

# American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 [www.americandecency.org](http://www.americandecency.org)  
Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts June 2018

## Disciples Disciple Their Children

By: Robert Vandooewaard



THE LORD DESIGNED households to be unique places for the development of disciples. Parents are commanded in Deuteronomy 6:6–7 to teach the words of God “diligently to your children, . . .” In the New Testament, when a head of a household was a disciple, it had implications for his family (Luke 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:14; 2 Tim. 1:5). In Ephesians 6:4, there is a direct command to disciple children: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (NKJV). The Lord certainly calls His disciples to disciple their children.

It is never too early to begin with routines of discipleship. Sing psalms and hymns over little ones and set aside time daily for

family Bible reading and prayer. In time, introduce Scripture memory and catechisms (Ps. 119:9–11). Make Lord’s Day worship a delight and a priority. Speak often of God’s Word, His works in creation, His providences, and prayers that He’s answered. These habits will set the stage for the rest of life.

As children grow, discipleship will need to intertwine with everyday life even more. The meaning of “training” in Ephesians 6:4 includes a narrowing of options or an establishing of boundaries. Children will need rules based on God’s Word so that they may learn obedience and the consequences of disobedience. This process ought not to lead to a constantly broken relationship but to a growing understanding that discipline is loving (Heb. 12:3–11). Seek to show them how each situation can either lead to alienation or to the cross of Christ and reconciliation.

As children grow, conversations become the most important aspect of

discipleship. The Savior answered many questions from His disciples, and parents also should become a primary source of answers. . . . don’t be afraid to take time to respond, to research, or to ask advice yourself, but be consistent in giving responses. Make your home a place of godly discussions, even healthy debates. Especially in this information age, teach them where to find the right answers for themselves, which includes helping them cultivate relationships with their elders. When questions become difficult, pray with your children for wisdom and the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13; James 1:5).

Christian homes can be pictured as greenhouses where children grow up as small plants for a time. They are given water and nurtured by the Word. . . . It is your calling as a parent to be diligent in discipling and sheltering. Above all, depend on His work, and be faithful to pray that the Lord would give the increase.

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## Disciples Obey Their Parents in the Lord

By: Scotty Anderson



IF, INDEED, A disciple is a learner, no relationship is more suited to the practice of discipleship than the relationship of children to their parents. Family is the first government in virtually all times, cultures, and religions. Life begins with both an association and authority. In this natural economy, interested parties act according to filial love, self-interest, tradition, and community to create an environment that fosters health, growth, learning, and maturation into adulthood. But this common arrangement hardly entails a universal standard. Parents can be harsh, soft, practical, idealist, hands off, hands on, narrow, or open—all before they've said a single word concerning their goals for you.

But the Christian home does possess both method and goal in the revealed

Word of God. Consider the simple form of Ephesians 6:1–4:

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

The command: obey in the Lord. The assessment: it's right. The promise: flourishing and life. The method: the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The manner: without anger. This is discipleship: learning obedience to what is right and good by teaching, example, admonishment, and practice.

From the child's perspective, no other arrangement in life is as well suited as the home to pursue discipleship. It requires no relocation, it costs you nothing, and you will never have another teacher so invested in your success. Merely growing up in the home of Christian disciples, if you can learn anything at all, you will

almost certainly learn loyalty, respect, submission, and service to the Lord.

All this must be viewed in terms of covenantal obligations by parent and child. Follow the paradigm of Deuteronomy 6:4–9: It begins with theology ("The Lord is one"). It speaks to relationship ("Love the Lord your God"). It gives direction ("These words that I command you today shall be on your heart"). It's applied generationally ("You shall teach them diligently to your children"). And it provides methodology ("You shall talk of them when you sit . . . walk . . . lie down . . . rise"). Where the families of the world have a natural version of discipleship, Christian homes have gospel discipleship, grounded in the saving work of Christ, the truth of His Word, the laws of His kingdom, and the disposition of love. This discipleship is for good (Prov. 1:9). God obliges parents to teach it. God obliges children to learn it from their parents.

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