

PRACTICAL
FAITH SERIES

Practical Parenting

SIX BIBLE STUDY LESSONS
FOR GROUP DISCIPLESHIP



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FOR GROUP DISCIPLESHIP



EVERY NATION
P R O D U C T I O N S

How to Use this Material

In Victory, the primary venue for discipleship happens in a small group. It is called a Victory group. We strongly encourage everyone to be involved since these groups are specifically designed to help disciples grow spiritually.

A Victory group meeting has three sections: **Connect**, **Word**, and **Prayer**, and ideally lasts from forty to sixty minutes.

CONNECT (5-10 minutes)

Victory group meetings begin with a time to relate with one another. Depending on the people who comprise the group, this can be done through a variety of ways:

- Fun—such as an icebreaker activity
- Answered prayers—sharing of testimonies and updates
- Questions—such as those provided in the material, learning each other’s personal stories, and sharing feedback from the weekly message

Effective Questions During the Connect Portion:

- Are deliberately friendly to first-timers
- Ask for opinion or experiences
- Require no Bible knowledge
- Have no right or wrong answer
- Are not controversial
- Are preferably connected to the meeting’s topic

PRACTICAL PARENTING

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WORD (20-30 minutes)

Teach the truth and relevance of God's Word for life application. The Victory group meeting is not primarily a Bible study. Although teaching and explanation of Scripture is involved, the goal is to minister, not finish a material.

There is no need to teach all the points in a material.

Within this section, we look at what the Bible says, its relevance to us today, and its application in our lives.

What: *What does the Bible say?*

Communicate and impart biblical truth clearly and concisely.

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16,17

Tips for Sharing the Word Effectively

- Let the Bible speak for itself.
- Use illustrations and tell stories to explain Bible verses.
- When entertaining clarifications, be watchful not to allow the discussion to go off-tangent.
- The primary goal is to minister to the needs of the people, not to finish a Bible lesson.
- Be led by the Spirit when using the material.

So What: *What is the relevance of the Word to my life?*

Give participants the opportunity to discuss how the Word impacts the way they live.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

ROMANS 12:2

Now What: *How do I apply the Word to my life?*

Our primary reason for sharing the Bible is so that people will know who God is and what He has done. In doing so, the participants will begin to discover who they are and what they should do.

If it is a promise, teach them to claim it. If it is a command or a principle, encourage them to put it to action by God's grace. If it is a truth, let them embrace it willingly and not under compulsion. Allow God's grace and love to win them by the way you teach God's Word.

Encourage specific, measurable action steps that are consistent with the life change that the Scripture is bringing about. We do not command people, but we spur them on toward love and good deeds.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.

Do what it says. JAMES 1:22

Tips for Life-Changing Application

- You may choose one of the "So What" and "Now What" questions or you may add your own.
- An effective standby application question is: "What one action step are you going to take as a result of what you heard today?"
- Designate who will be the first to answer the question asked.
- Do not allow someone to argue or be critical of others.
- Remind everyone to apply the lesson to their own lives, not to someone else's.
- Ask God for wisdom to know when to balance or correct strange or unbiblical applications. Insensitive correction or criticism can kill the group, as can unchecked heresy.
- Remind everyone that transformation is God's work, not ours, and our obedience is a response to who He is and His love for us. It is God's grace that enables us to apply and obey His Word.

PRAY (15-20 minutes)

Prayer is the most important part of the Victory group meeting. Make sure you have plenty of time left so your prayer time is not rushed. This is not a “closing prayer,” but a time for everyone in the group to take specific requests to God. This is where the action is. The goal is to create a venue where people will see God move on their behalf.

“Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” MATTHEW 18:19

Tips for Powerful Prayer

- Listen to the Holy Spirit carefully during the Connect and Word sections for things that may need prayer.
- Spend your time praying for one another, not sharing and discussing prayer requests.
- Keep your prayers simple, sincere, and short. Most non-believers have never heard an ordinary Christian just talk to God and will be touched by the sincerity and simplicity of the prayer.
- Pray, don’t preach. Pray in simple and short sentences, not long “sermon prayers.”
- Use conversational prayer, not complicated or profound, intercessory prayer.
- Expect God to answer your prayers.

CONTENTS

1	Hit the Mark	1
2	Heart Issues (Part 1)	5
3	Heart Issues (Part 2)	11
4	Strengthen the Ties	15
5	A Parent’s Roles	19
6	Discipline and Obedience	23

³Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. ⁴Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. PSALM 127:3,4

WHAT

As parents, God has given us the task of shaping our children so that they eventually hit their mark. With the limited amount of years we have with them, the Bible is clear on how we are to raise them. In this lesson, we will look at four descriptions of children according to God's Word and why they need to be trained.

1 Children are sinners.

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. PSALM 51:5

Though children can be cute and adorable, they are also born with a sinful nature. Like us, they need Jesus more than an education, values, or relationships. Jesus' death on the cross is the only thing that can save them. At the right time, they will understand this.

How have you shared the gospel to your child?

2 Children are imitators.

"Everyone who quotes proverbs will quote this proverb about you: 'Like mother, like daughter.'" EZEKIEL 16:44

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.
1 CORINTHIANS 11:1

Children mostly follow what they see. Apart from the grace of God, our children would follow our mistakes and sins. But if we lead them to follow Jesus, they will

become more and more like Him, rather than more and more like us.

In what ways has your child imitated you?

3 Children are vulnerable.

"But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." MATTHEW 18:6

Jesus said that anyone who causes a child who believes in Him to sin deserves destruction.

How did Jesus relate with children (Matthew 18:1-5)? How can someone cause "one of these little ones" to sin?

4 Children are transmitters.

⁴One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. ⁵They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. ⁶They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. ⁷They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness. PSALM 145:4-7

Raising a child is not just about the next generation—it is also about the generations after.

How can we have a multi-generational perspective? How does one generation "commend" God's work to another?

SO WHAT

- Knowing that children have the sinful nature, what do you think parents should do?
- According to Deuteronomy 6:6-9, what example should children see at home?
- How can we protect our children from being led away from God? How can we lead them to Jesus?

NOW WHAT

- Do you believe that your child is a sinner? How can you help him/her understand the gospel?
- In what areas can you set a better example at home, starting this week?
- How can you help impart your love for God to the next generation?

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- Thank God for His sacrifice on the cross. Pray that you will walk in gratitude of this every day.
 - Ask God to help you raise your child to honor and love Him.
 - Pray that you will set a godly example in your home and that the generations after you will also serve God.

2 Heart Issues
(Part 1)

C O N N E C T

- What's one of your favorite things to do as a family? Tell us about it.
- What was the most challenging thing you had to do this week?
- Who is one person you really respect? Why?

"The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks." LUKE 6:45

WHAT

The heart is like a storage closet. Anything that comes out of a closet was first put in it. Our words, actions, and habits are simply an overflow of what is stored in the heart. Since the heart is the "wellspring of life" and the storehouse for good and evil, in child training, parents must focus primarily on the heart, not on external behavior.

It is possible for a child to comply with a rule and still have rebellion in his/her heart. It is also possible for a parent to go through the motions of parenting while having a heart that is far from home. In this lesson, we will look at why we need to guard our families against legalism, compromise, and passivity.

1 Legalism

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

EPHESIANS 6:4

The Apostle Paul warned fathers not to exasperate their children.

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What does "exasperate" mean?
How can parents exasperate their children?

2 Compromise

So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, "Hurry and get out of this place, because the LORD is about to destroy the city!" But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

GENESIS 19:14

Lot was a respected city official, but he lived a life of gradual compromise that caused his family to lose respect for him. His compromise started when Lot lived near Sodom (Genesis 13:12,13). Eventually, Lot lived in Sodom (Genesis 14:11,12). Finally, Sodom lived in Lot (Genesis 19:1).

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When Lot warned his family of the coming judgment, they thought it was a joke. Noah, on the other hand, was exactly the opposite. He was respected least by those who knew him least, and respected most by those who were closest to him. When he told his family to get in the ark to flee the coming judgment, they immediately obeyed him (Genesis 7:13). To be successful parents, we must guard our hearts from compromise.

How did Lot's compromise affect his family? How did Noah's faith and obedience affect his family?

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3 Passivity

"For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them."

1 SAMUEL 3:13

Eli was judged not because his sons sinned, but because when they sinned, he passively sat back and did nothing about it. Parents must know what is going on with their children and they must do what it takes to deal with their sin and rebellion.

What does it mean
it to be passive?

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What does it mean
to be active?

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SO WHAT

- Why do you think the Bible instructs fathers not to exasperate their children? How can parents guard against legalism in the home?
- What is respect? Why do you think we should value respect in our family? How can we be worthy of our child's respect and how can we raise a respectful child?
- How can we guard against compromise and passivity in the home?

NOW WHAT

- Are you fully committed to raising your child in the ways of the Lord? Which heart issue do you think the Holy Spirit is pinpointing in your life? What will you do about it?
- Are there times when you allow legalism in the home? Is your child sometimes exasperated? How can you counteract this?
- How can you be actively involved in your child's life this week?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His love, mercy, and grace. If there are heart issues you need to repent of and surrender to the Lord, you may do so.
- Pray that you would raise and train your child in the ways of the Lord. Ask God to guard you, your family, and your home against legalism, compromise, and passivity.
- Ask God to reveal Himself to your child and that your child will love and walk with God every day.

3

Heart Issues (Part 2)

CONNECT

- When you go on a trip, do you pack light? Why or why not?
- What's one thing you wish would happen this coming month? Why?
- Recall one of the most encouraging things someone told you recently. How did you feel about it?

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. PROVERBS 4:23

WHAT

Aside from legalism, compromise, and passivity, there are two more heart issues that parents have to guard against: favoritism and wrong priorities.

1 Favoritism

When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. GENESIS 37:4

Every time parents favor one child over another, relationships in the family are destroyed. Jacob's favoritism toward Joseph caused his brothers to hate him.

How did favoritism affect Jacob's family and the relationships between the brothers?

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2 Wrong Priorities

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. HEBREWS 11:7

Many ignore their family to provide for them, to be successful, or to save the world. But Noah obeyed God and built an ark to save his family. His family was top priority. The ark Noah built to save his family also saved the world.

What were Noah's priorities? What are your priorities?

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SO WHAT

- Why is favoritism so destructive to a family? What does James 2:1 say about favoritism?
- How do wrong priorities affect the family? What should be the basis for our priorities?
- How do you think the issues in our hearts affect those around us (Luke 6:45)?

NOW WHAT

- How can you help lead your family according to God’s Word? How can you apply what you learned today?
- What are your priorities? In what area do you need to make some adjustments, starting this week?
- How can you guard against favoritism in your family?

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- Thank God for your family. Pray that each member of your family will always serve Him.
 - Ask God to help you guard against favoritism in your home. Pray for love and grace to abound in your family.
 - Pray that your family will be a blessing and example to those around you.

4

Strengthen the Ties

CONNECT

- What’s one unique characteristic of your child? Recall an instance explaining this.
- Tell us about one of the most memorable gifts you received from your parents.
- Growing up, how did your parents show their affection for you?

Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. PSALM 127:1

WHAT

Part of our role as parents is to build our homes. But it all starts with God as the Master Builder. In this lesson, we will talk about four love-builders that can strengthen the ties in the home.

1 Acceptance helps our children feel secure.

¹⁰As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." MARK 1:10,11

God is a Father who accepts us for who we are, not for what we do for Him. In fact, the Bible says that God demonstrated His love for us by dying for us (Romans 5:8). He accepted us way before we even did anything for Him. In the same way, as parents, we are to show acceptance to our children.

How can you show acceptance to your child?

2 Affirmation helps our children feel significant.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. EPHESIANS 4:29

It is so easy to catch our kids doing something wrong. Why not catch them doing something right? Express sincere praise for a job well done and encourage them

for putting in the best efforts. Even giving a child the freedom to fail can help.

How can we build our children up?

3 Availability helps our children feel important.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven . . . ECCLESIASTES 3:1

For a child, love is spelled T-I-M-E. Being available for our children communicates to them that they are a priority. The quality of time is appreciated in the context of quantity of time. In each season or stage of parenting, a parent's role changes—from disciplining to training and coaching. (This will be discussed in the next lesson.)

How does your availability affect your child?

4 Affection helps our children feel loved.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. . . . ⁸Love never fails. . . . 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4,8

Affection shows how much we value a person, and this can be shown physically or verbally. Each child expresses and receives love differently, and parents can observe the child to help fill his/her emotional love tank.

How do you show affection to your child? How does your child show you affection?

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven . . . ECCLESIASTES 3:1

WHAT

Our children will go through different stages of childhood and growth, and as parents, our roles will also need to adjust. In this lesson, we will look at three roles of parents in different stages of a child’s life.

1 Discipline children (0-5 years old).

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him. PROVERBS 13:24

Discipline benefits the child. It is physical and immediate for the child to understand what is right and wrong. The child is to obey without challenge, excuse, or delay. And the child can enjoy the benefits of obedience.

How have you disciplined your child in God’s way?

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2 Train children (6-12 years old).

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. PROVERBS 22:6

As children grow, they should move from simple obedience to understanding why they should do something, and what the consequences are for

obedience and disobedience. The goal is not simply to see them obey, but rather to see their hearts turn to God and to choose to please Him.

How can you “train a child”?

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3 Coach children (13-19 years old).

Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. PROVERBS 1:8

. . . And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

MICAH 6:8

As the child becomes a teenager, the parent’s role must shift to coaching, listening, motivating, inspiring, and challenging. A parent’s faith is a model for the child to love God on his/her own.

What is a coach? In what ways can a parent coach a teenager?

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SO WHAT

- How is discipline according to God’s Word different from the culture today?
- Why do children need to understand the consequences of their actions? How can we prepare them to make godly decisions on their own?
- How can teenagers be God-centered rather than self-centered? How can we coach them to love God and others?

NOW WHAT

- What stage of parenting are you in? In what area do you need to make adjustments?
- How can you enforce consistent discipline and obedience in your home?
- What is your end goal as a parent? What can you start doing to achieve this goal?

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- Thank God for the seasons and stages that He brings in your life and family. Pray that you will do what’s right in each season and stage, and that you will raise your child to be godly.
 - Speak a blessing over your child in the stage s/he is in. Ask God for wisdom, grace, and joy for you and your family.
 - Pray that your family will be a blessing to others and a testimony of God’s goodness and grace.

6

Discipline and Obedience

CONNECT

- When you were a child, what’s one thing you hated doing that your parents/guardian expected you to do? Why did you dislike it so much?
- What’s your child’s favorite pastime? Why do you think s/he likes it so much?
- How were you disciplined as a child?

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. HEBREWS 12:11

WHAT

God disciplines us for our benefit, and He expects us, as parents, to do the same. Though there is pain in discipline, there are also rewards for obedience—including “a harvest of righteousness and peace.” In this lesson, we will look at how to discipline children and expect obedience.

1 Teach and instruct children to obey God’s Word.

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16,17

God’s Word is the ultimate authority in the home. It should guide us in how we live, what we do, and what we say. As we teach our children God’s truth, we are giving them a framework of beliefs that helps them be who God intends them to be.

How do you teach God’s Word to your child?

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2 Correct and discipline accordingly.

¹³Do not fail to punish children. If you spank them, they won’t die. ¹⁴If you spank them, you will save them from death. PROVERBS 23:13,14 (NCV)

Discipline is dependent on the child’s age, the severity of the offense, and what would best motivate the child to repentance. As parents, we are not just to correct behavior, but also to check the motivation of the child’s heart. When we allow children to experience negative consequences from their sinful behavior, we are helping motivate them to turn back to God.

How has your child benefited from correction and discipline?

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3 Expect and encourage obedience.

... I will show you my faith by what I do. JAMES 2:18

Correction and discipline should result in obedience—to God, not just to the parents. We desire to see our children loving God and others, and to acting on this love. We foster obedience when we give clear instructions and encouragement. We should spend more time encouraging what is right than correcting what is wrong.

How do you expect and encourage obedience in your home?

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SO WHAT

- According to Ephesians 6:4, how should we bring up children?
- According to Hebrews 12:11, what is the product of discipline and correction? What is the goal?
- How can parents encourage obedience in a child? How is encouraging more beneficial to a child than always correcting?

NOW WHAT

- In what area does your child need discipline? Are there any adjustments that need to be made in how you correct and discipline your child?
- How can you teach and instruct your child to obey God's Word?
- Do you expect and encourage obedience? How can you apply what you learned today?

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- Thank God for His patience and discipline.
 - Pray that you will discipline your child in a way that honors God and leads your child to love Him.
 - Ask God for wisdom and grace in disciplining your child. Pray that you will know how to approach different situations and how to encourage your child.

Train a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not turn from it.

PROVERBS 22:6

Practical Parenting is a series of six materials for group discipleship designed to give biblical principles on raising children in God's ways.

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Hit the Mark
- Heart Issues (Part 1)
- Heart Issues (Part 2)
- Strengthen the Ties
- A Parent's Roles
- Discipline and Obedience



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