

DISCIPLE GUIDE

FAITH AT HOME



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INTRODUCTION

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

God calls the family to play a vital role in discipling the next generation. How this is accomplished though varies from family to family and is as unique as the flavor of each home. Family discipleship isn't one-size-fits-all, and it isn't easy—even the most intentional of Christian parents and grandparents may find themselves at a loss as to how to begin.

That's why we want to help you create or continue an environment of spiritual growth in your home through our Faith at Home initiative. We want to equip and inspire you to build a life-long and thriving marriage, introduce your children or grandchildren to Christ and launch them as committed disciples who love God, love each other and love our world.

In the following pages, you will find guides for personal study and small group discussion, articles that will give you a deeper understanding of the Faith at Home initiative, as well as practical application steps for implementing this intentional way of life in your home.

For more information about Faith at Home, check out the Faith at Home Center in the Faith Fellowship front lobby as well as online at faithfellowshipfortbend.com/faithathome.

I am praying that God uses this Disciple Guide to be transformative for you and your family as well as the countless generations, those yet unborn even.

-Pastor David



USING THE SMALL GROUP GUIDES

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The Small Group Guides for each week are divided into three sections: interact with the passage, open it up, discussion questions, and next steps for the week. These sections are designed to help us engage the selected passages of Scripture in personal study and small group discussion.

Before your small group meets, interact with the Scripture for the week according to the H.E.A.R. method:

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at any time throughout the week. Some may find it helpful to work through the Scripture in sections—such as two or three blocks of 15 to 20 minutes each, while others may want to study the whole passage in one, hour-long sitting.

Whichever approach you choose to take, be sure to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before your small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

To maximize our study of God's Word and the impact it can have on our lives, we encourage everyone to think through all the discussion questions in the Small Group Guide, but small group leaders may choose to focus on some questions more than others. In addition to the weekly sections, we also encourage you and your small group to take full advantage of the following resources on the next pages.

D-Group

Discipleship Group (D-group) is a time to apply the gospel to our hearts and grow deeper in the gospel through community. The overall goal of D-group is to foster discipleship relationships that help each person grow to become more like Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit and to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 3:18). D-Group occurs on the fourth week of the month.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

As we begin our Faith at Home initiative, our discipleship team has provided a list of recommended resources to equip you to go deeper into these rich portion of Scripture. These are available on our website at faithfellowshipfortbend.com.

Articles and Overviews

On the following pages, you will find articles that will help you better understand the theological and practical themes of the Faith at Home initiative. We encourage you to take time to walk through these resources to prepare for the series.

Sub-Group Exercises

During Small Group each week, we have provided a guided exercise in which your group will break into smaller sub-groups in order to complete. These group exercises will help us apply the focus of what we are exploring in God's Word to to our hearts as well as grow deeper in the gospel through community.

The Next Step for Next Week

The Faith at Home initiative is all about helping you create or continue an environment of spiritual growth in your home. That's why we want to give you one idea that you can easily implement to become more intentional about date night, engaging your children and grandchildren with the Gospel, or being a hospitable to your neighbors. For more next steps, check out faithfellowshipfortbend.com/faithathome.

Christ-Centered Parenting and Grandparenting Class

Are you equipped to talk to your kids or grandkids about today's cultural issues? In Christ-Centered Parenting and Grand-parenting, we'll help you lead your children and teens in a confident and responsible way that will equip you to address topics that children of all ages face, including: Gender issues, suicide, depression, and anxiety, pornography, addiction and coping mechanisms,, same-sex marriage, dating, marriage, and divorce.

Maybe you're a parent and your child is asking questions you don't know the answer too. Maybe you're a grandparent and are trying to leave a legacy of faith in your family. Maybe you're an aunt, uncle or you may want to have kids one day. Regardless of your role in your family, get equipped and join this 6-session class starting on Wednesday, April 21 at 8:00pm on Zoom



THE FAITH AT HOME CENTER

OVERVIEW

THE PURPOSE

The Faith at Home Center is now located in the Faith Fellowship Church front lobby. It offers both a physical and online connection point, so families and individuals can be resourced, equipped and inspired to create or continue an environment of spiritual growth in their home. We try to accomplish this purpose by using two simple principles:

Make It Easy

We hope to make it easy for you to become intentional at home by providing bite-sized, life-season specific ideas and resources.

Make It More Likely

We hope to make it more likely that you will become intentional by nudging you to incorporate holy habits into your existing family-life routines. We will remind you several times a year with church-wide initiatives and resources to incorporate into your home.

THE RESOURCES

The Faith at Home Center offers a wide variety of tools available to help those in any life season take steps toward creating or continuing an environment of spiritual growth in their home. Note that all of the resources available at the Faith at Home Center in the church front lobby are also available online at faithfellowshipfortbend.com/faithathome.

Consider some of the following resources available:

My Faith at Home Plan

We encourage you to create a plan several times a year to assess how intentional you have been at home and to help you decide what small steps you can take next.

Life Season Pointers

With more than two dozen topics, Faith at Home Pointers provide a biblical perspective on the most common family seasons and challenges, along with recommended resources and a description of ministries available from the church for additional support.

Idea Cards

Idea Cards make it easy for couples, parents and grandparents to take one small step to become more intentional at home, including marriage date nights, family time activities, connecting with your teen, mealtime conversations, movie night chats, neighboring, etc.

Initiatives

Initiatives support a specific theme and/or intentionality habit that often accompany a specific season or sermon series. Families will have access to resources that will make it easy to incorporate faith conversations and relationship building routines into the fabric of family life.

Going Deeper Opportunities

While we believe the home to be the primary place of spiritual formation, the church is an important partner in that journey. That is why Faith Fellowship offers a variety of core classes, ministry programs and resources designed to come alongside your family's faith journey.

Regardless of what life season you are currently in, the Faith at Home Center was built to help you take a next step in your spiritual journey. Whether it is helping you build a life-long and thriving marriage, introducing your children or grandchildren to Christ, launching them as committed disciples, or showing the love of Christ to your neighbors through hospitality, there is something for you at the Faith at Home Center.



FUTURE OF FAMILY MINISTRY AT FFC

OVERVIEW

Something has to change.

According to a recent Lifeway study, less than 10% of kids who attend church talk about faith issues with their parents or grandparents at home. In other words, in the majority of those who attend American churches, the mini-van is loaded up on Sunday mornings to go to church for a few hours. Then everybody heads home but no one talks about it.

Few are praying with their kids or grandkids other than mealtime. Few are reading the Bible with their kids or grandkids. Few are serving with their kids or grandkids.

Again, less than 10% of kids who typically have a religious experience on Sunday morning for an hour are talking about said religious experience for the other 167 hours of the week.

And we get consultants. And we do research. But we wonder why we're losing the next generation.

The reality is that our society has become a service economy where we outsource pretty much everything. We outsource the care of our lawn to the lawn guy. We outsource our laundry to the dry cleaners. We outsource our taxes to the accountant. Of course these are all very good and convenient things. However, it seems that we have also lumped in something that was never meant to be outsourced: the spiritual formation of our children.

Now the church does have a job. The job of the church is to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12). Like we often say at Faith Fellowship — the best ministry ideas are in the congregation. That is why we are equipping parents and grandparents to inspire and nurture the faith of the next generation.

This is what we pledge to do at Faith Fellowship. We are going to remind you of your God-given role but even more than that we are going to resource and get behind you. We will help you, however we can't do your job for you.

VISION: FAMILY MINISTRY GARDEN

Churches have never been more creative in their programming or resourced in their facilities. Churches in our city alone have multiple floors for their children's ministries, audio/visual technology that rivals the Toyota Center, and large indoor playgrounds that serve as spiritual successors to Discovery Zone. Don't get me wrong, these are great and wonderful innovations. Countless families both in and outside the church are served (including my own) as well as numerous Gospel conversational opportunities are possible.

And yet, why is it that 70% of those children are statistically likely to walk away from their faith in the first few years of college? Something has to change.

Interestingly enough, about 35% of those children who do walk away from their faith in college will come back in their late-20s and early-30s because of one particular life stage catalyst — they have kids.

The thinking typically goes like this: *“Well, I grew up in church and got a good foundation of faith. I want my kids to grow up in church and get a good foundation of faith. The church is the place to get it, so we’ll start going to church.”* Think of this mindset like watering a plant. The church has the Living Waters of the Gospel so parents or grandparents take their children to church because that is where children will get watered so to speak. The only problem is that the Living Water seems to just drip off because we’re still losing the next generation. Why are the roots not growing deeper?

So the next step in this thinking typically like this: *“Well, we know what the problem is. We just need to go to a bigger church where there are better programs. Maybe the youth pastor wears Jordans and skinny jeans and he’ll get them really excited about the faith!”* However, the Living Water drips off of them at the larger church as well and faith doesn’t take root.

So what do we do now?

See, the real problem is that we aren’t taking into account God’s original design for discipleship and faith formation. God’s original design is that the Gospel would grow in the rich and fertile soil of a home. Because it is in the context of the family and the Gospel poured into the home that a child’s faith roots will grow deep.

PRACTICE: FAMILY MINISTRY BASEBALL

So we’ve diagnosed the problem and we know God’s solution from Scripture. What might that look like at Faith Fellowship then? I think it’s helpful to think in terms of baseball.

Few experiences rival sitting in the stands eating a hotdog and watching a baseball game. The MLB season has just begun but even in the warm feeling of an April afternoon, the faint whispers of what could be in the cool October night runs through the bleachers. I don’t have to be James Earl Jones in suspenders telling you people will come out to Minute Maid for an experience like that.

But baseball and family ministry? How do those fit together? Well one of our core values in our children and family ministry at Faith Fellowship is to promote the church and family partnership to see God raise up kids who love God, love each other and love our world. And for every event and initiative that we do in Faith Kids we are going to see it through the lens of that particular core value on a baseball diamond. Let me explain.

Hitting Singles: Ministry Programs for Kids at Church

As a ministry, we hit one single every week when kids go into the Fellowship Hall and hear about the big story of Scripture. We need those singles. As a church, we can't win without those singles. Kids being taught the Gospel and growing in their faith in Jesus while at church is an incredible, life-transforming thing. The thing about only hitting singles that we have already seen however is that it's just not enough to win.

Hitting Doubles: Ministry Programs for Kids with their Parents and/or Grandparents

We also need to hit some stand-up doubles as a church. Hitting a double is intentionally programming missions opportunities and ministry events to involve both kids and their parents and/or grandparents together. Instead of creating ministry silos so to speak, the idea of hitting doubles is about bringing the generations together as we work toward an effective and healthy multigenerational church family.

Hitting Triples: Programs that Train Parents and/or Grandparents to Disciple Their Kids

If there are 168 hours in the week and the average family typically spends 1 of those hours at church, then the overwhelming majority of possible spiritual formation of children is obviously outside the church. Hitting triples are the reason the Faith at Home initiative itself is being launched. We want to equip and inspire families to create or continue an environment of spiritual growth in their home.

Hitting Home Runs: Parents and Grandparents Provide Spiritual Training and Discipleship at Home

When Kirk Gibson hobbled around the bases after hitting that walk-off home run back in 1988, the Dodgers rushed the field and celebrated the win because there was a man already on base. The home run was the hope. It was the end result and what brought the win. The home run for Faith Fellowship is like that. Singles can turn into home runs when parents and grandparents talk in the car about what they learned at church. A home run is when a grandson asks his grandpa why the sky is blue and his grandpa uses that moment to talk to his grandson about how big, powerful and beautiful God is. Yahtzee. Gone. Home run. Doubles can turn into home runs. Triples can turn into home runs. What we want to see at Faith Fellowship is parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles regularly going yard with their children. God's original design is that the Gospel and spiritual formation would grow in the rich environment of a home. When that happens, it's a home run.



APRIL 18

HOME

What you accomplish for God beyond your home will typically never be greater than what you practice with God within your home.

Timothy Paul Jones



PERSONAL STUDY AND GROUP DISCUSSION

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9

Small groups at Faith Fellowship are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step. Consider these questions and ideas to help you take your next step as a disciple.

Interact with the Passage

Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9 this week using the H.E.A.R. method before Sunday, April 18. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- Is there any "family tradition" that you learned from the family you grew up in that you now practice with your own children? Tell us about it.
- Did any of these traditions come from the previous generation—your grandparents?
- Have you and your spouse brought different customs from the families you grew up in? What do you do about that?

Discussion Questions

- Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9. What stood out to you in your interactions with the Scripture this week or with the sermon.

- According to verse 1, when are these commands being given? What clues do we have there about the “current” situation?
- According to verse 2, who are these commands for?
- What do we see in verses 2–3 about the results of living God’s way? What will happen to those who obey?
- Pertaining to verse 4-5, why was it so important for Israel to hear that there is only one God?
- Without even considering the deities of other religions, what are people in our culture worshipping?
- Think about the culture your children and grandchildren live in. What do their friends and classmates worship?
- According to verse 5, how are we to love the Lord? And how can we do this in today’s world?
- According to these verses, where should God’s commandments be? The references to home and children are especially important to us. How would you apply these verses to today?
- How can you make God’s way part of your home life? How can you make loving God a total commitment for your family?

Sub-Group Exercise: Spiritual Legacy Evaluation

Take a look at the “Spiritual Legacy Evaluation” on the next page (page 11). Go through the questions first on your own, answering them about the family you grew up in. Put the letter G—for “Growing up”—next to the appropriate answer.

Then, go back through the questions and put the letter N—for “Now”—next to the way you would answer for your family today.

When you have finished, share your answers with your group. Are there any surprises after taking this evaluation? Did you learn anything new about your family? Or about yourself? As you consider your “Now” answers, think about the things you’d like to change, and how you might change them.



Spiritual Legacy Evaluation

Go through the questions first on your own, answering them about the family you grew up in. Put the letter G—for “Growing up”—next to the appropriate answer. Then, go back through the questions and put the letter N—for “Now”—next to the way you would answer for your family today.

To what degree were spiritual principles incorporated into daily family life?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always
- Consistently

Which word best captures the tone of how you learned to view/relate to God?

- Absent
- Adversarial
- Fearful
- Casual
- Solemn
- Intimate

How would you summarize your family’s level of participation in spiritual activities?

- Nonexistent
- Rare
- Occasional
- Regimental
- Active
- Enthusiastic

How were spiritual discussions applied in your home?

- They weren’t
- To control
- To manipulate
- To teach
- To influence
- To reinforce

What was the perspective in your home with regard to moral absolutes?

- If it feels good, do it
- There are no absolutes
- Let your heart guide you
- Legalistic rules
- Conservative values
- Clear life boundaries



NEXT STEPS FOR NEXT WEEK

APRIL 18-24

The Faith at Home initiative is all about helping you create or continue an environment of spiritual growth in your home. That's why we want to give you an idea that you can easily implement to become more intentional about date night, engage your children and grandchildren with the Gospel, or be hospitable to your neighbors. Depending on the life season in which you find yourself, consider these three next steps to take a next step as a disciple this week.

ROM-COM NIGHT

Consider this idea for a date night discussion guide to foster conversation about how romantic love points us to the ultimate love story in the Gospel.

What to Do

Rent or buy a romantic film. If you have kids at home, put them to bed early. Make some popcorn or another favorite snack to enjoy during the movie. After watching the movie, spend about 10 minutes discussing the following questions.

- **Boy Meets Girl | Girl Meets Boy:** Every great love story has a “moment they met” sequence when two individuals find themselves drawn to each other. What was that moment for him? What was that moment for her? What was that moment for you both?
- **Obstacles:** What were several obstacles keeping the couple apart. Was the biggest obstacle external (i.e. another person, distance) or internal (i.e. clashing personalities, fear)? What obstacles did the two of you overcome to meet and marry?
- **Mystery:** The Apostle Paul called spousal intimacy “a great mystery” because when “two become one” they create a picture of Christ’s marriage to the church (Ephesians 5:33). Did any actions/choices by the guy model selfless love? How about the actions/choices by the girl? What actions/choices has your spouse made that make you feel loved?
- **Intimacy:** The most exciting moments of intimacy occur when both individuals seek to please the other rather than themselves. Did selfless giving or selfish taking characterize the couple in the film? Describe one way you would like to better meet your mate’s or friends needs in daily life and during physical intimacy.

CREATING IMPRESSION POINTS (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

Consider this idea to foster faith discussions with your child in order to fulfill the commandment to “impress them on your children” found in Deuteronomy 6:6-9.

What to Do

Invite your child out for a special parent/child outing. You might want to send them a nice invitation in the mail just for fun! Bring your small group guide or the Idea Card available at the Faith at Home Center with you to guide a discussion.

Your child will select the times and questions he or she wants to try as you launch parent/child faith discussions. Select which of the following times and discussion questions that you and your child would most enjoy. Use the sample ideas listed or come up with your own that fit best for your family.

Mealtime: Capture moments while eating together: After giving thanks for your meal, someone shout “High-Low.” Everyone around the table shares the high point and low point of their day. Consider praising God for the “highs” and praying for the “lows.”

Bedtime: Give a blessing at bedtime: While tucking in for bed, parent or child says “What do I love?” The other person must then guess what the person is thinking in one of the following categories...a fun moment they shared that day, something nice about the other person, something they appreciate that person did today.

Drive Time: Explore God’s creativity while in the car: On a short drive, play a game of “I spy” together – naming several things God created (a flower, a cloud, a bluebird, a cow, etc.) that you must spot before arriving to your destination. On a longer drive spend time asking each other questions, such as, “We know that God knows our future. What do you hope he sees in your future at age (insert future ages)?”

Finally, be sure to put a date on the calendar to get started!

HOSPITALITY AND READING SCRIPTURE

Scripture is the most powerful thing that God has given us for experiencing Him. When talking about discussing the truth of God’s Word with skeptics, Martin Luther said it like this: *“If your standing beside a cage with a roaring lion in it and the person your talking to does not believe the lion is real, you can do one of two things: you can stand there and defend the lion or you can open the cage and let the lion defend himself.”*

What to Do

If you have a friend or neighbor with whom you want to encourage or tell about your faith, open up the cage by walking through a Bible Reading Plan together with them found at the Faith at Home Center or on our website at www.faithfellowshipfortbend.com/resources/biblereadingplan.

As you walk through these short plans, consider opening up your home and inviting your friend or neighbor over for coffee or tea to talk about what you both are reading and learning in Scripture.



APRIL 25

HOSPITALITY

Radically ordinary hospitality is this: using your Christian home in a daily way that seeks to make strangers neighbors, and neighbors family of God.

Rosaria Butterfield



D-GROUP

APRIL 25

The fourth week of the month is the time when small groups participate in D-Group. D-Group (Discipleship-group) is a time to apply the gospel to our hearts and grow deeper in the gospel through community. As we continue our new small group rhythms, we want to start our D-group times in such a way that they help everyone in the group think more clearly about the gospel and apply it to every area of their lives. Every person in every group will begin in a different place.

Remember that every person in every group will begin in a different place. D-group is different from the Bible study rhythm, where God's Word is the starting block. In D-group everyone's faith, spiritual maturity, and blind spots influence where one starts. Because of this, we need to remember three core ground rules for every D-group meeting:

- We all have blind spots. We need brothers or sisters to help us identify our own.
- We have to slow down and talk candidly in order to renew our minds.
- We must trust that God wants to use others in this process; therefore we must be vulnerable and open with our D-group.

In each D-group meeting, your group will divide into men and women. This increased intimacy will best facilitate asking and answering the three core D-group questions. This smaller, gender-specific time will also facilitate everyone having more time to engage in the group conversation. Here are the questions:

1. What am I experiencing? (emotions, events, and relationships)
2. Why am I experiencing this? (circumstances, empathy, and sin)
3. How should I respond? (repentance and reconciliation)

This D-group's focus is on continuing our habit of asking each other these three questions.

Question 1 allows everyone in the group to share something they are currently experiencing, positive or negative, that strongly affects their life or faith.

Question 2 helps us to slow down and assess how our heart (belief) is engaged in the struggles or circumstances we shared in question 1. Question 2 will be the most important part of your D-group time. Most of us need significant time, and help, to fully wrestle with how our belief in Jesus is interacting with our day-to-day circumstances. Renewing our mind takes reflection on the details of our lives and on God's Word. This aspect of D-group should almost always include members opening their Bible to edify and reproof one another.

Question 3 facilitates the development of an action plan or accountability structure that turns right belief into right actions. We will always run the risk of skipping over deep reflection on our belief (question 2) and jumping into surface-level solutions. Don't do it! The power that defeats sin in our lives is the gospel. The gospel is clearest when it is shared (and received) in the midst of community.

1. *What am I experiencing? (emotions, events, and relationships)*

- Share a current or recent experience that has been a struggle for you.
- As you describe this experience, consider and talk about whether or not it is a routine occurrence in your life. Is it related to other experiences in any way?

2. *Why am I experiencing this? (circumstances, empathy, and sin)*

- While engaged in this experience, what were your heart and mind trusting in or fearful of?
- Do you ever attempt to separate your biblical knowledge or faith from this situation in your life?

3. *How should I respond? (repentance and reconciliation)*

- How does your faith shape how you respond to this experience in the future?
- Do you need any accountability in your life to more faithfully engage in this circumstance?



NEXT STEPS FOR NEXT WEEK

APRIL 25 - MAY 1

The Faith at Home initiative is all about helping you create or continue an environment of spiritual growth in your home. That's why we want to give you an idea that you can easily implement to become more intentional about date night, engage your children and grandchildren with the Gospel, or be hospitable to your neighbors. Depending on the life season in which you find yourself, consider these three next steps to take a next step as a disciple this week.

DISCOVERING NEEDS

Consider this idea for a date night discussion guide to help husbands and wives discover ways to meet one another's needs.

What to Do

Schedule a dinner or coffee date. Each spouse should spend a few minutes writing down their own answers to the following questions below. Only God can meet all of our needs, but He intends to meet some of them through marriage. Use the following questions to discover how you can be more intentional:

Little Big Things: We often neglect the little things that can make a big difference. Explore small ways you can better meet your spouse's needs by asking the following questions.

- What three things could I do at the house to help you feel more relaxed at home?
- What three ways could I surprise you to make you feel appreciated or pampered?
- What hobby would you like to try together during the next three months?

Communication: Most marital conflicts are rooted in poor communication. Explore how you might better meet your spouse's need in this area by asking the following questions:

- How can I help establish a routine context for one-on-one conversation?
- What is the best time/place/approach to share something that hurt me without making you feel attacked or disrespected?

Intimacy: God intends husbands and wives to meet one another's need for spiritual, emotional, and physical intimacy. Explore how you might better meet your spouse's need for intimacy by asking the following questions

- What simple thing can we do once per week to improve our spiritual connection?
- What three things can we do to create stronger emotional connection?
- What two ways might I improve our sexual relationship so you feel more loved?

FAVORITES

Consider this idea to strengthen your relationship with your child or teen by having fun making a special meal, fostering good conversation and discovering one another's favorite things.

What to Do

Ask your child or teen to pick his or her favorite meal. Gather the ingredients together and set a night to cook together. Write out the recipe for them with a special note on the back from you

Ask: Ask them why he or she chose this particular meal. Is there a unique memory or something else special about the meal?

Do: Take the time to show them how to make the meal. Use the time for life coaching as you prepare them for the future by teaching how to follow a recipe.

Share: If the meal has a special meaning to you or your family, share any stories, memories, or pictures with your teen.

Ask: After cooking, spend time going through the following questions as you eat together. Remember, this is a time to listen and learn more about what your teen thinks, not to criticize or critique their answers. What is your favorite...

- Activity you are involved in right now? Why?
- Thing about school? Why?
- Quality that you look for in a friend? Who do you see that has that quality in your current group of friends?
- Book?
- Song or artist?
- Thing about our family?
- Thing about our church?
- Thing about your walk with God?
- Thing to do when you have down time?
- Thing you have accomplished?

Answer: Invite your teen to ask you similar "favorites" questions and/or come up with different questions. The goal is to enjoy dialogue together.

Read: Read James 1:17 together: *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."*

Pray: Thank God for your meal and for the many good things that He gives. Pray together: *"We thank you, Lord, that we have so many things that are our 'favorites.' We acknowledge that every good and perfect gift is from you. Thank you for our time together. In Jesus name we pray, Amen."*

PRAYER WALK YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Sometimes its like we get home from school or work and close the garage like we are entering our cave for the night. Of course it's been a long day and of course we're tired. The last we want to do is have people over to our house! So how can we live out our calling as Christians to be hospitable to our neighbors? One simple, yet incredibly effective way is to simply go on a walk through your neighborhood in the evenings.

What to Do

Take a walk around your neighborhood and pray for the houses you walk by. If you see someone else outside, engage them in a conversation and maybe even ask to pray for them. As you are walking consider the following prayer prompts:

- Ask God how you can be hospitable to your neighbors in this season.
- Ask God to give you a burden for the lost in your neighborhood.
- Pray that God would help you to trust Him to give you confidence to carry out the Great Commission.



MAY 2

HAMMERS

Imagine yourself as a living house...You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but God is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.

CS Lewis



PERSONAL STUDY AND GROUP DISCUSSION

EPHESIANS 5:21-6:4

Small groups at Faith Fellowship are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step. Consider these questions and ideas to help you take your next step as a disciple.

Interact with the Passage

Read Ephesians 5:21-6:4 this week using the H.E.A.R. method before Sunday, May 2. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- Have you tried any of the "Next Steps for Next Week" ideas? If so, which activity did you do? How did you or those you participated with respond? Did you learn anything new about your kids, your spouse, yourself, or a friend as a result of that activity?
- Did any of these traditions come from the previous generation—your grandparents?
- Have you and your spouse brought different customs from the families you grew up in? What do you do about that?

Discussion Questions

- Read Ephesians 5:21-6:4. What stood out to you in your interactions with the Scripture this week or with the sermon.

- According to verse 21, Who are we supposed to submit to, and why? What does it mean to submit?
- What does Christ have to do with how wives treat their husbands? How do you think the wives in Ephesus would have reacted to Paul’s teaching?
- How does the church submit to Christ? And how does that provide a model for wives with their husbands?
- What does Christ have to do with the way husbands treat their wives? How do you think the husbands in Ephesus would have reacted to Paul’s teaching?
- In what way is Christ the head of the body? And how is a husband the head of his wife?
- Verses 28–30 anticipate the “one flesh” idea with husbands loving their wives as they love their own body. What implications does this have for the day-to-day relationship between husband and wife?
- How does verse 33 sum up the interaction between husband and wife? According to verse 25, how should husbands love their wives? What might this look like in everyday life?
- According to Ephesians 6:1–3, why should children obey parents? Does obedience always lead to a longer life? What do you think this promise is really saying?
- In what ways could parents be “exasperating” or “provoking” their children? According to these verses, what should parents do instead? How would that help?
- Do you think it’s significant that this is addressed to fathers and not parents in general? Does Paul’s exhortation reflect only the culture at that time, or are fathers generally more likely to provoke their kids?

Sub-Group Exercise: Aroma Therapy

Take a look at the “Aroma Therapy” on the next page (page 25). Take some time individually to evaluate your own homes before discussing in the group. Note that you’re asked to “grade” your own homes—on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being low in that area and 10 being really strong—and you’re also asked to jot down some general ideas that might be helpful to others.

Answer the questions based on your life season and the makeup of your home. For instance, some will have children in the home while others will not. Consider these questions from your personal perspective.

You do NOT need to announce your “grades” to the group. That’s for your personal interest—and perhaps for you to talk with your spouse about it later. However, please share your thoughts about how low-graded homes might improve. It might be that you or others might benefit from some of the ideas shared.



Aroma Therapy

A is for *AFFECTION*: 1-10 Grade: _____

Do you hug each other, provide caring touch, and often say kind things? Do your kids feel loved? Do kids see mom and dad showing affection to each other?

What are some things that a low-graded home might do to improve in this area?

R is for *Respect*: 1-10 Grade: _____

Do the children respect the parents? Do the parents respect the children? Do husband and wife respect each other— and demonstrate this to the kids?

What are some things that a low-graded home might do to improve in this area?

O is for *Order*: 1-10 Grade: _____

Do you have an accepted schedule? Does the whole family observe certain customs, traditions, and priorities? Do people have particular responsibilities? Do people know what's expected of them? Do they know the rules? Granted, every home will have a measure of chaos, but is this causing anxiety or conflict among any family members?

What are some things that a low-graded home might do to improve in this area?

M is for *Merriment*: 1-10 Grade: _____

Do you laugh together? Do you enjoy one another's company? Do you spread this joy to others? Is it important for you to plan fun things to do as a family?

What are some things that a low-graded home might do to improve in this area?

A is for *Affirmation*: 1-10 Grade: _____

Are you “cheerleaders” for your young or adult children? Do they know they have your support? Do you attend their activities and compliment them on their development? Do they feel that you are proud of them? Are they proud of you? Have you talked together about the love of God, the gifts of God, and how we can praise him and please him?

What are some things that a low-graded home might do to improve in this area?



NEXT STEPS FOR NEXT WEEK

MAY 2 - May 8

The Faith at Home initiative is all about helping you create or continue an environment of spiritual growth in your home. That's why we want to give you an idea that you can easily implement to become more intentional about date night, engage your children and grandchildren with the Gospel, or be a hospitable to your neighbors. Depending on what life season you find yourself, consider these two next steps to take a next step as a disciple this week.

LOVE AND RESPECT

Consider this idea for a date night discussion guide to help husbands and wives become intentional about meeting their mate's greatest needs.

What to Do

Each spouse should listen to the 20 minute "Love and Respect in Marriage" talk by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. This is available to listen on our website or on the Faith Fellowship Church Spotify page. Each spouse should spend a few minutes writing down answers to the following questions.

Husbands: Read aloud Ephesians 5:25-28 and answer the following questions...

- Do you agree that your wife's primary marital need is to be cherished by you?
- What are some of the ways you try to show her sacrificial love?
- What are 2-3 ways she needs you to show love but that you might find difficult?
- What do you think your wife would say if invited to offer a few "baby step" suggestions on better meeting her needs?

Wives: Read aloud Ephesians 5:22-24 and answer the following questions...

- Do you agree that your husband needs to feel respected?
- What are some of the ways you try to show that you admire and respect him?
- What are 2-3 things he would appreciate but might be more difficult for you to do?
- What do you think your husband would say if invited to offer a few "baby step" suggestions on better meeting his needs?

Wives: Read aloud Ephesians 5:31-33. Then hold hands and pray these words...*Dear God: Help us to better fulfill the purpose of our marriage by modeling the relationship between Christ and His Bride. Amen*

IRON SHARPENS IRON

Consider this idea as a guide to help parents and teens or two friends to set personal and spiritual discipline goals and help one another stay motivated.

What to Do

According to Proverbs 27:17 *“As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”*

Get dinner or coffee within the next few weeks. Using the following guide, identify goals for personal, intellectual, and spiritual growth and invite a spouse, child, parent or friend to partner with you in the quest. Each person should identify at least one new goal that he/she would like help “sharpening” while each person takes a turn explaining his/her choices. Consider spending some time exploring how you could do these things together and/or help one another stay motivated.

To get in better shape physically, I want to...

Eat a healthier diet. “Sharpening” options include...

- Use an app to track calories together
- Grocery shop together to select healthier options
- _____

Start an exercise routine. “Sharpening” options include...

- Walk/run together three times per week
- Start a bike riding routine together
- _____

To sharpen my mind, I want to...

Read more. “Sharpening” options include...

- Select one book per month to read/discuss together
- Read during the same ___ minutes per day and text one another when done
- _____

Study more for school/job performance. “Sharpening” options include...

- Ask about assignments/goals at the beginning and end of each week
- Set new rule – no TV/Facebook/etc. until some studying is done each day
- _____

To grow spiritually, I want to...

Have regular prayer and Bible reading. “Sharpening” options include...

- Text one another weekly or daily prayer concerns
- Select a book of the Bible for one chapter per day reading/ discussion
- _____

Serve others. “Sharpening” options include...

- Find a ministry at church we can serve in together
- Identify an elderly/disabled relative or neighbor we can serve monthly
- _____



MAY 9

NOW WHAT?

The path of spiritual growth in the riches of Christ is not a passive one. Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning. Effort is action. Earning is attitude. You have never seen people more active than those who have been set on fire by the grace of God.

Dallas Willard



MY FAITH AT HOME PLAN

TAKE A STEP TOWARD INTENTIONALITY

The Faith at Home Plan is one of the foundational tools of the Faith at Home initiative. It is designed to be a self-assessment of how intentional you have been over the past few months as well as help you create a simple plan of one or two easy steps you can take to become more intentional in the coming months.

HOW HAVE I DONE? EVALUATE YOUR OWN LEVEL OF INTENTIONALITY OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS.

MARRIAGE

Nurturing Intimacy

- Had a “date night” twice or more per month to focus on one another without distractions.
- Wrote a note, gave a flower or some other tangible expression of love at least twice per month.
- Called during the day, sat down to chat, took walks together, or some other time of focused, non-task driven communication at least three times per week
- Prayed with my spouse at least twice per week
- Demonstrated meaningful touch and/or verbal affirmation at least once per day

Avoiding Dangers

- Took steps to reduce risk to my marriage in vulnerable areas (bad temper, relationships outside of my marriage, demeaning language, etc.) by maintaining boundaries, increasing accountability, etc.
- Took care of myself physically and emotionally to be the best lifelong spouse I can be
- Admitted I was wrong and apologized and/or forgave before going to bed after conflicts with my spouse

Not Confident Very Confident

How intentional have I been to build a lifelong thriving marriage?	1	2	3	4
I am confident that my marriage will last until one of us dies.	1	2	3	4
I believe my marriage is, for the most part, God-honoring.	1	2	3	4

Not Confident Very Confident

NEXT GENERATION

Parents

- Connected relationally with my children daily (help with homework, eat together, etc.)
- Did something special with my children (hobby, ice cream date, etc.) twice per month
- Created an opportunity for discussing my beliefs and values with my children at least once per week
- Prayed with my children (including meals, bedtime, etc.) at least five times per week
- Admitted I was wrong and apologized and/or forgave before going to bed after conflicts with my children
- Served together and/or participated in an intergenerational faith experience (father/daughter banquet, local missions event, etc.) with my children at least once in the past couple of months

Grandparents

- Did something to connect with my grandchildren (a letter, phone call, etc.) at least once per month
- Did something to help my grandchildren inherit a strong spiritual legacy at least once per month
- Prayed for my grandchildren at least five times per week

	Not Confident		Very Confident	
How intentional have I been to help my children/grandchildren build a strong faith?	1	2	3	4
I am confident my children/grandchildren will have a strong Christian faith in adulthood.	1	2	3	4
	Not Confident		Very Confident	

SINGLE ADULTS

I Am Called to the Single Life

- Planned to remain single throughout my life to give time, resources and attention to Christian ministry.
- Took proactive steps in learning to be complete in Christ alone
- Practiced spiritual and physical disciplines in order that I may live out biblical singleness
- Committed to keeping myself pure as I believe God has called me to remain single

I Hope to Marry

- Prayed about/for my future spouse and that my future marriage will be God-honoring
- Kept myself sexually pure knowing my body is God’s gift to my future spouse, or repented of past sexual sin and committed to remain abstinent until married
- Took proactive steps toward finding a Godly mate and preparing for marriage by learning to be complete in Christ alone
- Practiced spiritual and physical disciplines to help me become the best gift possible to the person I marry
- Attended pre-engagement or pre-marital counseling or other sessions to learn the Christian view of marriage

	Not Confident			Very Confident
How intentional have I been to honor God in my singleness and/or prepare for a God-honoring marriage.	1	2	3	4
I am confident my future marriage will be God-honoring.	1	2	3	4
	Not Confident			Very Confident

WHAT WILL I DO?

IDENTIFY 1-2 THINGS YOU INTEND TO DO IN THE COMING MONTHS THAT WILL MOVE YOURSELF OR YOUR FAMILY TO THE NEXT LEVEL IN EACH CATEGORY.

MARRIAGE: To strengthen our relationship, I will...

- Plan at least two dates per month
- Pray together at least twice weekly
- _____
- _____

PARENTS: To nurture my child's faith, I will...

- Schedule at least two "family time" activities or faith discussions per month
- Pray together at least five times per week (including mealtime and bedtime)
- Eat together (including prayer and conversation) at least five times per week
- _____
- _____

GRANDPARENTS: To leave a strong legacy, I will...

- Call, text or write a note to each grandchild once per month
- Pray for each grandchild daily by name
- _____
- _____

SINGLE ADULTS: To be a good neighbor or friend, I will...

- Intentionally ask a friend how they are doing and specifically ask how you can pray for them.
- Creatively think of a way to serve a neighbor who might be lonely or in need.
- _____
- _____