

THEOLOGY OF Family Ministry

PURPOSE

We aim to equip and cultivate gospel-centered, disciple-making families.

FRAMEWORK

**Marriage
Parenting
Children**

MARRIAGE

In light of Scripture, we believe marriage is one of the clearest representations of Christ's love for His Bride (the Church). Marriage is designed by God for the purpose of making the mystery of the Gospel of Jesus Christ known to those inside and outside the relationship. Marriage is not meant to fulfill/satisfy us, but instead, it is meant to be an outflow of experiencing Christ's love. Out of reverence and love for Christ, husband and wife are meant to leave their family of origin and cleave together in the monogamous, lifelong covenant of marriage (Genesis 2; Matthew 19) through unconditional love and mutual submission/sacrifice (Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Peter 3).

Equally-Yoked

In Scripture, believers are given the charge to "not be equally yoked with an unbeliever" (2 Corinthians 6). In other words, regarding marriage, a Christ-following man or woman should not seek to be joined in marriage to an unbeliever. Given the purpose of marriage, if spouses are not equally yoked, they will have opposing views of marriage, one another and Christ. Also, given the intimacy within a marriage, the relationship with the greatest amount of influence on one's life is the spousal relationship. Disciples of Christ are called to "not be conformed to this world" (Romans 12), yet within an unequally yoked relationship, one allows oneself to be influenced by someone with opposing values and worldviews, which puts oneself in the position of potentially being led away from Christ and towards conformity to the world, instead of being led toward holiness in Christ.

Submissive

In accordance with Scripture, Christians are called to submit to one another out of reverence and fear of the Lord. Within the marital relationship, wives are to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord, and husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves His church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5). Despite cultural opinions, submission does not mean inferiority, as the example of Christ submitting to the Father shows us (John 6:38), and Scripture even confirms that wives are co-heirs with their husbands. The call to submit is explained further with the words "as unto the Lord" as God makes clear the motive as to why wives should submit - in obedience to God's designed roles in marriage. God then protects the wife by calling the men to sacrificially love their wives "as Christ loved the church." The husband's love requires faithfulness, commitment, and sacrifice without expecting anything in return. Therefore, it is a privilege to sacrificially submit to one's spouse, not as an obligation but in joyful obedience to Christ.

Leave and Cleave

In Scripture, we see that spouses are meant to leave their family of origin and cleave/be joined to one another (Genesis 2). The justification and goal of “leaving and cleaving” are found in the phrase “one flesh.” When two individuals come together in marriage, they are united as one under God. Though this can be seen with sexual implications, marital oneness has deeper emotional, mental, and spiritual implications. As the two are declared one flesh, there is still a process of becoming one flesh through the deepening of this marital bond. The marital bond between husband and wife is meant to be the primary earthly relational bond; therefore, in marriage, spouses are meant to leave their family of origin financially, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, with the goal of protecting and deepening marital intimacy. According to Christ, as two individuals are brought together as one, this cleaving together is meant to be a lifelong commitment as they become one flesh (Matthew 19:4-6).

PARENTING

In light of Scripture, we believe that the Christian discipleship of a child starts in the home. Children are gifts from God given to parents whose primary purposes are raising them in the truth of God’s Word so that they may come to know and believe in Christ’s finished work on their behalf (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 2 Timothy 1:5; Ephesians 6:4) and teaching them what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:19). Therefore, parents should steward the time they have with their child (no matter the length of time) knowing that children belong to God, not the parent; that raising a child is a privilege, not a problem; that children are a blessing, not a burden (Ephesians 6:4); that children are gifts to be grateful for, not gods to be worshiped (James 1:17); and that children should be prepared to be sent out into the darkness of the world, not just temporarily protected from it (Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 22:6).

Family Discipleship Framework

In Scripture, we know that the discipleship of children within the home is multifaceted, so practically, four spheres of life constitute family discipleship (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Because children differ from one another and change as they grow and mature, the practical implementation of this discipleship framework within the home is fluid and evolves in conjunction with the dynamics of the child and home.

- **Modeling:** Serving as a godly example for your family, living out your genuine walk with God, and demonstrating true repentance where and when you fall short.
- **Moments:** Capturing and leveraging opportunities in the course of everyday life for the purpose of gospel-centered conversations.
- **Minutes:** Creating intentional time built into the rhythm of the family’s life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about, and living out the gospel.
- **Milestones:** Marking and making occasions to celebrate and commemorate significant spiritual milestones of God’s work in the life of the family and child.¹

Prepare vs Protect

Though children are influenced by their parents, we know that we live in a fallen world filled with dangerous lies and false theology that seeks to captivate the hearts and minds of children. When children are young, parents ought to protect them, but, more importantly, in light of Scripture, parents also ought to prepare the children to navigate the sinful world around them with a gospel identity because as a child grows older, they become more independent until the day they will be launched out of the protection of the home and into the world to live independently (Psalm 127:3-5). Therefore, parents should teach their children the truth of God’s Word and help them hide it in their hearts (Psalm 119:10-12), so that the children understand it and firmly believe it themselves (2 Timothy 3:14-15). The desire of parents should be to teach their children how to recognize the lies being taught to them by the world and how to stand firm on the foundation of God’s Word and the finished work of Jesus (Colossians 2:8; 1 John 4:1). Prayerfully, by God’s grace, parents will raise

their children to be authentic disciples of Jesus who are confident in their faith and courageous enough to stand firm in what they believe and be set apart from the world (1 Peter 3:15).

Instruction vs Influence

Two main ways parents make an impact on their children are through Instruction and Influence. Instruction can be defined as specific, intentional, and direct teaching or discipline, while influence refers to the indirect effect a parent has on a child. In today's culture, parents often tend to try to influence their children, and as children grow older and begin to rebel against authority, parents suddenly try to enforce discipline and instruction. In reality, when children are young, parents should focus on instruction so that the children may see the parent as an authority figure. However, over time, as children grow older, instruction decreases and influence increases. As children grow and are launched into the world, parents continue to influence their children and further generations as well (Proverbs 22:6; Psalm 127:3-5).

CHILDREN

Though parents are the primary disciple-makers of their children, it is the role of the church to gather around the families within the body with the goal of supporting them, praying for them, and partnering with them throughout the process of raising their children. We also know that not all children have parents in their home who are discipling them in the Word of God, therefore, no matter their home life, as the children within the body come under the care and influence of the church, we want to compliment the parents' discipleship by equipping children to recognize their sinful and idolatrous nature (Romans 1:18-32, 3:23) and to identify Jesus as their Savior and Lord. We desire to teach children what it means for them to live as a disciple of Jesus - to follow Jesus, be formed by Jesus, and fish for Jesus (Matthew 4:19), and we pray that children come to find their identity in His finished work and trust in Him with a child-like faith (Matthew 18:1-5; Galatians 2:20).

FOOTNOTES

¹Chandler, Matt, and Adam Griffin. *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home Through Time, Moments, and Milestones*. (Crossway, 2020).

RESOURCES

- *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home Through Time, Moments, and Milestones* by Matt Chandler & Adam Griffin
- *Mama Bear Apologetics: Empowering Your Kids to Challenge Cultural Lies* by Hillary Morgan Ferrer
- *Marriage* by Paul David Tripp
- *Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* by Tim and Kathy Keller
- *Parenting* by Paul David Tripp
- *You and Me Forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity* by Frances and Lisa Chan