# Session 3: The Family and Mission

***Objectives:***

* Affirm the role of the church in a child’s life.
* Understand the crucial importance of church and home working together.
* Explore foundations of family discipleship and how it is core to the completion of God’s mission.

***Time:*** 1 hour, 1 hour and 45 minutes with translation

***Materials:***

* Bible
* Session 3 handout
* 15-25 balloons (the more participants and larger the activity space, the more balloons you will need)
* Target handout for each participant
* string with 168 knots
* 3 sticky notes (post its)/small strips of paper
* Target from Teaching Aids folder
* ball or small round object
* tape
* scarf or strip of long fabric to use as a blindfold
* 8 to 12 Word Cards of Everyday Moments/Objects from the Teaching Aids folder
* scissors
* Puzzle Piece handout to refer to

**Getting Ready:**

1. Decide where to hold the Balloon Activity. ***Option 1***: a large open space outdoors; ***Option 2***: a large open area in the room.
2. Blow up and tie the balloons the day of the activity.
3. Tie 168 knots in a long piece of rope or string. It should be thick enough for the group to see. If you do not have access to sticky notes, prepare 3 small strips of paper folded in half.
4. Have your target and tape available to put up during the demonstration.
5. Cut out the 8 to 12 word cards of everyday objects and moments. ***Option*:** If you would like to substitute or add additional objects or moments that are region or country-specific, write the words or put pictures of the objects on similar-sized cards.

# Introduction

We have seen that God invites us to join Him in His story, and that from the very beginning, God’s desire has been for children to be included in that invitation.

Whose responsibility is it to tell children this story? Who helps them hear the invitation to join with God in what He is doing?

Before we can talk about how to teach and equip children, we need to spend some time answering this very important question.

Balloon Activity

Let us begin with an activity.

I need six or seven volunteers.

(Have the volunteers stand in a large, open area, forming a circle.)

(Pick up a balloon.) I have a balloon in my hand. When I say go, you must work as a group to keep all the balloons up in the air. Keep going until I signal you to stop.

If a balloon hits the ground, you may pick it up and continue.

(Address the large group.) The rest of you are not allowed to help. You are observers. Watch what happens and be ready to share what you noticed.

(Turn back to your volunteers.) Are you ready? Go!

(Throw two or three balloons into the center of the group. After about 10 seconds, begin adding all the remaining balloons. After two to three minutes, signal the volunteers to stop. Have them return to their seats.)

Discussion

What did it take to keep all the balloons in the air? (Possible answers: pay attention, everyone involved, looking up, moving and reaching from original position, teamwork, cannot stop, some had to “rescue” fallen balloons)

This activity reminds us of the process of mobilizing children to become lifelong disciples who embrace the person and purposes of Christ and step into their role.

It is different than a short event or special ministry project. It is not the same as a weekly Sunday school class or a family devotion time at home.

It is an ongoing process that requires lots of time.

It requires attention, from many people, who work together, to do their part.

The job is too big for one parent, one teacher, one church, or one organization to do alone. Churches and families need to work as partners to disciple children.

Let us explore the two main influencers in the life of a child: the church and the family.

# The Influence of the Family

(Ask for two volunteers. Instruct them to each take an end of the string and hold it up for the group.)

We all know the valuable role of the church in a child’s life.

The church puts a lot of energy into reaching and discipling children.

The knots on this string represent the 168 hours in a child’s week.

About how many hours a week do you have children in church? (Allow answers.)

At most, a church has one to three hours a week with a child. (Place three sticky notes/3 small piece of folded paper over three knots on the strings to mark the hours spent in church.)

Do you think this is enough time over the course of a child’s life to fully disciple and equip them?

No, it is not.

The rest of these hours are spent at school or at home. (Allow volunteers to return to their seats.)

Although the role of the church is crucial in the life of a child, parents, who see their children every day, have the most time to invest in children.

Because of this, parents have the greatest access to their children’s spiritual formation.

They have the greatest opportunity to equip and disciple a generation of globally minded children.

Do parents live this way? Do they embrace their God-given responsibility to be the number one discipler in their child’s life?

Statistically, around the world, the answer is no.

A recent study revealed that in any given church of any size, less than ten percent of parents are having at least one intentional conversation about Jesus each week.

That means that nine out of every ten families in your church are not talking about Jesus with their kids!

Who are parents relying on to disciple their children? (Allow answers.)

Let us look at why I think this is.

Jurisdiction

When we look at Scripture, we can break it down into four areas:

Doctrine, which is the truth of God.

Righteousness*,* which tells us the will of God.

Methodology, which tells us the way of God - how we do things.

And lastly, jurisdiction, which is the call of God - who should do it.

We learn a lot about the first three.

We talk about who God is, what He wants from us, and how He wants us to do it.

But this area of jurisdiction – who does what – is where things get blurry.

Throughout Scripture, God has assigned tasks and commands to four groups of people: the individual, the family, the church, and the government.

When one group takes on a task that is not in their jurisdiction, they take time, money, and resources away from whatever tasks they should be doing, and motivation away from the group who should really be doing it.[[1]](#endnote-1)

For the first 19 centuries of the Christian church, believers knew that it was a parent’s job to pass on their faith to their children.

In the early 1800s, Christians began to go to unchurched children in local parks to teach them how to read and write, as well as share Bible stories with them. They called it Sunday school.

But in the mid-1800s when we brought Sunday school into the church, some things began to change drastically.

What began as an outreach for children who did not know Jesus became a discipleship program for the kids who already knew Him.

Now, the church was taking on the task of discipling children.

Parents saw it as an opportunity to drop off their kids so they could learn what they needed to know about faith.

When this happened, we moved the discipling of children *out* of the jurisdiction of the family and *into* the jurisdiction of the church.

Consequently, the church began to lose time, money, and resources for the things they were supposed to be doing – equipping and releasing those in the church, and reaching those outside the church.

The family began to lose the motivation to do their job – parents discipling their own children.

Role of the Church

The Church has specific tasks and responsibilities. For children who come from homes where the parents are not Christians, the church steps in as the primary discipler.

Let us look at another role of church found in Ephesians 4:11-13

*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.* (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Pastors and children’s teachers, one of your roles is to equip the people already *in* the church, adults and children, for works of service. This is in your jurisdiction!

As Christian parents disciple their children, you are there to walk alongside them by bringing children in on Sundays, equipping them for works of service, and then releasing them out into the world.

You also have a role in empowering parents to do what God has called them to do.

We need to help them understand their biblical role as parents to be the primary discipler of their children and then equip them to live it out.

Maybe you are wondering, what does family discipleship have to do with mobilization?

I am glad you asked.

Let us look back at Abraham and see how family discipleship is core to God’s mission.

# Abraham’s Role

In Genesis 18:18, God gives us a summary of God’s mission to Abraham:

*Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.* (Genesis 18:18)

Abraham would be blessed so that he would be a blessing to the nations! God’s mission for Abraham was a macro, global plan.

But what did God want Abraham to do in response to this global vision?

This mission has been in effect for thousands of years. Abraham was only alive on earth for a small portion of that time.

What was Abraham’s part, as an individual man in a particular time in history, in advancing the global mission of God?

Verse 19 answers the question.

*For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.* (Genesis 18:19)

How could Abraham advance this global mission of God? By discipling his family.

This was the key assignment, given to Abraham by God, “so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has promised him.”

As we learned in Session 1, God created a main identity among the Israelite people.

He was not called the God of the sun, the moon, and the stars.

He was not called the God of grace, peace, and forgiveness.

Although He was and is all those things, He identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

His global, world-redeeming covenant was made to a family.

God chose to accomplish His purposes through families and generations.

God’s generational plan of fulfilling His promise to Abraham continues today in us. We too are to cultivate our homes into discipleship centers for our children.

This is core to raising and mobilizing a generation of life-long, world changing followers of Jesus.

# Foundations of Family Discipleship

In Deuteronomy 6:6-9, God says:

*“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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates*.” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

We are to make the person and purpose of Christ a part of everyday life.

Discipleship is not a program. It is not a set of rules.

It is daily living out our faith alongside our children, so we can say to them the same words Paul said to the Corinthian church, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Let us explore some key foundations that enable us to create this environment in our home. These foundations are what we will build from as we learn in later sessions how to practically mobilize children.

Partner Discussion

Let us begin by thinking about how vision affects our lives.

Look on your handout under “Partner Discussion Questions." (Give participants time to locate this section.)

Find a partner sitting near you and discuss those two questions. You have five minutes to talk to your partner. Then we will share ideas with the large group.

*Have you ever been a part of a vision or heard of a vision that greatly impacted your life?*

*If so, how did it affect your daily decisions and life choices?*

(After five minutes, have a few participants share some observations.)

Vision

The first thing we need as foundation isvision.

You need to know where you are going.

In Psalm 127:4-5, the psalmist gives us an interesting metaphor about children.

*Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.* (Psalm 127:4-5)

Each child in your home is an arrow you have the responsibility of shooting out into the world.

If an arrow is not released, it can never fulfill its purpose. But where that arrow goes is largely dependent on you.

(Ask for a volunteer.)

Your job is to take this ball and launch it where it is supposed to go.

(Place a blindfold on the volunteer. After he is blindfolded, hang up the target near the volunteer without telling him you are doing it. Hand him the ball.)

Ok, on my word, I want you to launch this ball where it is supposed to go.

But before you launch, I am going to spin you around three times. (Spin the participant around.)

Ok. Ready? Launch.

(Have the participant launch the ball. Then remove the blindfold so he can see where the ball went.)

Oh no. Here was your target, but you did not get the ball where it needed to go. Why not?

(Allow participant to answer.)

In order to get the ball where it is supposed to go, you first need to know where your target is.

Let us try again, this time without the blindfold.

(Hand the participant the ball. Spin him around three times and then instruct him to launch the ball. Have the participant return to his seat.)

Parenting is difficult. Often, we are simply trying to survive the chaos of running a family.

Like when I spun our participant around, we can feel disoriented and unsure about what we are doing and where we are going.

Even in the midst of the chaos, having a clear target, knowing where we want to be launching our children, helps us keep focused.

When you look at your kids, do you see past today?

Parenting is not an isolated day-by-day event. Your job as parents is to train your children in the ways of the Lord and help them develop into the future men and women that God desires them to be.

Right now, while they are young, you will not know what job they will have or what person they will marry. Those are details of their lives that God will lead them in as you prepare them to follow Him.

But regardless of who they grow up to be, we know what is at the core of the target (point at the center bull’s-eye of target).

God wants us to launch our children out to be lights in a dark world, to have hearts that desire to bring Him glory among all the peoples of the earth – regardless of who they marry or what job they choose.

If God reigns over our kids, He will equip them in everything else that comes in their lives.

That is our target.

We want to have immediate, long-term, and eternal influence on our children.

Remember, the global-covenant that God made to Abraham was passed on to Isaac, and then to Jacob. It was multi-generational.

The vision you are giving your children will be carried on to their children, and to their children’s children.

Consequently, the bad choices and wrong habits we have in place of that vision can be carried on, too.

What are you passing on?

The average adult makes 3,000 decisions a day. The majority of those decisions are small – what chair you will sit in, what you will eat, which lane you will drive in – but others have more significance.

What guides you in the 3,000-plus decisions you make every day, particularly the ones that affect the development and growth of your children?

There is a saying, “If you plan to go nowhere, you will end up there.”

Just making a goal, whether or not you have a detailed action plan to accomplish it yet, makes you more likely to meet that goal.

Consciously or unconsciously, you begin to move in that direction, to be alert for opportunities that further your goals and to make choices that align with meeting them.

Be Intentional

If you are serious about your vision, then secondly, you need to become more intentional.

Use everyday moments to reflect on God’s Word, on His work, and His world.

It is not about adding more to your full schedule. It is about having a God-sized vision for how you want to raise your children, lead your family, and be a part of God’s story, and then applying that vision to things that are already a part of your life.

You can bring meaning to times you already spend with your children … walking to school, driving across town, eating dinner, waking up, and going to bed.

Does your vision include wanting to see God magnified in your city? Be intentional to pray.

As you travel or drive, use your time to pray for the city and the things you see around you. Be sensitive to needs you can meet right there along the way.

Does your vision include wanting to see all nations find hope in Jesus? Be intentional about learning about those peoples or cultures.

Bring culture and learning into playtime. Use a world map. Learn a dance from a different people group or try an international food.

Does your vision include wanting your children to worship Jesus through everything? Be intentional in connecting them to Jesus.

Use nature and things around you to teach truths about who God is.

[Insert your own story here. Here is an example.]

I once went to a friend’s house for a service project training. The house was full of adults and youth.

The man’s three-year-old daughter was walking around with a rock in her pocket. She went from person to person, showing them her rock, but each person ignored her.

When Anyalisa came to me and showed me her rock, I took it and looked at it with wonder.

“Do you know who made this rock, Anyalisa?” I asked.

She shook her head “no,” and looked at me with curious eyes.

“God made this rock! And the Bible says that if we do not praise Him, even the rocks will cry out and say how great He is.”

Anyalisa took back her rock and looked at it with new eyes of wonder. What was once something she found outdoors and carried in her pocket was now a treasure that was leading her little heart in worship.

Later, her dad came to me and told me, “For days I have been trying to get her to throw that dirty rock outside. I just saw it as an annoyance. But then you took it and used it to show my daughter a new truth about God. Why did I not think to do that?”

Do not just ignore your children’s wonder at a dirty rock or write off their questions about people or how things work.

Use all things to bring them closer to Jesus. Take the time to listen to them. Ask them good questions.

The goal, the target (point to target), is help our children see how Jesus is central in everything, to live a life where He is a part of all our moments.

We must redeem the time.

Be intentional with your words, with your time, with the choices you make that will impact your family and your children.

Group Activity

Let us try a fun activity together.

I want you to break up into groups of seven to ten people and choose one brave leader. (Allow participants time to break into groups.)

Can each of my leaders stand up?

You, leader, are now the proud parent of the seven to nine beautiful little children sitting around you.

(Pass out one Everyday Moments or Object cards to the leader/parent in each group.)

For some of you, your sons and daughters have brought you an ordinary, everyday object. Here is your chance to use it to teach them truth about Jesus and His love for the world.

The rest of you parents are sharing an everyday moment with your children. Think of how you would intentionally use it to teach and grow your kids.

Explain and share your thoughts with them as you would with a child. And children, do not be afraid to ask mommy or daddy questions!

I will give you three minutes. Ready? Begin.

(After three minutes, allow two groups to share their truth, one group who had an object and one who had an everyday moment.)

Capture God-moments.

They are those little moments along the way where God is clearly at work.

God-moments happen all the time: A sunset, a torrential downpour, a baptism.

Keep your eyes open and you will find God at work.

Do not underestimate the importance of ordinary, everyday moments.

No doubt, God told us to use them in Deuteronomy 6 because He knew we would begin to find that those seemingly insignificant places are filled with Him.

It is where the simple becomes extraordinary.

Model Your Faith

Third, we must model everything we teach.

Earlier, we read about how we are to teach our children in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Let us look at the verse that comes right before that important instruction.

*“Hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.”* (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Before we impress the truths of God on the hearts of our children, we are to love God and have His Word on our own hearts.

The most important factor in building a family legacy is to authentically live out our faith both in front of and with our children.

Modern education calls this “modeling.” Early rabbis like Jesus called this discipleship.

It is in the “showing” or in the demonstration of the Christian life that our children see faith with their own eyes.

As your children watch you grow in the things of God, they will see what it looks like to be a true follower of Jesus.

Live a life of humility, grace, and faithfulness.

Be willing to admit when you make a mistake and seek forgiveness from your children.

Love God with all your heart, mind, and soul in a way that is visible for them to see.

While teaching is important, demonstration and experience are the keys to developing a heart for the purposes of God in our families.

In addition to helping our children see what a life of following Jesus looks like by living out our own faith, we also must model what it means to make God’s purposes our own and central to our family life.

Be an example of living for God’s purposes to your children and experience God’s heart for others and the nations together.

Allow your children to experience your way of loving people and allow them to participate. They will embrace your compassion for a lost and dying world.

The goal, the target (point to target), is to teach your children truth, to show them what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus, and to model for them how to see others not as sinners but as sheep without a Shepherd, just as Jesus did.

Your children need to know that they are not the most important thing on planet earth …

But they are *a part of* the most important thing on planet earth.

# Conclusion

Whenever God had in mind to do something in history to impact mankind, a child was born that God intended to use in a mighty way years later.

Think of Moses, floating in a basket down the river, who one day set God’s people free from Pharaoh.

Or John the Baptist leaping for joy in his mother’s womb, before one day preparing the hearts of God’s people for the Messiah.

Or even teenage David, hanging out in the fields with a bunch of smelly sheep, about to be anointed as king.

It is sometimes difficult to look at your toddler or teenagers and see a great leader or influential person God wants to use mightily in His kingdom.

But a home just like yours is where such leaders and people of influence come from.[[2]](#endnote-2)

What consumes your time and what do those things say about the vision you are casting for your family?

Are you leveraging your family’s life towards God’s global purpose in any way?

Based on how you spend your time, will your family one day stand before the throne of God and be able to say, “My family had a part in making Jesus famous among the nations”?

May that be our vision.

Included in your handout is a target. (Hold up example.)

Think about all we just discussed. What do you want to say about your sons and your daughters now? What do you want to say about them when they reach adulthood?

Building this vision, defining the target towards which you are releasing your arrows, is a process. It will take time. You will need to pray and listen.

For now, I want you to begin by writing within each circle the things that impacted you during this session. What are the things already burning on your heart? Write them here (point to target handout).

(Allow participants five minutes to reflect and write.)

What you have written is only meant to get you started. You will need to continue thinking this through later on, and then you will need to begin to intentionally live it out at home.

Pray continually. Trust God. Follow and obey His Holy Spirit.

He will faithfully guide you in what this looks like for your family.

There are many right ways. Each family will look different because each family is uniquely blessed to be a blessing from their home to the nations.

American author Tim Kimmel once said this about the responsibility we have as parents:

“Even with the disappointments … raising children is still the greatest thing you’ll ever do. It’s greater than any milestone you can hit in your career. It dwarfs any fame you may receive from your ideas or inventions. You’ve been handed a piece of history in advance–a gracious gift you send to a time you will not see–and you play the biggest role in how that history will ultimately be recorded.”[[3]](#endnote-3)

Take the time to release strong and purpose-filled arrows into the world. If you do, it will change this country, the global Church, and ultimately … the world.

# Training Preview

During the rest of our time together, we are going to talk about practical ways to teach our children about God’s Word, the world we live in and the ways God is working in it.

But teaching these things to our children solely at church will not be enough. As we have seen through this session, the church plays an important role in equipping children but that must be in partnership with parents.

Parents have a God-given responsibility to disciple their children and lead them into being a part of God’s big story. That God-given responsibility is central to God’s mission.

We cannot work for lasting impact in the world without considering the role of families, the challenges they face, and the opportunities they offer for the future health of the Church.

# Puzzle Activity

Look at your puzzle handout again. Find piece two. (Point to the second puzzle piece on the handout.)

I am going to ask you a question. With one or two people around you, discuss your thoughts.

Then write or draw your responses on the second puzzle piece.

Here is your question: How would it shape a child’s faith if their parents discipled them on a daily basis, teaching them in everyday moments and modeling for them what it looks like to live for Jesus?

1. *Limited Church: Unlimited Kingdom* by Rob Rienow. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. *The Family God Uses* by Tom and Kim Blackaby. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. *Grace-Based Parenting* by Tim Kimmel. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)