all heading the right direction on our spiritual journey. A big part of family discipleship is teaching our children, or younger believers, on how to practice spiritual disciplines. Parents are charged to raise their children in the instruction of the Lord and teach them how to love the Lord our God with all of their heart, soul, and strength. (*Eph 6:4, Dt 6:5-9*). Also, the Great Commission tells us to make disciples, which would include our families, and teach them how to obey all that God has commanded us to do (*Mt 28:18-20*).

Due to varying ages of members in a family, along with varying spiritual maturity levels, it is up to the family to decide what each member of the family needs in order to grow in their relationship with and obedience to God. In order for each family to grow in their relationship with and obedience to God, Cornerstone Church recommends intentionality in the following areas:

### *Family Devotional/Worship*

These are designated times, at least once per week, for the household to gather for prayer, Bible study, and worship together. It is important to gather together as a family, outside of normal church, to have these intimate times together. Pick a study, or walk through a book of the Bible together. Make sure to include prayer and worship songs.

### *Family Prayer*

At some point in the day, find a time where you can pray together as a family daily. Saturate your family in prayer any change you get to show our need for God in all things.

### *Child-Specific Growth*

For families with multiple children, it is important to assess each child's current spiritual needs and find times to be intentional in that area. This could be done at bedtime, or during a parent-specific date night like mentioned above. This would need to occur outside of the family devotional and worship time.

### *Faith Talks*

Have discussions in the course of everyday life about what you experience or see taking place. The goal here is to help your child or family see that God can be seen in and through everything in life. If we are intentional, we will see many opportunities to talk about God or His truths daily. A few examples could be an ambulance driving by, an illness of a family member, or how the beautiful clouds show something about our Creator.

### *Scripture Memorization*

For our good, we are told to hide Scripture in our hearts (*Ps 119:11, Dt 6:6*). Teaching our families this can build a practice that draws us closer to God and aids in our growth and obedience in amazing ways.

### **3) Give as a Family**

The family should sacrificially and cheerfully steward the resources God has given, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, serving, and participation in community (*Matt 25:14-30; Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 8-9*).

While this may primarily apply to the parents of a family, we must help our children see from a young age that proper response to God blessing us, is to give joyfully and sacrificially. Help your children become a cheerful giver of their finances, time, talents, and spiritual gifts. Think through some of the following examples to see how you can apply it to your family.

#### *Finances*

Give up a meal as a family to give to missions or someone in need.

Allow children to help designate where extra gifts go in your giving.

Let your children work for money, then teach them how to tithe.

Talk to them about why you tithe and allow them bring the offering envelope.

#### *Time*

Set a goal of one service project a month and allow your children to choose it.

Contact the local retirement center and find a project to do for an elderly person.

Identify jobs around the church that need to be done and complete them as a family.

#### *Spiritual Gifts & Talents*

Identify possible spiritual gifts of each family member, talk about them, and then find ways to serve the church and others with them.

#### **4) Go as a Family**

The family should support the vision and mission of Cornerstone Church to glorify God by making disciples. We should live our lives as a witness to the grace and truth of Jesus (*Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor 5:17-19*).

Help your family see that their primary purpose is to glorify God by spreading the gospel and then teaching others how to live in a God-honoring way. Your family unit should actually aid in the spread of the gospel by opening the door to areas not previously accessible. Think through the following examples on how to Go as a family:

##### *Local Efforts*

Do prayer walks through your neighborhood for the lost.

Invite lost families over for dinner or to your home to build relationships to share the gospel with them.

Challenge each member of the family to speak God's truth to someone this week and share stories during your next family devotional night.

Set a goal to become friends with one family from your child's sports team and invite them to community group or church.

Talk to your children about whom you are sharing the gospel with and let them join you in prayer for that person.

Find a family in the community or church that is struggling and find way to encourage them as a family.

Teach your family how important prayer is when we Go, by spending in-depth time praying for the lost around you. Ask for boldness to share with others

##### *Global Efforts*

Participate in short-term mission trips together.

Post a map of the world and pray for the lost and unreached around the world.

Teach your kids about the missionary partners at the church and encourage them to send an encouraging note or picture they drew for them.

## Family Discipleship Summary & Strategy

We believe that both individuals and family units exist to make known the supremacy and glory of Jesus Christ. We believe that we start close, in the home, so that we can bring the gospel to those around us and to all nations. We have been given a mission, join us in it!

Below is a summary of our family discipleship strategy at Cornerstone Church. For full details, reasons behind the strategy, or tips and suggestions with these areas please see the Family Discipleship Packet.

**Gather** as a family weekly with Cornerstone Church in Sunday worship gatherings, mid-week Community Groups, and prayer meetings. Also, plan weekly intentional family time, away from the distractions of everyday life, to grow in your love and enjoyment of each other.

**Grow** as a family as you strive to grow in spiritual maturity both individually and as a family unit. Strive to grow individually by daily Bible study, prayer, and meditation. Grow as a family with weekly family devotional/worship times. Strive to pursue prayer daily and for families with multiple children, focus on what each child needs to grow in their specific journey.

**Give** as a family by sacrificially and cheerfully stewarding the resources God has given, including your time, talents and spiritual gifts, and finances. Invite your children into the financial giving and allow them to choose ways to use family time for service and glorifying God.

**Go** as a family by constantly being engaged with the lost around you in an effort to preach the gospel to them. Think through how to use your everyday lives to speak God's truth and the hope we have in salvation. Our work, school, and neighborhood should be different because our family is there!

We encourage you to sit down with your calendar and plan times to Gather, Grow, Give, and Go as a family!

