

FOLLOW CURRICULUM

LESSON FOUR

Leading my Family and Friends Spiritually

INTRODUCTION (5-10 minutes)

Each person read a paragraph

Today we're going to discuss the 4TH mark of a follower of Jesus. A follower of Jesus leads his or her family and friends spiritually. When we consider the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (or all peoples)," we must realize that Jesus is commanding us to take an active role in leading others spiritually. John Piper defines spiritually leadership as: *knowing where God wants someone to be and taking the initiative to use God's methods to get them there in reliance on God's power.*¹ Spiritual leaders are not trying to merely move people in a given direction (like through the front doors of a church). People can be coerced and prodded to do a number of religious things, but that's not God's desire. If we have not helped them deal with their heart, then we have not yet lead them spiritually. God wants life-change that comes from heart-change.

When we think about leading others spiritually, we rightly think about those in our sphere of influence: neighbors, friends, coworkers, and that parent who stand with us on the sidelines at the ball game. However, there are other people included in the "all people" of Matthew 28 that reside much closer to us, namely, our family members. Our culture regularly champions the view that family, a spouse and children particularly, exist for our happiness. But that misses God's *full* intention. Our family is given to us not only for our happiness but also to spread God's glory. *Our family is our primary mission field*, and God has given them to us to lead. This involves embracing a stewardship mentality. Our families belong to God and we are the stewards of His treasured possession.

In a moment, we're going to read from Deuteronomy chapter 6. In verse 2 Moses says, "That you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son..." *This is a three-generation vision for family discipleship.* We are instructed to lead our children in such a way that it not only affects them, but also their children. This vision is given all over the bible but most notably in Psalm 145 which says, "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts...they shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness." For the Israelites, the "Mighty acts" that they were to share with following generations included their rescue from slavery in the land of Egypt. For Christians however, we realize that the Egyptian slavery pointed to a greater slavery (a slavery to sin) and a final rescue through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's the gospel message that Christians are to share with their children such that they will one day pass it on to their children.

In a study of generations of Mennonite families, one Christian leader made a surprising discovery. He wrote, "One generation **believed** the gospel and held that there were other social, economic, and political entailments. The next generation **assumed** the gospel but focused on the entailments. The third generation **denied** the gospel: the entailments became everything."² Although this study focused on the Mennonite denomination, it is a picture of all Christians that fail to pass on the central message that Jesus died, in our place, for our sins, and rose from the dead. It only takes one

¹ Piper, *The Marks of Spiritual Leadership*, desiringgod.org, 1995.

² Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 1996 baker academic.

generation to lose the gospel because the gospel is “assumed” and other good things take center stage. It is the gospel of Christ alone that can humble us in our sins, and when believed, restore our relationship with God and change our hearts. The gospel must not be pushed behind the curtain in our family life or in our friendships. It must take center stage and first place.

Let’s study God’s word together and learn how RBC can have a *three-generation vision* for discipleship.

BIBLE CONVERSATION (40 minutes)

Read Deut. 6:4-9

- 1) Try to describe in a single phrase what this passage says devotion to God looks like. What are some words from the text that you would highlight?
- 2) Why do you think God emphasized personal devotion (vs. 4-6) before he commands us to teach others? In other words, why is it so important to start with our own heart (vs. 6)?
- 3) Tell about a friend or family member that modeled repentance, faith in Jesus, and a genuine love for God. What affect did that person have on your life?
- 4) Reread vs. 7. Do you find yourself regularly having conversations that bring up the gospel or God’s word? Look at the four times for conversation in vs. 7 (dinner time, drive time, bed time, breakfast time) and give one activity that could transform that time into a gospel talking time for you and your kids, your spouse, or a friend.
- 5) Read ahead to verses 10-12. What is this passage about? As Christians, how do we avoid “forgetting the Lord” and forgetting the way Jesus has freed us from our slavery of sin (through the gospel)? How can the gospel be assumed (last paragraph in article) in our friendships and in our families?
- 6) **[Parent Exercise]** Read Psalm 127 together and discuss the main point of the passage. Then do the gospel-centered parent exercise on the next page. Circle the description from each column that describes you best. Finally, share with someone how God is challenging you to center your life on your identity in Christ and not yourself or your child. (*this can be a take home assignment*)

PRAYER (10 minutes)

- 1) Praise God for entrusting you with family and friends. Thank God for your own salvation and adoption into His family.
- 2) Ask God for wisdom to see *where* and *how* you need to be more active in leading your family and friends spiritually. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you strength.
- 3) Pray for someone who needs to hear and believe the good news of Jesus.

Self/Child-Centered Parents	Gospel-Centered Parents
Live with anxiety over their children's faith, safety, education, future, or other concerns.	Live with faith that God controls the future. Strive more to be faithful to him while worrying less about where that might lead.
Feel pressure to do parenting correctly and win approval from their spouse, family, other parents, or God. Often compare their family to other families.	Know they already enjoy the favor of God through Jesus who died for them, so are free to parent in love, not out of pressure to impress.
May get angry when children fail to meet behavior or achievement expectations. Blame their children, spouse, or others.	Are humble , knowing how much they too need God's help and forgiveness—making them able to teach, encourage, and warn their children patiently.
Seldom pray , preferring to focus on fixing problems by themselves.	Pray constantly about both big and little family concerns, trusting their Father to help.
Seldom admit their sins , preferring to be a voice of authority and virtue to their children.	Often admit their sins and their need for a Savior, allowing them to effectively point their children to Jesus as well.
Are controlling toward their children , either overbearing or manipulative, feeling a need to make sure everything goes right.	Trust that God is in control and is the wiser Father. Are chiefly concerned with guiding their children toward him.
May withdraw from their children , especially when problems or spiritual matters arise, out of fear they'll fail or be exposed as flawed parents.	Are confident that their Father will use even their flaws and failures for good, so prayerfully engage even the most difficult family problems .
May be resentful toward God or others when things don't go as they want or when their children disappoint them.	Learn surrender, comfort, and forgiveness from their Father who has forgiven them.

Self/Child-Centered Parents	Gospel-Centered Parents
Set aside all else to pursue academic, athletic, or other dreams for their children—and may be devastated by setbacks .	Believe and teach their children that God loves them and works all things for their good, even amid disappointments and suffering.
Feel content only when their children are happy, achieving, and faithful.	Find satisfaction in God alone , letting them care for their children rather than worship family success.
Add your own self/child-centered behavior: _____ _____ _____	Add your own gospel-centered behavior: _____ _____ _____

WRAP-UP AND PRAYER *10 minutes*

Sometimes an exercise like the one we just completed only makes us feel guilty. Resist this by remembering that *the Lord builds the house*. Your Father knows you are weak and sinful. He loves you anyway, and gives his Spirit to help you. *He* is the one who grants blessings to your family—and faith to you! The descriptions of a gospel-centered parent can encourage you even if you don't yet live up to them very well, because with God's help they are possible.

The coming lessons will explore many of these themes further. For right now, let's begin to practice faith-filled parenting by praying together for our families. Include prayers that God would make you into a gospel-centered parent.