



Priorities

First in a 3-part mini-series titled: *Reno*
Part of the larger 10-week *Family Bundle* series

Pastor Matt Friend – September 9 & 12, 2021
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– OUTLINE –

Today's Big Idea:

Family discipleship is the single most important thing we'll do this year!

Why is family discipleship so important this year?

- #1 – Discipleship is the most important thing we do in any year. ([Matthew 28:18-20](#))
- #2 – According to the Bible, discipleship always begins at home. ([Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:5-7; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 78:4; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:15](#))
- #3 – God has entrusted us with many families in our church and community. ([Acts 2:38-39; 18:10](#))
- #4 – After 18 months in a pandemic, our families need much attention. ([Proverbs 13:12; 27:8; Ephesians 4:30-32; Hebrews 12:14-16](#))
- #5 – Our families desperately need discipleship because our families desperately need Jesus. ([Psalm 127:1; Isaiah 59:1; John 15:5; Romans 9:16; Hebrews 12:1-2](#))

Today's Take-Away:

Pray hard for families this year!



Resource Recommendation

[*Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home Through Time, Moments, and Milestones*](#)

Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin



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– NOTES –

Introduction:

Today we launch our 10-week “Family Bundle” series...

You win when you bundle!” That’s what the insurance and cable companies tell us. If that’s true with our finances, it’s even more true with our faith. This fall we’re bundling family discipleship in a way everyone can use. We’ll study what God says about: priorities, marriage, parenting, singleness, sexual identity, navigating this digital world, mental health, narcissism, expectations, and more.

Check out the [series page here](#) for related pop-up groups, classes, events, conferences, and resources.

For the first three weeks of this “Family Bundle” series (including today), we’ll be looking at our big picture need for family “Reno” (renovation).

- What priorities does Jesus call us to have within our families?
- What’s a grace-based, gospel-centered marriage look like, and is it even possible?
- What about raising children and grandchildren in this grace and with this gospel?

Thankfully God’s Word has all the answers! I’m not the authority. You’re not the authority. But the Bible is. Sarah and I will be learning and growing along with you.

Join us for this entire series! Bring friends and family members. Come prepared to take notes. Ask Jesus to give you “ears to hear”



and a resolve to follow Him afresh and anew with your family!

Today's Big Idea:

Family discipleship is the single most important thing we'll do this year!

Other ways to say the same thing...

- Discipling families is the single most important thing we'll do this year.
- There's never been a year when our families have needed discipleship more than this year.
- Family discipleship is one of the most important things we do.
- Family discipleship is as important to Christianity as breathing is to living.
- There's no higher calling for a Christian than to engage in family discipleship.

This series rolls out our one-year vision emphasis: “Understanding that healthy families are the backbone of a church on mission, we will seek to equip 300 families to be intentional in family discipleship by leveraging our worship services, conferences, weekend events, classes, activities, groups, family nights, campuses, online resources, and school.”

Why is family discipleship so important this year?

#1 – Discipleship is the most important thing we do in any year.
[*\(Matthew 28:18-20\)*](#)

In Matthew 28, the resurrected Jesus, standing on top of a mountain with nail marks in his hands, tells his followers to “Go therefore and make disciples (Jesus-followers) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (v. 19). We call this the Great Commission—the summary of all that the



Christian church is to be committed to until Jesus returns. It's the call to make disciples everywhere and to teach Jesus' commandments entirely.

From that, here's how we phrase our mission at Bible Center:
"Making disciples of Jesus."

What is discipleship?

- Discipleship is the process by which we are formed into the image of Jesus, causing us to love God, love each other, and love our neighbors.
- "Discipleship is the process of becoming who Jesus would be if he were you." –Dallas Willard
- Discipleship is friendship with a vision.

Discipleship is the most important thing we do in any year.

#2 – According to the Bible, discipleship always begins at home.
([Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:5-7; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 78:4; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:15](#))

What is Family Discipleship?

- It's the act of helping your family to follow Jesus.
- It's leading your home by doing *whatever* you can *whenever* you can to help your family become friends and followers of Jesus.

We'll see next week that God even calls husbands and wives to have a discipleship impact on one another; however, today, let's begin by thinking of it in terms of our kids.

Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them (Deuteronomy 4:9).

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you



today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15).

We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done (Psalm 78:4).

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6).

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).

God's plan for children has always been that parents would be the primary disciple-makers of our children. If you're a parent, you are automatically in the position of disciple-maker in your child's life. A disciple-maker is not, as some might believe, a role reserved for so-called super-Christians. Making disciples is the job of every follower of Jesus. This is your purpose in your home: making eternal investments in your children. God invites you to pass along to your children everything you have learned and are continuing to learn about following Jesus.

A few principles to consider:

- The Christian home is a garden for growing Jesus followers.
- Christian discipleship starts in the Christian home.



- The most explosive weapon in God's arsenal is the Christian home.
- Discipling your child is not primarily your church's job, your child's school's job, or your pastor's job. It's your job.
- Making disciples at home is not "one more thing" to add to your list of parenting tasks. It is the thing, the primary mission and calling that should undergird every single interaction your family is fortunate enough to have.
- With all your family has going on, you may think you don't have time for family discipleship. The truth is, with all your family has going on, you can't afford not to be dedicated to family discipleship.

Children are immeasurably valuable. You, a parent, are the guardian of an immortal soul, a cherished human being, an incalculable treasure, the very image of God himself. When it comes to parenting, sometimes you get to enjoy it, and sometimes you have to endure it. It is wonderful and unpredictable. It is the most fun, upsetting, messy, beautiful, disappointing, and encouraging position in the world. Raising kids comes with a never-ending list of responsibilities, and the grandest of those is the call to all parents to be disciple-makers in their own homes. No matter what your household looks like (two-parent home, single-parent home, blended home, grandparent home, spiritually divided home), your family is the primary instrument and environment for discipleship in all the fantastic and flawed ways that it might be worked out. Your perseverance and often thankless spiritual leadership in your home are two of the most important things you will ever do with your life.

Discipleship is both what we heard Jesus command and what we saw Jesus doing. Discipleship is essential to both the message and the method of following Christ. Jesus's method of discipleship was not intended to be unique; it was prototypical. He invited people to follow and live alongside Him so they might lead others in like manner. He could have started a formal training school, but instead, He built His training around time in His presence as He exercised



His trust in the Father, practiced relentless love for all people, and carried out His mission with His disciples. The Great Commission is for you to similarly make disciples of those who do not follow Christ, including those born or brought into your home.

To disciple your family as Jesus disciplined his twelve, think less of your children as students in your home-university and more as apprentices invited to study and exercise the way of God they see in and hear about from you. When your kids ask questions, think of ways that you might give them an invitation for an answer just like Christ did: “Come and you will see” (John 1:39).

Consider all the planning you put into the physical and intellectual needs of your children. You prepare meals. You make living arrangements. You choose a school. You clothe them. You protect and warn them against the dangers of their world. You establish rules, consequences, and rewards. You could not claim to love your child and send them out unfed, unclothed, or uneducated. You could even be arrested for the neglect of many of these needs. Family discipleship is the charge to realign your priorities, to acknowledge that the spiritual feeding and the spiritual covering of your children need to be as vital to you and your family as your children’s physical feeding and physical covering.

- Clothing our children with the armor of God is more important than clothing them with the latest fashion.
- Feeding our children the bread of life is more important than feeding them their favorite cereal.
- Helping them dwell in the house of the Lord is more important than raising them in the nicest house.
- Teaching them to discern good from evil and right from wrong is more important than any other education you’ll ever provide.

If you don’t disciple your children, the world will. Each day your children are exposed to messages from our culture about how they



should look, think, and act. As they grow older, this exposure will increase. That's why it's important for us to be intentional in our discipleship—to help our children learn how to walk with Jesus in this world.

Consider this:

- According to Jim Burns at *HomeWord Ministries*, kids that talk about their faith at home with mom and/or dad have an 80% chance of remaining in church once they leave the home.
- By the age of 9, most children have already formed their basic moral foundation, and by age 13, they've come to an understanding about God, His love, and eternity.
- According to the Barna Research Group, over half of the people who come to accept Christ do so before age 12 and only 13% make commitments after the age of 21.
- Studies show that on average, Christian kids will spend about 30-40 hours a year at church. Contrast that with the 2,000-3,000 hours they will spend at home or with their parents.

The question should never be, “should we disciple our families?” The question is only “how should we disciple our families?” That's what we seek to answer with this entire series and one-year family emphasis.

According to the Bible, discipleship always begins at home.

#3 – God has entrusted us with many families in our church and community. ([Acts 2:38-39](#); [18:10](#))

God loves the children within our congregation AND the children of our community. Both have always been precious in His sight.

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).



“For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:10).

This should burden your soul:

- There are tens of thousands of people in our valley who have no church and no Jesus.
- According to one Southern Baptist study, out of the 178,000 people in Kanawha County, only about 10,000 attend an evangelical church each weekend.
- In Kanawha County alone, there are 9,256 kids are under the age of 5.
- In Kanawha County alone, there are 35,600 kids are under the age of 18.
- Add to this the pain of our opioid crisis, our meth, and heroin resurgence.
- There are 7,265 kids in foster care in West Virginia right now. According to DHHR, 82% in foster care are there because of drug influence.

Why do these figures burden me? Thousands are headed for a Christless eternity. The highway between West Virginia and Heaven isn't full enough. God is inviting us to fill the highway to heaven and rob the highway to hell!

Imagine if just a fraction of these families could experience the freedom of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

God has entrusted us with many families in our church and community.

#4 – After 18 months in a pandemic, our families need much attention. ([Proverbs 13:12](#); [27:8](#); [Ephesians 4:30-32](#); [Hebrews 12:14-16](#))

In many ways, the elders, pastors, staff, and I sense that the warning light is glowing on the dash of many of our families. Our families need much attention right now.



Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life (Proverbs 13:12).

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:30-32).

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral (Hebrews 12:14-16)

Like a bird that wanders from its nest is a man who wanders from his place (Proverbs 27:8)

Family discipleship is hard in any season, even during the best of times. But add to that the stresses of the pandemic, it's a perfect recipe for a nuclear explosion.

“We deeply want a revival of domestic religion, but—in these evil times—families of so-called Christians have no family worship and no wholesome instruction or discipline. How can we hope to see the kingdom of our Lord advance when his own disciples do not teach his gospel to their own sons and daughters?” –Charles Spurgeon

“Christian parents, with all my heart I say to you: Do not sin against the child by your bad example or by your negligence concerning his salvation, but seek the Holy Spirit so that for your own offspring you may fully discharge the solemn duties which providence and grace have thrown upon you.” –Charles Spurgeon

“God has given you one of the greatest privileges imaginable: the privilege of helping shape the future of another human being. Someday your children will no longer live with you—but what will



their memories be? Will they only be of bickering or conflict—or will they also be of love and joy and happiness? Don't let your frustrations or weariness crowd out your love.” –Billy Graham

After 18 months in a pandemic, our families need much attention.

#5 – Our families desperately need discipleship because our families desperately need Jesus. ([Psalm 127:1](#); [Isaiah 59:1](#); [John 15:5](#); [Romans 9:16](#); [Hebrews 12:1-2](#))

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. – John 15:5 (NIV)

At this point in the message, perhaps you're feeling guilty because you still have a wayward child. Remember mom and/or dad: you cannot save your child's soul.

It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy (Romans 9:16).

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear (Isaiah 59:1).

We are not emphasizing family discipleship because families are the most important people at Bible Center Church. We are emphasizing family discipleship because Jesus is the most important Person at Bible Center Church.

Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain (Psalm 127:1).

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-2).



Today's Take-Away:

Pray hard for families this year!

- For your own family.
- For the other families in our church.
- For the families in our community.
- For me and all our speakers as we cover some needy (and sensitive) topics.

Why must we pray so fervently for families? Because...

Family discipleship is the single most important thing we'll do this year!