

## Suggestions for Day-to-Day Discipleship

- 1) **Strive to live a holy life to set an example. Then mention your example to your children to imitate you (how we use money, how we interact with our relatives or other people, dealing with political situations, acting with integrity, doing personal devotionals, etc.).**
- 2) **Make prayer a natural part of life. Be sure that prayer is not just a religious ritual. (See “Habits of Prayer” below)**
  - When you pray, don’t just use formal words, but pray as you would when you are normally speaking. If possible, pray in your child’s heart language (if English, then English)
  - When you pray, pray meaningfully according to the categories and values of Scripture and pray with faith. Western-educated children are turned off by hypocrisy; they value authenticity.
- 3) **Follow-up on conversations about things they are learning in Christian school (if applicable), church, Sunday school or personal Bible reading.**
- 4) **Speak to your children about God and a Scriptural worldview in everyday life. Incorporate God in every part of your life (this is only possible if God is a natural part of the parents’ lives).**
  - E.g., friendships, money, success, fun, video games, movie content, news, what’s happening in the world (war, COVID-19), what’s happening in Hong Kong, LGBTQ community, death/funerals, weddings, food, etc.
- 5) **Help your children to grow in virtue (character), but root their virtue in their faith in the Gospel**
  - A) Be vigilant in character** – their words, manners, respect, lying, gossip, use of social media
  - B) But rooted in Grace**
    - i. When they succeed, praise God
    - ii. Always ask God for help them do the right thing with the right motives
    - iii. When they fail, remind them that God still loves them because Jesus has died for them and rose again in their place
- 6) **Admit your mistakes, failures and invite your children to pray for you**
- 7) **Take their objections and questions seriously. Talk to them honestly from a biblical point of view. If you don’t understand the subject, speak to leaders and pastors and do your research online.**
  - e.g., LGBTQ, sex, Black Lives Matter, Christianity is the only true religion, evil and suffering in the world, etc.
  - Don’t ever assume your children are too young to speak about these issues; they will be exposed to it in our internet world and with other kids

- 8) Know who their friends are and ask them about their friendships. Be a good listener in guiding their friendships.**
- 9) As your kids grow older, give them choices in life; do not just dictate (according to traditional Chinese culture). Talk to them to make an informed decision. Negotiate with them to get agreement as they get older (middle school age – 10-13 years old and up).**
- 10) As your children get older, have open conversations about books and movies and video games according to Christian principles (discussing worldviews and values that go against the Bible, media that are sexually explicit, violent, etc.)**

# Suggested Models for Discipleship and Family Worship

## Developing Personal Bible Reading for Your Children

1. **Make sure that you as parents have a regular discipline of personal Bible reading and prayer. (This is most important step; the following steps are useless if you don't set an example.)**
2. **Read children's Bible stories to them and as they grow, to have them read it out loud. Talk about the stories. Answer their questions. Respond to their comments.<sup>1</sup>**
3. **Highlight one key biblical idea and explain it to them. Help them come to personal understanding by asking them questions about it.**
4. **Pray and teach them how to pray about that big biblical idea.**
5. **As they develop the habit, ask them regularly what God has been teaching them in their Bible reading.**

## Habits of Prayer

### A) Prayer during meals

- Gently lead your children to take prayer before meals seriously (don't make prayer an adult thing only, nor **force** them, but guide).
- Take turns praying (one time daddy can pray, one time mommy can pray, one time your child can pray).
- Pray meaningfully (both in gratitude for the meal [because God gave us health to have jobs to earn money to buy food] and for other relevant matters in life as you converse with your children).

### B) Prayer during family worship (See above "Format in Family Worship")

### C) Prayer in crisis or life situations

- When life happens (events in family, health, COVID-19, Hong Kong, etc.), pray together about these events meaningfully (take turns praying as parents and children each time). It doesn't have to be long, but catch those meaningful prayer moments. When your children sound excited or concerned or they show curiosity, that is the time to teach them how to pray.
- This is another reason for you to know the Bible well because if you don't, you will end up praying prayers that are generic, materialistic, and self-centered, rather than for God's will in the Gospel, our spiritual growth and character development, the Great Commission, and God's glory.

### D) Prayer before bed

- Teach your children to thank God for the day, to give God thanks and praise.
- Pray for other things that have come up throughout the day, or areas of concern.
- Commit the next day to the Lord and ask God for peace and good rest for another day to live for Him.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., The Jesus Story Book Bible, NRSV version of the Bible.

## Family Worship Suggested Format

### 1) Preparation

- a. Pick a time in your family's schedule where all of you are the most focused (including parents and children).
- b. Make sure all of you are well-fed, had enough sleep, and the room that you are in has less distraction and is clean.
- c. Make sure also that other urgent things are taken care of (house chores, meetings, phone calls, etc.), so that you as parents can concentrate.

### 2) Format (e.g. Daniel in the Lions' Den)

- a. **Dad or mom opens in prayer**
- b. **Dad, mom, or child reads a short passage (5-10 verses long)**
- c. **Highlight one big idea in the passage** – "God wants us to commit to worshipping him even if there is hardship. He will protect us in the end."
- d. **Ask your children follow-up questions** – "Do you think God would allow hardships for us in Canada? What might that look like? How would you feel if you couldn't play with your friends because we are Christians or some friends don't like you because you are Christian? Would you struggle? How can mommy and daddy be praying for you about this?"
- e. **Pray**
  - i. According to the big idea that you have highlighted above
  - ii. Ideally, take turns praying. Or better yet, one parent prays for the children, and you teach the children to pray for your family or for mommy and daddy.

### 3) Make sure family worship is:

- a. **Not too long** – 15 minutes will do
- b. **Consistent** – Don't give up! It took Pastor James and his wife over 1.5 years to establish family worship
- c. **Interesting, relevant, and meaningful** – You may need to do some pre-study if you are unclear about the Bible story. You need to know the Bible story well before you teach your children or else you will be confused or bored, and your children can sense when you are excited or not. You may also need to think beforehand about:
  - i. **The Big Idea**
  - ii. **Questions to Ask**
  - iii. **How to Pray**
  - iv. You may need to go through some training with church leaders or pastors.
  - v. Make sure it's not just religious, but applicable. Don't just tell Bible stories. The point of the Bible is application so that we would worship God and our lives are changed (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Irrelevant Bible stories are meaningless and have no spiritual benefit.

### 4) If both parents are Christian, have the father lead in family worship.