



ABC's *of* Family Discipleship

26 Mini-Motivators
that Foster
Spiritual Growth

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When Christian parents bring a son or daughter into the world, they immediately realize that this special blessing from the Lord is also a huge responsibility. God directs dads and moms to teach their children about Him (Deuteronomy 6:6-9), but most parents need a great deal of encouragement to accomplish this.

These “ABC’s of Family Discipleship” are designed to help parents guide their children to know, love, and serve God as they grow in their own relationship with Him. Each mini-motivator will assist dads and moms to prepare their children for the journey ahead!

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A

Abide in Christ

Discipleship Truth: Abiding in Christ is simply remaining in constant communion with Jesus. That is very basic, but it can also be quite challenging. Apart from Him, all human efforts to be godly are useless and ineffective (John 15:5-6). Believers who abide in Christ also bear fruit—the proof of discipleship (15:8). As Christians allow Jesus to direct their lives, He provides daily energy and endurance. The Lord is the only One who can purify, sustain, empower, and guide people to navigate the 21st century gracefully.

Action Step: As you read John 15:1-11 with your child, draw a picture of the scene that Jesus describes. Talk about ways of abiding and the process of pruning. Encourage your child to point out activities and attitudes that limit his or her ability to bear fruit. Examine your own walk with Jesus and see if anything needs to be adjusted. Commit yourselves to cling wholeheartedly to Christ. He has already made that commitment to you—and He will remain faithful!

B

Be Filled with God's Spirit

Discipleship Truth: Jesus made the incredible promise that His followers would do even greater works than He had done (John 14:12-17). Clearly, believers can accomplish those works only through the Holy Spirit's enabling power. The Holy Spirit **indwells** every Christian, but God wants to completely **fill** (direct and empower) all believers all of the time.

Action Step: To be filled with God's Spirit, read these verses and “pray through” each step together.

1. **Thirst**—Strongly desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit (*John 7:37-39*).
2. **Repent**—Confess your sins and turn to God (*1 John 1:9*).
3. **Trust**—In faith, ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit (*Luke 11:13*).
4. **Obey**—Submit to the lordship of God's Spirit (*Galatians 5:16*).



Count the Cost

Discipleship Truth: Jesus often surprised His disciples by giving them tasks that they felt incapable of performing. To expand their faith and commitment, He s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-d their comfort zones. This stretching process helps believers overcome complacency, apathy, and lethargy so they will be equipped to achieve more than previously thought possible (Matthew 16:24-25; Philippians 4:19).

Action Step: Every Christian must embrace the rigors of discipleship. Are you ready to reconsider the cost and rewards of following Christ? Begin by “dying daily” to your own interests. Invite the Lord Jesus to live His resurrected life in and through you. As God s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-s you, look for new opportunities to serve. You will experience a higher level of ability to do so. Your child will observe your renewed zeal and be encouraged to follow your example. Embark on your ascent toward a new summit today—for the glory of God!



Delight in the Lord

Discipleship Truth: God is the centerpiece of the universe. Without His vigilant attention, everything would fall apart. Incredibly, that same all-powerful Lord delights in the activities of His individual children (Psalm 37:23). God blesses those who delight in Him (Psalm 112:1). The Lord deserves to be the primary focus of each person’s attention and affection (Psalm 37:4).

Action Step: One way to delight in the Lord is to consider your personal roles. God is pleased when His children actively pursue and fulfill their duties. Family roles may include: parent/child, son/daughter, brother/sister, grandparent/grandchild. For each of those roles, ask yourself, “What does it mean to delight God as a _____?” Next, think of other roles such as: friend, worker, neighbor, student, citizen, church member, and worshiper. You may want to list all your roles on a sheet of paper. Beside each one, write a specific “action item” that will delight God. Determine to walk uprightly and to live for God’s glory—no matter what!

E

Establish Good Friendships

Discipleship Truth: In the upper room, Jesus prayed that friendships among all His followers would mirror the oneness that Christ enjoyed with His heavenly Father (John 17:20-23). Jesus prayed for Christians to love, to worship, and to serve alongside each other in such a genuine way that the watching world would be drawn to Him.

Action Step: The New Testament reveals many “one another” principles of friendship and Christian fellowship. Talk with your children, encouraging them to look for opportunities to practice these “one another” principles daily. Continually seek ways to help kids apply these principles as they grow and mature in their faith.

- be devoted to one another
- live in harmony with one another
- teach one another
- share with one another
- serve one another
- be kind to one another
- forgive one another
- build up one another
- pray for one another
- be hospitable to one another

F

Follow the Faithful

Discipleship Truth: Saints from previous centuries who plowed and planted the soil left a clear trail to follow. They walked by faith, not by sight. They stored up treasure in heaven (their true home). They fixed their eyes on Jesus, not allowing distractions, travails, or pleasures to alter their course. They remained faithful to the end. God is not ashamed to be called their Father (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Action Step: Encourage your child to embrace God’s magnificent plan for all eternity. Explore the “hall of faith” (Hebrews 11) to meet godly men and women who illumined dark corners of history. Overview God’s plan for the ages and challenge your child to walk in the footsteps of Bible champions. Invite your son or daughter to select a person they desire to be most like. Have him or her find out what makes that faithful man or woman so special and why? Make it your aim to follow those who walk in Jesus’ footsteps—and to teach your child the importance of being faithful.



Give to World Missions

Discipleship Truth: God is Lord of the whole earth! Just as the loving Father breathes life into every human being, His heart longs for each person to receive forgiveness through Christ. To accomplish this, God gave His Church the sole responsibility to fulfill Jesus' urgent command, "Go into the world and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-20). The Church exists to carry out that task.

Action Step: The Great Commission is not "someone else's job"—it is every Christian's privilege and duty. Ask God to give your child a heart of love for all people who don't yet know Him. Find ways to plant and reinforce an earnest desire within him or her to help every person find the Lord. Together with your son or daughter, seek opportunities to share the Gospel with others—to experience God's power first hand. Actively support your church's international ministries through prayer, finances, and involvement.



Honor Jesus' Bride

Discipleship Truth: The Bible describes the Church as a radiant bride without wrinkles, blemishes, or flaws. She is stunningly beautiful—a fitting bride for a noble and worthy Husband. Jesus Christ loves His Church the way a groom cherishes his precious bride (Ephesians 5:25-29). In a great celebration in heaven, Jesus Christ will someday marry His beloved Church (Matthew 22:1-14, Revelation 19:7-9).

Action Step: As Head of the Church, Jesus promises to love, honor, and lead her. Think about your commitment to Christ and to His bride. Does your local church involvement reflect your love for Him? Do your conversations engender honor and respect toward the church? Together with your child, list ways you can cherish Christ's Bride now—that will delight Jesus at that grand celebration!

I

Imitate Christ's Character

Discipleship Truth: Jesus Christ embodies all the character traits that Christian parents hope to see their children develop. Though He was a humble servant, the Lord also displayed dynamic leadership (Philippians 2:5-12). Christ mingled with known “sinners,” yet lived in perfect holiness. Jesus promoted peace, yet He expressed zeal for righteousness, denouncing the hypocrisy of His day.

Action Step: “Character” describes who you really are, the person you choose to be. You build character through thousands of choices, one decision at a time. The words you speak, the behaviors you model, and the expectations you convey all shape your character. Together with your child, make a list of Jesus’ character traits. Look for practical ways to imitate Jesus and build godly values into your family.

J

Join God's People

Discipleship Truth: When Jesus Christ came to earth, He set aside divinity to embrace humanity. Though He was Lord and Master, Jesus willingly became a servant. Christ enjoyed serving and associating with all types of people. He showed His followers how to be selfless and humble. Fifty days after Jesus ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit who knit His followers together into a sacred assembly—the Church (Acts 2:42-47).

Action Step: All the believers in your local church are “one body.” You belong together. Church settings provide opportunities to worship, fellowship, grow, and serve. Encourage your child to form strong friendships at church. Look for ways to serve Christ by participating in church activities with other families, individuals, and ministries.

K

Know God Intimately

Discipleship Truth: God has given parents primary responsibility for the spiritual training of their children. But many parents don't know where to begin. Proverbs 1:7 offers a clue: without knowledge and fear of the Lord, children cannot learn anything that is eternally valuable. Education begins with the pursuit of God—who He is, what He is like, what He has done, and what He can do.

Action Step: Each week, choose one aspect of God's amazing character: infinite (almighty, all-knowing, everywhere, eternal, unchanging), majestic (glorious, beautiful, sovereign, awesome, wise), loving (gracious, patient, faithful, merciful, compassionate), or upright (good, holy, righteous, jealous, just). Learn about each characteristic together. Use your Bible concordance (or the Internet) to do a simple word study. You may want to write a prayer to God reflecting on His character traits. Take time to read each prayer to each other and experience His presence. To know God intimately, explore each facet of His unending perfection!

L

Love God Passionately

Discipleship Truth: Jesus summed up all 613 Old Testament laws into two: love God and love people (Mark 12:30-31). But beware of the simplicity of Jesus' words. To love God with ALL the heart, soul, mind, and strength does not mean "business as usual." Loving God demands effort, passion, and action.

Action Step: Most children today love peer approval more than they love God. They are more concerned about "fitting in" than they care about being set apart for God's special purpose. To overcome this tendency, show your child how to enjoy God's presence moment-by-moment throughout the day. Read your Bible together; sing worship songs; draw God's creation; enjoy a family devotion time. Children learn by participating in activities that embrace the truth about God's love and reinforce who He is. Stay in step with His Spirit by loving God passionately, expressing adoration for Him, and delighting in unbroken communion with Him!



Make Wise Decisions

Discipleship Truth: The Scriptures exalt wisdom as the highest blessing a person can attain (Proverbs 3:13-15). Biblical wisdom is the ability to navigate through life with supernatural skill—with the Lord’s insight, integrity, and intensity. Because wisdom is so valuable, becoming wise requires effort (2:1-6). The path of wisdom begins with a desire and determination to know God—fearing and revering Him (9:10).

Action Step: Encourage your child to make decisions that consider God’s viewpoint and values (3:5-6). The choices your son or daughter makes today contribute toward the person he or she becomes tomorrow. These ten guidelines will help you make wise decisions together: glorify God, honor parents, build others up, increase your integrity, protect your body, demonstrate discipline, produce spiritual fruit, keep a clear conscience, defeat the devil, and imitate Jesus!



Nurture Your Roots

Discipleship Truth: God encourages His followers to remember their family heritage and to build a spiritual legacy. Moses exhorted the Israelites to treasure their identity as God’s beloved, chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6-9). After they settled into the Promised Land, Joshua commanded all 12 tribes to preserve their property boundaries and maintain their family lineage (Joshua 24:13-15).

Action Step: Today, family roots are often neglected and easily forgotten. Help your children appreciate their ancestors! Tell them about their travails and triumphs. Invite grandparents to relive stories from their own childhood. Place visual reminders around your house that preserve the family heritage—old photographs, antiques, and other memory-rich items. Draw a “family tree” diagram and talk about your child’s spiritual legacy.



Obey God's Word

Discipleship Truth: God gave His Word to transform the way believers live.

Knowing Bible truths is only the first step toward godliness. That head-knowledge must lead to life-change. The Book of James calls believers who know the truth, but who do not act on it “self-deluded” (James 1:22).

Action Step: Kids quickly differentiate holiness from hypocrisy. They discriminate between empty words and heartfelt actions. Integrate God's Word into your daily routine. Each time you read the Bible, DO something! Look for S-P-A-C-E:

S — **S**ins to Confess

P — **P**romises to Claim

A — **A**ttitudes to Change

C — **C**ommands to Obey

E — **E**xamples to Follow



Pray from Your H-E-A-R-T

Discipleship Truth: God grants Christians an incredible honor—to be in touch with Him every moment of every day! The Lord's unlimited resources and inexhaustible power are at anyone's disposal. Draw near, seeking God's face. Dialogue openly with Him. Pray with the whole heart. Be passionate. God delights to connect with His children and eagerly awaits every request (Psalm 34:17-19)!

Action Step: Each morning ask your child, “How can I pray for you today?” In the evening pray together with him or her. Let the H-E-A-R-T acrostic guide your prayer time:

H — **H**onor God with praise and respect.

E — **E**xamine your life; confess any sins.

A — **A**sk God to supply your personal needs.

R — **R**quest God's help for the needs of others.

T — **T**hank God for blessing you today!



Quote Bible Verses

Discipleship Truth: The mind is a powerful instrument that possesses an incredible capacity to remember. Memorizing Bible verses is a skill and discipline that yields lifelong rewards (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2-3). To gain victory over temptation, Jesus did not hesitate to quote Scriptures that He had previously learned (Matthew 4:4-10).

Action Step: Encourage your child to discover the marvelous mental potential that God has given by learning Bible verses together. To begin learning a new verse, read it aloud three times at breakfast, three times at lunch, and three times at dinner (or before bed). Recite the verse in that manner every day for a week. By the end of the week, the Bible verse will be your friend and teacher. If you recite that Scripture aloud once daily for a month, you will retain it for life!



Read Your Bible

Discipleship Truth: Once upon a time, parents asked their children after church, “What did you learn about God?” Today, the question is often, “Did you have fun?” In many churches, kids rarely use their Bibles. For centuries, Hebrew and Christian families have read God’s Word together—a cornerstone for family bonding and spiritual growth. Laying a Biblical foundation equips believers to yield lifelong fruit (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Action Step: Here’s how to get started:

1) Follow a plan. For younger children, reading a Bible storybook might be best. For older kids, read each day from the Bible itself. You may want to download a Scripture reading plan and adapt it to your family needs (see DiscipleLand.com/parents).

2) Make time. As kids get older, schedules get tighter. Choose a regular time to meet together. For many families, a brief time right after a meal works best. Though the fruit may take a while to ripen, you will reap a bountiful harvest. Decide to embrace God’s Word today!

S Serve God Selflessly

Discipleship Truth: Most kids serve themselves before they consider the needs of others. Selfishness is natural. It is part of being human. But God extends a higher calling to His followers. The Lord challenges Christians to demonstrate faithful conduct that honors God and helps people. This requires supernatural strength from the indwelling Christ (Galatians 2:20). Believers cannot do it in their own power.

Action Step: Lift your child's eyes from his or her own interests to see the world from God's point-of-view. Christ has promised to meet all your needs (Philippians 4:19). That is His job. Your job is to walk by faith, serving Him in all you do. Kids usually follow the example of their parents. Initiate times when your family serves others together: food kitchen, neighborhood cleanup, church mission, etc. When you model selflessness, your children will respond in a similar manner!

T Treasure the Scriptures

Discipleship Truth: The Bible is like no other book; it is the very Word of God. Its engaging stories speak clearly to everyday situations. Its time-tested principles bring insight and hope. Its intriguing biographies encourage righteous living. Because the Bible is God's very Word—it is a Book to trust and treasure. Throughout its pages, God directs the paths of His people (Psalm 119:9-11; Proverbs 2:1-6).

Action Step: Encourage your child to embrace the Bible as God's inspired and authoritative message for all people everywhere. To foster his or her respect and fondness for the inerrant Scriptures, take time to ask about favorite Bible stories, characters, Book of the Bible, Scripture passage, etc. Your son or daughter will come to see how God's Word has transformed people during every era of history—and continues to do so. Discover God's treasure by reading the Bible together, and enjoying God's messages to His children!



Understand Your Uniqueness

Discipleship Truth: God's creative genius knows no bounds. Each snowflake differs from all the others. No sunrise or sunset is exactly the same. Even identical twins do not share similar fingerprints, retinas, or DNA codes. God has uniquely and wonderfully configured every human being—and He doesn't make mistakes!

Action Step: Read Psalm 139:13-18 together. Then begin an ongoing "I spy" game in which you identify tendencies, abilities, and special interests in each other. Get to know every aspect of your child's character. Develop an understanding of how to bring out the very best in your son or daughter. Share your observations about his or her uniqueness. Encourage your child to become no one other than the incredible person God designed him or her to be!



Value Role-Models

Discipleship Truth: A child's role-models significantly influence attitudes, choices, and conduct. The world offers an array of influences that sway kids' thinking. The faces and themes are familiar: wealth, fame, beauty, power, talent, strength, popularity, etc. But the Bible offers a host of alternative role-models for kids to follow. These heroes possess traits that God values highly: honesty, modesty, holiness, righteousness, humility, faithfulness, wisdom, etc.

Action Step: Talk with your child about the people that he or she admires—athletes, film stars, musicians and performers, teachers and coaches, local and national leaders, etc. Don't forget to include Bible champions as well as ministry, missionary, and church leaders. What characteristics do these people exhibit that attract your child? Discuss the personality traits that matter to God (Philippians 4:8). Make sure that your child discerns between what God values and what the world promotes (1 John 2:15-17).



Walk with God

Discipleship Truth: Walking with God is the Christian's most exhilarating privilege. Not only does the Lord graciously invite believers into a personal relationship with Him; He also promises to direct each step of their journey. God wisely and purposefully transforms the intellect, emotions, and will.

Action Step: *Intellect/Mind:* As you walk with God, you know Him more and more intimately. Together with your child, make it your goal to explore each facet of His unending perfection (Proverbs 2:4-5).

Emotions/Heart: As you walk with God, you love Him more and more passionately. Encourage your child to express adoration and delight in unbroken communion with Him (Mark 12:30-31).

Will/Actions: As you walk with God, you serve Him more and more selflessly. You build essential skills for living out Christ's life. Choose to exhibit a disciplined lifestyle so your child can observe and embrace your unswerving allegiance to Him (Galatians 2:20).



Xplore God's Greatness

Discipleship Truth: God is the nucleus of the entire universe. He enjoys being Lord of the heavens and the earth! The supremely great God also deserves to occupy the central focus in the minds, hearts, and souls of every human being. Learning about God is more important (and more rewarding) than anything else people can do!

Action Step: Encourage your child to write one "glimpse of God's greatness" each day on a calendar. Discover "who God is" by meditating on His names and roles (Deuteronomy 4:39). Learn "what God is like" by exploring what the Scriptures say about His nature and personality (Deuteronomy 32:4). Find out "what God can do" by observing the Biblical record of His marvelous deeds and relationships with people (Psalm 146:7-8). Every moment of every day, God actively advances His great plan and accomplishes everything He decides to do. He doesn't watch from the sidelines. He's on the playing field—intimately involved in your life and leading you on!

Y

Yield Yourself to God

Discipleship Truth: Through 20 centuries, Jesus' challenge, "Make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-20) has stirred His followers to action. Believers have submitted their personal agendas to His command to disciple others—just as the Lord had done. The focus of His ministry, His earthly delight—was His twelve disciples. It is certainly true that He ministered to the masses, but Christ poured His life into those twelve diverse men.

Action Step: After Christ's ascension into heaven, His disciples knew what Jesus expected them to do. They were to go and repeat with others what the Lord had done with them. Those early believers "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). God calls you to respond to that same challenge. God changes the world one person at a time. Begin with your own children—today. Yield your life entirely to Jesus, allowing His life to shine through you to others—especially to those in your own home!

Z

Zero in on Eternity

Discipleship Truth: When compared with eternity in heaven, the years believers spend on earth are infinitely brief. God promises a heavenly home where all His children will experience unimaginable splendor (1 Corinthians 2:9). In fact, Jesus is presently customizing heavenly residences to individual tastes and interests (John 14:2-3).

Action Step: God generously rewards those who seek Him (1 Chronicles 28:9). As you prepare your child to face the rigors of adulthood, be sure to keep his or her eyes fixed on Jesus and on eternal priorities. You may want to plan a special retreat together to talk about the future and to establish personal goals—both short and long range. Remind your child often that life on earth is a preparation period for eternal life in heaven. Both of you will be "forever" grateful!