

Revive Your Vision

A STRATEGY TO DISCIPLE YOUR CHILDREN

In his book, The Great Omission, Dr. Dallas Willard challenges churches to answer two vital questions: "What is our plan for making disciples?" and "Does our plan work?" The sections below summarize a proven strategy for you to disciple children.

Guard Tender Hearts

Six environments shape every child's views. Each one can cultivate health and growth, or disease and death. These environments have the power to draw like a magnet—either attracting kids to God, or repelling them from Him.

Family—The family is the first of two institutions commissioned by God Himself. The Lord is pro-family. He wants Christian homes to flourish.

For most children, however, the healthy influence of the home is waning. Christian homes struggle with shifting priorities; secular homes increasingly succumb to worldly values.

Church—The Church is also divinely ordained—a beacon of hope, salt, and light for every generation. The authority of the North American church is clearly eroding. Nonetheless, when all else crumbles, the true Church will remain intact.

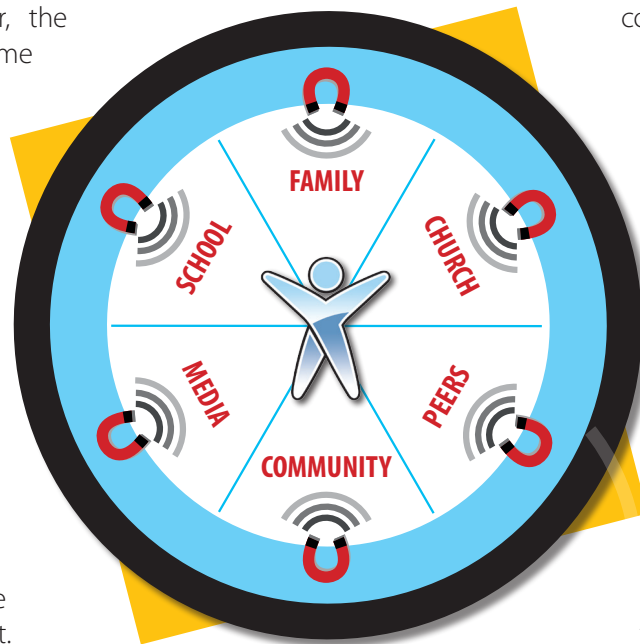
Peers—As the influence of family decreases, the impact of peers inevitably grows. Instead of looking for support at home, many children seek approval and identity from their friends. Teaching kids how to choose good friends is essential.

Community—Every town and city features unique demographics that affect a child's development. Kids who grow up in the inner-city, in rural towns, and in sprawling suburbs are exposed to radically different environments. It is increasingly important for children to use God's lens to interpret the cultures and people they encounter.

Media—Technology plays an increasingly prominent role in the lives of children. Televisions, computers, tablets, smart-phones, video games, and other digital devices are not only changing what kids see and hear, they also alter how they communicate. These media are powerful tools that children can learn to use judiciously.

School—Public, Christian, and home schools offer a wide array of educational opportunities. Teachers and administrators are experiencing dramatic role changes. With the fragmentation of families, many children look to teachers for emotional support as well as for academic training.

Unless Christianity exerts a stronger influence than the world, the enemy's persuasive tactics will wean your kids from the truth of God's Word. Guard and guide the tender hearts of your children!



DiscipleLand
Children's Ministry
Tools

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Lay Firm Foundations

God has given parents primary responsibility for the spiritual training of their children. But many dads and moms feel overwhelmed with that responsibility. They don't know where to begin. To lay a firm foundation, introduce your children to three time-honored truths:

Start with God's **Message**: the Gospel—the greatest news ever proclaimed. *Jesus died to forgive our sins and rose again to give us new life (1 Peter 2:24).* Every person on earth needs to hear about God's love and forgiveness. When your children clearly understand this message, they are ready to trust Jesus as personal Savior.

Then explain God's **Mission**: make Disciples—the greatest commission ever given. *Go make disciples of all people everywhere (Matthew 28:18-20).* Jesus poured His life into twelve close followers. Before the end of the first century, those men turned the known world upside down! Your children need role models to see how Christ's devoted followers really live.

And emphasize God's **Motive**: Love—the greatest commandment ever received. *Love God with all your being. Love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:30-31).* Selfless love motivated Jesus to abandon heaven's glory. Love kept Him on the cross. Because the Lord deeply loves your children, they can also learn to selflessly love others.

A foundation anchored in bedrock will remain in place when the earth shifts and shakes. God's greatest Message, Mission, and Motive are vital to every child's Christian growth. They're three cornerstones of victorious living—from the nursery through the elementary years.

Follow God's Blueprint

Spiritual growth is very dear to God's heart. Just as human parents swell with pride in their child's achievements, the heavenly Father receives great glory, renown, and satisfaction when His children reflect the image and attributes of God. *"I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth"* (3 John 4, NASB). To become Jesus' lifelong disciples, children should progress through **six** essential learning levels:

- Level 1—**God's Greatness**: Kids discover the Lord's character and qualities. They find out who God is, what He is like, and what He can do (1 Chronicles 29:11).
- Level 2—**God's Word**: Students explore the purpose and power of the Bible. They learn how to use God's inspired, authoritative Book (Hebrews 4:12).
- Level 3—**God's Son**: Children study Jesus Christ's life and ministry. They walk in His footsteps and decide to follow Him (Mark 10:45).

- Level 4—**God's Church**: Kids encounter the Lord's mission for every believer—making disciples. They see the Church as God's instrument to change the world (Acts 1:8).
- Level 5—**God's Kingdom**: Students view God's eternal plan for all nations. They survey Biblical history and learn ways to influence their own culture (Hebrews 12:1-2).
- Level 6—**God's Champions**: Pre-teens embrace Christ's call to personal discipleship. They explore opportunities to become world-class Christians (Ephesians 4:14-15).

Build Balanced Disciples

Luke 2:52 offers a rare glimpse into Jesus' childhood: *"And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men"* (NASB). Joseph and Mary made sure that their Son's activities were kept in balance. He grew intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially. Balanced discipleship interweaves three dimensions—growth in **knowledge** + **character** + **conduct**.

Knowledge: Growing disciples **know** God intimately. *They develop a reservoir of knowledge based on a Biblical worldview.* When it comes to the Christian faith today, most children are functionally illiterate. Kids who attend church regularly are exposed to an evaporating pool of Bible knowledge. Ensure that your children receive thorough training in the faith. Don't entrust this important task to chance. (See Proverbs 2:4-11.)

Character: Growing disciples **love** God passionately. *They display Christlike character in every area of life.* "Character" describes who you really are, the person you choose to be. Endeavor to be a consistent role model of Jesus' life, convictions, and values. Your children build character through thousands of choices—one decision at a time. (See Mark 12:30-31.)

Conduct: Growing disciples **serve** God selflessly. *They demonstrate faithful conduct that honors God and helps people.* Encourage your children to implement Biblical principles in practical ways every day. Demonstrate the faith through acts of service, compassion, generosity, righteousness, encouragement, courage, and sacrifice. The truth of God's Word must move from each child's head, to the heart, and then to the hands and feet. (See Mark 10:42-45.)

The Bible illumines a limited number of "must know" topics to understand (knowledge), "must be" traits to exhibit (character), and "must do" activities to experience (conduct). When a child's development includes those topics, traits, and experiences, you can be reasonably assured that you have done your part to build a balanced, lifelong disciple of Jesus Christ.



Train Diligently

The inspired Scriptures must remain the focal point of all training (2 Timothy 3:16-17). In view of what God has called you to do, think about these four “training tracks”—pathways of personal development:

Sequences: *How plans progress.* (2 Timothy 2:15)

Sequential Bible instruction unfolds God’s master plan as it advances from era to era. Book studies help students see how the Bible fits together. DiscipleLand’s **Core Bible** curriculum offers six years of sequential Bible instruction—with no repeated lessons. Kids learn to study the Bible on their own, becoming confident “self-feeders.” (Examples: Esther, Acts, Daniel)

Topics: *How themes inter-relate.* (Luke 24:27)

Topical Bible learning uncovers what God says about any subject throughout the Scriptures. Topical studies strengthen kids’ personal beliefs. With DiscipleLand’s **Adventure** series, children travel to a variety of locations around the world, applying Biblical principles in everyday situations. (Examples: doctrine, friendship, spiritual warfare)

Skills: *How to do ministry.* (Luke 10:1-2, 17)

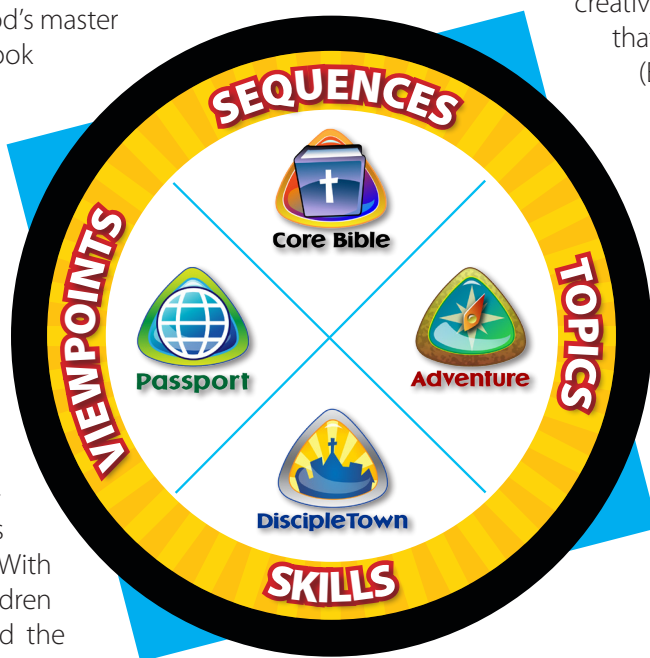
Skill formation gives children practical opportunities to live out their faith. “How to” skills develop confidence and encourage personal discipline. In **DiscipleTown**, kids experience high-energy fun as they develop vital skills for walking with Jesus. All 24 units creatively equip children with “how-to” skills that they’ll need for lifelong discipleship! (Examples: how to make good choices, how to explain my faith, how to earn eternal rewards)

Viewpoints: *How to evaluate ideas.* (Acts 15:1-2, 30-31)

Worldview training introduces global issues and needs. Cross-cultural experiences foster informed decision-making and awaken students to the plight of others. With **PassPort**, your children will grasp God’s global missions strategy and be equipped with a Biblical worldview. They meet faithful men and women who have served God on every continent. (Examples: help in a local mission, meet church

missionaries, pray for revival, take a family missions trip)

The four training tracks build upon and reinforce each other. Children who benefit from all four—sequences, topics, skills, and viewpoints—enjoy remarkable growth. Consider ways to include each one as you equip your kids. Train them from all four directions.



Implement Your Vision

Your children will someday blossom into adulthood—the harvest will come. You will reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7-10). Until then: guard tender hearts, lay firm foundations, build balanced disciples, follow God’s blueprint, and train diligently. Discipleship takes perseverance and prayer, but it’s worth it. Resist the temptation to give up or to become complacent. Your children can grow and thrive. With God’s help, you can raise faithful disciples!

To learn more about implementing a children’s discipleship system, visit DiscipleLand.com/Why-DiscipleLand

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