

OUR VISION

**WE EXIST
TO PARTNER
WITH PARENTS
IN DISCIPLING
THEIR CHILDREN
TOWARD KNOWING GOD
AND MAKING GOD'S MISSION
THE CENTER OF THEIR LIVES.**

UNPACKING OUR VISION

Partnering with Parents

As parents God has given you the incredible responsibility of impressing a love for God on the hearts of your children (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). These impressions best occur as a natural overflow from those who are seeking to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength.

Our hope is that Children's Discipleship will be congruent with what is being taught at home in order to create a holistic approach to spiritual formation, uniting what children learn in the home and what they learn at church so that each setting reinforces what was experienced in the other. That's why we will provide parents with the training, tools, and resources to build confidence to guide their children in their journey of discipleship.

The church has the opportunity to play a supportive role in this endeavor as it fulfills the mandate in Ephesians 4, which states that the role of the church is to equip the saints for the work of the Lord (v.11-13). Many parents feel ill-equipped for this responsibility as discipler, and it is essential that we offer inspiration, resources, and support to what will be a new role for many parents.

Discipling Children

Ultimately we want the same things for our kids that we want for ourselves; we want them to live as disciples of Jesus. A disciple is one who knows WHO they are (God's kid, loved, and nothing can ever change that) and then WHAT to do (representing their Father, the King, by acting on His behalf as they imitate Jesus, the One we follow). It starts with the interior reality of identity overflowing to the external reality of acting on behalf of God.

As leaders, we have the privilege of teaching our kids to ground their identities in their loving, heavenly Father and to live out of that identity by what we do. It's about BEING and DOING. It's about RELATIONSHIP and RESPONSIBILITY.

Everything we do in Children's Discipleship is geared around shaping kids who are growing as disciples of Jesus, as they fulfill God's mission, and live into the unbelievable adventure of taking part in the work of God, their Dad in heaven, here on earth.

Knowing God is the heartbeat of spiritual transformation. "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3). Knowing God is different than knowing about God; it is primarily a pursuit of an intimate relationship with God. In this intimate relationship with God, we are being transformed by the Holy Spirit, as we become more and more like Jesus.

WHAT DO WE WANT KIDS TO KNOW???

That they are Gods kids and He loves them no matter what

That they represent their Dad (God the Father) and are part of His great adventure to transform the world

How to pray confidently and see things happen as a result of their prayers

How to have balance in their relationships

How to prioritize resources (especially time)

How to gain a love of scripture and understand it as their story

How to hear God's voice and see God at work in their lives

They can be comfortable asking questions about their faith

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

Pray: we have no interest in babysitting your kids. We want to see them grow up to be passionate followers of Jesus Christ. Prayer is the engine of that vision, and your prayers make a difference. Specifically please pray for your child's huddle leader.

Connect: we ask our Huddle Leaders to connect with you but please help them by proactively checking in with them. Let them know how things are going at home and how they can pray for you.

Encourage: our team is committed to investing in the life of your child – this takes time and energy. Please find practical ways to encourage our team.

Be consistent: because of our huddle model, it helps your children and our leaders if you commit to bringing your child every Sunday throughout the learning season. We understand that this is not always possible, but please make this a priority for your child. It is also really helpful when you drop off and pick up your kids promptly each week.

WHAT WE ASK OF OUR TEAM

Here is an excerpt from our team manual that shows what we ask of each leader:

Modelling a lifestyle of following Jesus: God wants to work IN you while He works THROUGH you. The more you commit to a passionate life of following Jesus the better leader you'll become.

Praying regularly: prayer is the foundation of everything we do. Try and find creative ways to pray for your kids, their families, and the rest of the team.

Becoming sensitive to the Spirit: ask God to show you how He sees the kids you are serving, and what it is God wants to do in and through their lives.

Stepping out in faith: the Bible is full of people who were asked by God to do things they didn't feel comfortable doing; the same is true today. Ask God to stretch you as a leader by being willing to do things you've never done before.

Connecting with kids: while this happens primarily on Sunday mornings, it shouldn't be the only time. Make it your goal to connect with your kids at least once a month outside of Sunday.

Communicating with parents: our role is to support parents in their task as disciplers of their children. Communication is a vital part of that support. Find the best time and way to communicate with each parent, and aim to communicate with parents once a month.

Consistency: you honor God, the team, and your kids by being on time. Each leader should plan to arrive 20 minutes before the education hour begins.

Discernment: be wise about how you interact with kids and be careful not to put yourself in situations that could raise questions. Never be alone with a child in a private place. Also be smart about how you act around kids (i.e. don't text during worship, choose the words you use carefully).

DISCIPLINE IN CHILDREN'S DISCIPLESHIP

We want our parents to understand how we approach discipline. We believe that children are responsible for their own actions and can be taught to love their neighbors. We want to offer children the privilege of learning about the grace of Jesus Christ in a loving and safe environment. None of our kids have a right to disrupt our Children's Discipleship time; especially if they are preventing others from learning, or experiencing God.

The Bottom Line:

- Love others like you want to be loved by honoring them with your actions and words.
- Be respectful of the things in the rooms. (chairs, supplies, etc.)

Here are the guidelines we provide for our leaders:

When a child is disruptive, often a gentle touch on the shoulder is enough to stop a behavior problem. If the behavior problem continues, ask the following questions in a calm, respectful and curious voice:

- Are you making a good choice?
- What are the rules?

A child will be given the choice of remaining in the activity and following the rules or sitting in time out until they can indicate to their leader that they are able to follow the rules. This process will only work if it is done in love, and if the rules are made known and implemented with parental support. At no time will corporal punishment be used in our Children's Discipleship time.

Preventative Plan: a preventative plan is a necessity in Children's Discipleship. If we as leaders stress the following points in our huddles and spend time praying for our children, then hopefully we will not need to implement the remedial discipline actions.

Show love and acceptance: respond to unacceptable behavior with love and acceptance. Discipline is an act of loving a child away from bad behavior.

Be realistic and consistent: expectations need to match the abilities of the child. Being consistent with the children will help them understand what they can and cannot do. Children thrive when they know where the boundaries are.

Be positive and praise good behavior: correct the children in a positive way. Affirm children for good behavior – it helps set the standard.

Variety of activities and flexibility: having a few pre-planned options to help meet the needs and interests of the children. Providing activities that are different in style and type is helpful. Strive to teach through seeing, hearing, and moving. Be flexible – expect unexpected situations or interruptions to arise and change direction if necessary. Allow space for the surprises of the Holy Spirit!

Smile: don't ever correct a child in anger. Reassure the child that you still love them after they have been disciplined. Explain to them that you love them, but their behavior is not acceptable.

Be forgiving: always remember to offer encouragement and forgiveness to the child who has been corrected.

Be alert: learn how to foresee potential behavior problems.

OTHER THINGS TO KNOW

Snacks: as part of our commitment to provide a safe environment for kids, all snacks are nut-free and egg-free.

Children with additional needs: if your child has additional needs, please let us know any specific ways we can help your child during Children's Ministry.