

Diligence in the Home

A missing ingredient in the missing generation

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to answer the following two questions:

1. What has transpired in the home which has caused our children to forsake the Lord's Churches?
2. What can we change in the home to prevent this trend from continuing?

These questions, especially the second one, are important for every generation to answer, however the present state of the Missionary Baptist Churches in Indiana make them of the utmost importance.

The tone of this lesson is meant to be solution, not accusation oriented. We do not want to accentuate the failures of previous generations so as to justify our own failures, skirt responsibility, create discord, or worst of all, revel in their weaknesses. Rather, we must first analyze the cultural norms we inherited from them before we can effectively address the systemic issues which we presently face.

Before we discuss the home, we must acknowledge that all of the problems mankind faces begin in the heart (Jeremiah 17:9; Proverbs 4:23). Though this lesson will not specifically address the change to our hearts, *realize that if we are going to fix any problem, the change must begin there and work its way out* (Deuteronomy 6:1-9). Any change in the home which does not originate in the heart will either be a hypocritical one or one that won't last (Matthew 23:23-28).

Finally, before we can create and maintain a home which strives to diligently serve the Lord and disciple our children, we must understand why this is important. We will first seek to identify the worldview God's Word lays out for parenting and then move on to the main object of our lesson: correcting the spiritual apathy within the average Missionary Baptist home by re-creating an environment of diligence whose primary goal is to glorify God.

This is Possible

I am not hopelessly optimistic about the state of the Lord's churches. I know that God can remove our candlestick and call other people to carry on his cause. I do believe however, that God is longsuffering and has not cast us away.

I also know that the things I am advocating in this lesson are possible for us to do, because they have been done in the past. I would like to begin our lesson by proving that through our Baptist ancestors who -despite being persecuted, martyred, and subjected to merciless torture- still made disciples out of their children.

The other handout I have given you is a copy of the catechism a group of our Waldensian ancestors used to teach their children. Accompanying the questions are, from what I understand, actual answers that a child was able to give to these questions.

Food for thought: How would your child, or for that matter, you be able to answer these questions?

The Right Perspective

God reveals, in the narrative found in the first two chapters of I Samuel, the worldview Christian parents *must* possess before any serious attempt can be made to diligently disciple their children. These chapters contain two very different approaches to parenting. One is found in Hannah, the other in Eli the priest. Time will only allow us to look at the first of these accounts, though a lot can be learned about what NOT to do by looking at the latter.

As a reminder, Hannah begged God for a child (I Samuel 1:10-13), promised to commit her unborn son to the Lord's service for life (v. 11; also known as the Nazarite vow), and fully trusted God when she was promised an heir (v. 18&19). These things alone are worthy of our admiration, however pay special attention to how she responds after her son is born: *she willingly upholds her commitment by returning Samuel to the Lord's service (action) and joyfully worships God AFTER returning her child to the temple (attitude).* **How could this woman find joy from her barrenness when her obedience left her once again with a childless home?**

The first 10 verses of chapter two is famously known as Hannah's song and is taken from her prayer. I believe a close look at these verses explain how Hannah was able to joyfully commit her child back to the Lord.

¹*My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.* ²**There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.** ³*Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.* ⁴*The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.* ⁵*They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.* ⁶**The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.** ⁷**The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.** ⁸**He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He hath set the world upon them.** ⁹**He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.** ¹⁰**The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall He thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of His anointed.**

Seventeen times Hannah glorifies God in these ten verses. Remember, she does this immediately AFTER she offered her only son to God, knowing that she would only see him once a year (I Samuel 1:21). We are going to look at two main points found in her prayer which illustrate why she was willing to offer her son to the Lord's service and how she actually found joy in doing so.

Notice first why Hannah rejoiced. Not because of her son, but because of the Lord (v.1). It would be very easy for a woman who was barren to allow her newborn child to become the sole object of her gratefulness, unintentionally making him an idol. **Hannah does not primarily rejoice in the object of her prayer, but in the greatness of God for answering her prayer.** Before she offered her son, Hannah's own heart was fully surrendered -by faith- to bringing God glory. Thus she was already willing to use every part of her being (including everything she possessed) to bring glory to God.

This must be the case before parents can diligently disciple their children. If a parent does not surrender their own life to God's glory, they will be unwilling and unable to surrender their children to God for the same purpose.

Secondly, notice who she identifies as the author of all success and the ultimate judge of her actions (vs.3-10). No doubt many of her neighbors considered her behavior ludicrous. Maybe some of you even agree with them. *Hannah, however, fully believed that God would vindicate her decision as He alone is the rightful judge of our actions and that He would ultimately use her son for His glory if she faithfully honored her commitment (I Samuel 2:30).*

Remember, Hannah had no idea that her son, Samuel, would eventually replace Eli as priest in the temple, serve as the last judge of Israel, anoint the first king of Israel, announce God's removal of Saul from the throne, anoint David as king, and be called back from the dead to prophesy. But she did know God! And she knew that God's plans for her child -as great or as small as it might be in the eyes of the world- was sufficient consolation for an empty home and far more lasting than the earthly riches or accolades he could attain on his own.

As a parent, do you believe that? **Do you believe that a life of service to God FAR EXCEEDS ANY earthly accomplishments your children can attain?** Your answer, not verbally but actually, will dictate how diligent you will be in disciplining your children.

There are three possible responses to this important question. Below are the answers and my description of the typical attitudes, actions and long-term results of a home which answer the following ways.

1. **No!** Most professing Christians will never say this but do so with their actions. As a parent, they have established the tone of their household as one solely focused on worldly concerns. Sports, entertainment, hobbies, academics, work, college, and anything culturally acceptable dominate the home. God's ways are only an accessory on Sundays (if that) and the home is NOT a place where God's ways or Word reigns supreme. The highest expectation in the house is the absence of obvious immoralities (cursing, stealing, lying, etc.). The likelihood that a child raised in this home will be in church after they are

20 is low. The likelihood that they will be a relevant, spiritual, mature Christian by adulthood is very low.

2. **I believe that a life of service to God AND one striving for earthly achievements can co-exist.** This is the most common and acceptable response in the present Missionary Baptist culture. People who adopt this view rarely ever read the scriptures for what they actually say and instead insist on contextualizing them to fit our modern culture. This view avoids perceived extremes, satisfies our appetite for comfort and ease, and strangely allows us to sacrifice only things of little personal value in the name of serving God. It allows us to maintain the appearance of godliness, but simultaneously deprives us of any power with God or man. Those who are truly saved will periodically battle conviction from God's Spirit over their divided allegiance, but most of the time Satan, peer pressure, or their carnal nature wins out. This victory is often caused by shallow justifications within our own hearts which involve finding "worse offenders" OR by refusing to consider our obvious transgressions because they have become such mainstays in our lives. Though balance between these two extremes is constantly sought, it is NEVER attained as Jesus promised (Luke 16:13; Matthew 6:24-34). As the children grow, a *gradual* shift towards sports, extracurricular, academics, college prep, entertainment, peers, and hobbies begin; and less time is *available* for family, church, older adults (for mentoring), Bible study, personal evangelism, prayer, and meditation. Parents justify this gradual shift by blaming busyness or by simply ignoring it. Most of the time, morality is mistaken for holiness and the occasional emotional outbursts are substituted for a genuine and mature Spirit led life. The likelihood that a child raised in this home will be in church after they are 20 is about 50/50. The likelihood that they will be a relevant, spiritual, mature Christian by adulthood is low.

3. **Unequivocally Yes!** These faithful few believe that a life of service to God should permeate every aspect of life, must come at a personal cost to everyone in the home, and centers their home on a Biblical worldview. These homes typically involve parents who **understand** and **embrace** their specific role as laid out in the scriptures and who strive daily to **exemplify** the behavior they expect from their children. This does not mean that the home is perfect or meets certain standards as laid out by the "god of idealism" (as we know he can be a merciless god), however it does mean that these parent are **thoughtful** about the way they manage their home by seeking Godly advice (Titus 2:3-5; Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 11:14) , regularly **communicate** God's will for their home with each other and their children (Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 11:19), are governed by **moderation** in all things they and their children do (I Corinthians 6:12), actively **demonstrate** Godliness before preaching it (Proverbs 22:6; I Timothy 4:12), **prioritize** life **deliberately** and finally, expect **diligence** from themselves and from their children (Deuteronomy 6:7). These parents are unconcerned about how things might appear to our culture, but realize that a child who can fully utilize their gifts for God's glory will also be equipped to thrive in the demands of the natural world. The likelihood that a child raised in this home will be in church after they are 20 is highly probable. The likelihood that they will be a relevant, spiritual, mature Christian by adulthood is high.

Time will not allow us to look at the first two answers above, nor will we have time to evaluate each of the bold terms listed in the final response. Through the remainder of this lesson we are going to assume that you know what is right in the home, and we will focus on why we *must be diligent about doing it and what this diligence looks like*.

The Current Confusion

On more than one occasion, I have sat with an older brother who was grieved and confused as to why his children (or his children's generation) forsook the church for the ways of the world. These brothers recall a generation who was exposed to many spiritual services, faithfully attended Sunday school, were regulars at Bible studies, etc. and they can't figure out why their children forsook God and His church.

On a few of those occasions I have innocently asked questions which lead to the heart of this lesson. Yes, they were *exposed* to some of the right things, but how diligent were they indoctrinated in the ways of truth? One short example may help us better consider this question.

The most dedicated Missionary Baptist Churches meet for approximately 4-5 hours per week. During that period of time, singing, testimonies, prayer, teaching and preaching usually occur in what is sadly becoming a casual setting. The most attentive children probably pay close attention about 60% of the time, which means that the most attentive are having 2-2.5 hours per week of something religious poured into them from church.

One the other hand, let's consider how often an average 8th grade basketball team meets. When I was in school we had two hour practices Monday-Friday, except for game days. During game days, our preparation for the game, the game itself, and the postgame took no less than three hours, but it commonly took between four and five hours. This means that it isn't uncommon for 13 year old kids who play basketball to be 'formally' involved in this activity somewhere between 12-16 hours per week. This does not include the time spent talking with parents, coaches, friends and other family members about the game or practicing on one's own time (which is expected).

This activity not only took time but also required us to prepare physically for the game. Most parents -even ones which cannot provide the finer things in life- purchased expensive shoes, knee braces, socks, practice clothing, they re-arranged their schedules and traveled many miles to attend games and practices. Some even recorded games and re-watched it to improve their play. I am confident that the level of intensity used when I was younger as not diminished bur rather increased.

So why use this example? Because indirectly our children are being taught a lot about life through situations like this every week.

The first thing that a child is being taught is that as long as you come to church you are doing your job. The older men I spoke of above often assumed that attendance automatically translates into attentiveness. That is far from the truth. If you have a child or a grandchild which goes to

church with you, ask them to name any topic the preacher has talked about in the past month? If they are reasonably attentive, they might be able to recall a couple general topics, memorable verses, or the book of the Bible the pastor read from. It is very unlikely they will be able to do much more.

The problem is even deeper though. This question is built on something very misleading. Is simply remembering a topic/scripture the preacher discussed the “goal” of preaching? Of course not! James taught us that doers of the Word are those we need in church, not hearers only (James 1:22). But what if we aren’t even hearing? Scary thought isn’t it?

The more important questions we ought to ask our children and grandchildren might include:

1. What was the main idea(s) behind the sermon today?
2. What was God speaking to you while you were listening?
3. What specific people could you possibly help by using this sermon?
4. How did the sermon convict, instruct, exhort, or inspire you?
5. How can you apply the sermon?
6. What are examples in your life or the life of someone you have read about in the Bible which further demonstrate the truth in this sermon?

THAT IS DILIGENCE!

If a parent routinely asks these questions and accepts nothing less than detailed and penetrating responses, they are getting closer to diligence in the home. At first glance this may appear radical, however consider this: *if this level of diligence is being more encouraged for a game, rather than the things of God, which will our children believe is most important?*

This example and many others like it illustrate why our children leave church for other “more important” things. The actions of their parents, other adults, the American culture, and their peers, clearly place more importance on the carnal than the spiritual. A child indirectly learns that basketball is more important because they deliberately practice the things which are relevant to the game, are properly outfitted, regularly communicate about successes, failures, improvements; and finally, spend a significantly larger amount of “active time” devoting themselves to it. The whole time this is being encouraged by the parents.

I don’t believe this system is intentionally developed by parents, however we must understand that this is how it is perceived by the mind of a child. This usually happens because parents immediately assume that the cultural norms we have established are good and they don’t think through what message is being communicated to their children.

The remainder of this lesson will focus on how we can change the message we are sending our children by being diligent in our homes.

Also, notice that the remainder of this lesson contains things which are completely within the parent's control. This is especially true for the men of the home who are responsible for being the leader (Ephesians 5:23). In a culture that makes an excuse for everyone and everything, we must accept the responsibility for what takes place in our home and actively seek to implement the things listed below.

The Foundation of Diligence

It would be very easy for us to overlook some simple, yet profoundly impactful qualities which are required *before* we can be diligent in the home. It is safe to say that without these qualities one cannot be diligent, however, the presence of these qualities do not mean we are being diligent. The first is being present in the home.

Being Present

*“^dNow these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: ²That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. ³Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. ⁴Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: ⁵And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. ⁶And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: ⁷**And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. ⁸And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. ⁹And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”***

This familiar text is found in Deuteronomy 6 and is one of the most explicit texts about parenting found in the entire Bible. We will look at this text with greater depth later in the lesson however I want to begin by paying close attention to an implication found in verse 7 of the text. How often are the parents with their children? Almost all of the time! How can we even begin to talk about being diligent with our children if we are not present?

Though this could easily be taken to an extreme, the text seems very clear that parents are commanded to spend a considerable amount of time with their children. In our American culture today, and unfortunately in many Missionary Baptist Homes, this is far from the reality. It is not uncommon for children to be placed in the hands of educational institutions, daycares, grandparents, coaches, and other adults for the MAJORITY of their lives. This could obviously offend a lot of people, however take just a few minutes and objectively consider the reality of the situation in your home.

There are 168 hours in one week. Let's assume your child spends at least 56 hours per week (or 8 hours per day) sleeping. Let's also assume that certain menial tasks like getting prepared for

school, riding the bus, and where, though you might be present with them, there is no real engagement going on, take 12 hours per week. That leaves 100 hours per week available.

Below is a chart which illustrates what I believe to be an average American family's schedule.

Location	Hours per week (on average)
School	36 hours/
Extracurricular activities	12 hours/
Daycare	4 hours/
Friends' Houses	2 hours/
Grandparents	4 hours/
Miscellaneous	6 hours/

(Assignment: When you get home, sit down with your spouse and write out the actual numbers for your home on the other side of the numbers listed above. If things need to change in your home, you must first begin by honestly acknowledging the problem.)

If the schedule above is even close to the schedule of the average family, this means that nearly 2/3^{rds} of our children's time is not even spent with us. The remaining time is further divided by entertainment, church, "down time", traveling, hobbies, and hundreds of other possibilities.

How can a person begin to be diligent in the home when they are not spending much time with their children? The simple answer is they can't! Spending time with your children is a prerequisite to being diligent in your home.

Being Engaged

You may look at the chart above and feel as though you spend a larger amount of time with your children than that. That is a good start. But let's consider another prerequisite to being diligent in the home: Engagement! In Deuteronomy 6, God instructs Israel to be present, but also to *actively teach* them when we are present. It is impossible to teach them without being engaged.

Over the last 10 years there has been a steep decline in parent/child engagement because of technology. This single temptation is robbing children of hundreds of hours per year and most of the time parents are aware of it, but not the magnitude of it. Whether it is putting children to bed as early as possible to get on our phones, scrolling through Facebook during every pause in life, checking the score of the game, looking at the latest news coverage, conversing with friends through text messages, posting pictures to Instagram, playing games, checking twitter, looking at

your bank account, snapchatting, etc. Parents may be with their children, but this single temptation prevents the parent and child from having any meaningful engagements.

We must realize that every minute we give to technology, is one minute we are not engaging with our children. That isn't to say that we can't ever use technology, but we must be aware that when we do, we are not engaged with our children, no matter how close in proximity we are to them.

The central idea of engaging with your child is that nothing comes between the interactions you are having with them. This doesn't mean that you aren't doing anything together, but merely means that the things you are doing are tools which cultivate your interaction, not distract from it. For example, when a young girl helps her mom cook dinner if the mom is constantly annoyed or agitated during this interaction then the child is going to quickly realize that the process of cooking is coming in between their interaction. Or in other words, there is no engagement.

However, if the mom patiently explains why certain things are done, asks the girl questions, allows the girl to participate in the process, takes extra time to cook the meal, and doesn't rush things to finish, then the child inherently know that the central purpose of the task was engagement. A number of other examples could no doubt apply.

Also, be careful not to assume that working together immediately translates into engagement. An easy way to tell whether the task included engagement is to ask your child when the last time you spent time with them was. This question allows them to define engagement, which is more of what you want. Furthermore, younger children are generally eager to engage with their parents. If they are continuously asking to do a certain task, that probably means they felt like you engaged with them during that task. When we get to helpful hints at the end of this lesson, we will include certain practical tips about how to develop those situations.

Being an Example

There is one more thing that needs to be understood before we talk about the qualities which make up diligence. We must understand that we are talking about teaching our children the ways of God, diligently. Diligence, of itself, is an important quality to have in almost every area of life. What we are focused on in this lesson is doing the Godly things which we know are right, diligently.

We cannot expect our children to be diligent about the things of God unless we ourselves mirror the actions, attitudes and virtues we expect them to be diligent about. One common mistake that parents make is expecting their child to perform a "religious task" and a closer look shows they rarely, if ever, demonstrate the same task in front of their child diligently and they rarely raise their expectations as their children grow.

For example, many children are taught at a young age to memorize Bible verses. They commonly get up in front of the church, family members, or at Christmas programs and recite these verses. As a child enters into their teenage years, they generally stop doing those things because they seem "childish". Why do they seem childish? I think the answer is two-fold. First, memorizing and repeating scriptures has become a performance rather than a tool and resource

God desires us to draw strength from, use in personal evangelism, and use to teach others.

Secondly, neither parent displays or prioritizes memorizing scriptures in their own life implying that other things are far more important and only children should do such a “cute” activity.

Another common activity is having Bible studies in the home. When a couple only has one child and they are young, they generally use a “kid’s Bible” and tailor each story to the child’s understanding. That is exactly what should be done. But what happens when child number two comes along and now we have kids at two different levels of understanding? Most of the time parents continue to tailor their lessons to the youngest child so that he or she can understand it.

In the meantime, the older children begin to learn that “Bible stories” are for little kids and have less importance as a child gets older. Dad and mom rarely, if ever, direct a story at themselves or express any genuine novelty in the material. This gives the perception to children that the Bible is not as applicable the older you get and that we can “grow out” of its importance.

The last example is that of prayer. Again, it is necessary when children are young for parents to teach them how to pray. This begins with teaching them to fold their hands, bow their heads, and repeat certain things that mom and dad say. As time progresses and a child gains the ability to utter prayers on their own, a parent must begin to demonstrate the humble way we must approach God and the power that exists in prayer. Unfortunately, the trend is that parents never progressively reveal the true nature of prayer to a child but always allow the bare minimum display of prayerfulness to suffice.

Let’s pause for a moment and rewind to the older man I spoke about earlier who can’t understand why his children left church. He only remembers the public exhortations from the pastor to, “Study to shew thyself approved...” and neglects to remember all the opportunities *he* missed to impress the importance of Bible studies in the home where kids will interpret the activity to be more genuine and applicable. Again, unintentionally we are teaching our children a lesson which end up doing the opposite of what we intend.

Now we all know that memorizing scriptures, Bible studies, and prayer are things which must be done. However, the main question we are trying to ask is whether these tasks are done diligently and patterned in the home in a manner where the children will be impacted by them. I think we can see that if a parent is not displaying these actions in a genuine setting then a kid will actually take away the opposite lesson they are trying to instill. After this lesson, thoughtfully reflect and discuss with your spouse how your home presently carries out the above listed examples and what your actions are communicating to your children.

Defining Diligence

Everything we have discussed up this point, only gives us the proper foundation to be diligent in the home. Like most things in life, the strength of a structure is largely dependent upon the foundation it is built upon. We will now move on to what is required to diligently teach our children the ways of God in the home.

To begin, take a few moments and look at the chart on the following page. All of these qualities are different aspects of diligence.

Deliberate	Invested	Detailed	Observant
Thorough	Researched	Valuable	Not Competitive
Repetitious	Corrective	Forgiving	Responsive

We are specifically looking at how we can diligently teach our children the commandments of God (Deuteronomy 6), and how that might prevent them from forsaking the Lord's church.

Though we would like to look at each of the qualities listed above, we will only have time to focus on a few of the most vital ones which comprise diligence. I hope on your own time you will consider the importance of each of these qualities and whether they exist in your home. We are going to assume that you know the definition of each of these qualities and intend on explaining how they can be done with the intentions of creating Christian diligence in the Home.

Valuable

While preparing to preach the gospel, I can still hear the advice of my father who often said, "You must first care about what you are preaching before you expect the people to care about what you are preaching." This harmonizes with what Jesus said in Matthew 6:45 when he said, "...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth [and actions] speaketh." Very often, parishioners can discern whether a preacher values his own instruction by how prepared he is in giving it, how repetitiously he says it, the passion with which he presents it, and most important, how he personally applies it. If they sense that he does not value the instruction he is giving, they are unlikely to follow it. Our children are no different.

Younger children may not be able to interpret body language, tone, or inconsistencies between our actions and words, however as they get older, they can easily discern the things we value by what we do, and sometimes more importantly, what we don't do. When a parent fails to govern their home in a way which is consistent with the principles their children are learning at church, and instead adopt the values of the surrounding culture, the child will conclude that the things at church are unimportant at best.

Worst of all, if the things which are advocated at church, and heartily agreed upon by parents within that setting, are never practiced at home, or are even mocked in "real life" situations, the child will not only conclude that these topics are unimportant but are blatant lies meant to satisfy religious traditions. I have been aware of many incidents where this happened, and even received advice which is blatantly opposite of the scriptures teaching because the situation just seemed "too difficult" for the Bible's counsel to work.

If we truly believe that, "...God's ways are higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:9)," and that He alone, "...giveth wisdom: and out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:6)," then we must display the value of His ways by practicing them in all circumstances. A

failure to do so will only defame the character of God and discourage our children from ever diligently following Him.

Deliberate

All of the struggles of marriage exist because two *sinner*s are trying to become one holy vessel which God can use to transmit His teachings to the next generation. Both sinners have their own preferences, desires, wills, emotions, priorities and more. This alone demonstrates the need for parents to regularly communicate about the way they will disciple their children. Most parents don't do this for two reasons.

First, it seems implied, "We both love God, are members of His church, and faithfully try to uphold His commandments, therefore, of course we want to disciple our children." The problem with this approach is it leaves out the vital details of discipleship which cause the instruction to be impactful in the first place. When parents assume they will both disciple their children, this approach lacks the specific time or place for discipleship, level of intensity both parents think are appropriate, specific methods which both intend to use, age appropriate goals, the opportunity to change when certain methods aren't working, and a time to celebrate when they are working.

All of those things are important for the process to be effective.

Secondly, it can be convicting. Discussing our own failures in parenting often cut to the core of a person's self-esteem because they know the responsibility completely falls upon them. The conviction is magnified when we talk to our spouse because we can't hide from the reality of what goes on in our home like we can when we discuss it with other people. In short, it forces us to either change or plead guilty as charged.

Ideally, the man of the home should initiate discussions regularly which focus on one child at a time. These discussions shouldn't be emotionally charged or brought up out of frustration, but when the parents can be as honest and objective as possible. The discussion should include the positives and negatives about their children's attitudes, actions, and how effective they perceive the methods are working. The next ingredient will show us that doing these things repeatedly is a necessary component in being diligent and knowingly hurt our children.

Repetitious

The word "diligently" as stated in Deuteronomy 6:7 means to whet or sharpen an object. In this verse, the emphasis is placed on the regularity of your teaching rather than the force of it. When you sharpen any object, the key is to apply firm pressure repetitiously. If you try to speed up the process by being more forceful, you will not only fail to sharpen the knife but probably injure yourself in the process. This is also true of making disciples of our children. Since our children are not inanimate objects, forceful and abrupt repetition will damage both us and them, and will fail to make them disciples of Christ.

This repetition should occur in two settings: in the milieu (in the middle of life), as well as in an environment specifically designed for discipleship. In the milieu shows children that the Word of God, prayer, meditation, etc. have value in everyday situations. This is what Deuteronomy 6:7 teaches when it says, "*And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk*

of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” Those are not meant to identify literal places we need to teach our children, but rather emphasize that Godly instruction should take place throughout the child’s daily routine. The power of teaching God’s commandments in the milieu is that it usually brings to life the principles taught at church, home, or in other formal settings. This means that a parent must be observant to their child’s behavior and environment so they can seize on the teachable moments. This may temporarily disrupt a particular social interaction, however the benefits to our children could be life-long.

The other setting where repetition is desperately needed is in specific interactions solely set aside for Godly instruction. This repetition communicates the importance of the activity because generally we only plan things we find valuable. This is difficult because if we do it faithfully, we will have times when other activities conflict with our scheduled time to teach our children. A powerful message can be sent to our children about the importance of such an interaction when they see both mom and dad prioritize their instruction over other desirable activities. It would be unfair and simply wrong to force our children to turn off a movie, put down a toy, leave a neighbors house for Godly instruction, if they don’t also see us abandon pleasurable activities for this sacred time. If a child is receiving instruction in both environments then they are learning the value and relevance of the instruction.

In summary, there is no substitute for consistently teaching your children. We live in a transient and ever-changing culture which has “new” life-changing solutions every few years for almost every area of life. Unfortunately, it gives the illusion that there is a shortcut or easy method for doing anything in life. That is not the case with making disciples of our children. We must accept that these qualities, and the others listed above, are essential to being diligent in the home.

Implementing Diligence

As we come to the end of the lesson, we cannot stress the importance of applying these truths to our homes. If we do these things, I believe that we will see a radical transformation in our churches. Not only will our children attend church, but I firmly believe that it gives them the best odds to become strong, mature Christians who God can depend on to carry out His work.

Do not make the mistake so many young, inspired Christians do after being stirred by the truth. They walk out the door and commit to something they cannot uphold. Be as Jesus instructed, “...sit down and count the cost (Luke 14:28).” In the context of those verses Jesus is saying that following Him will require a man to lose his own life. Realize that it takes two people dying to themselves, to raise one child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).*” Could there be any better tasting fruit to parents than to see their children faithfully walking in the truth? It is my sincere prayer that you will count the cost, ask God to incline your hearts toward making the necessary sacrifice, and willingly implement the things contained in this lesson.

Conclusion

Why are the majority of Missionary Baptist Churches losing young people and how does the home play a role in preventing this trend from continuing? I believe that a part of the answer lies in the diligence of parents. The cultural norm which pervade our churches was one that mirrored the American culture and failed to deliberately prioritize Godliness over carnal gain. Well intentioned people trying to provide their children with a culturally acceptable childhood unintentionally neglected some of the key ingredients in a Godly home, chiefly that of diligence.

This lesson has explored many of those ingredients which cannot be neglected for another generation or else the fate of our churches will no doubt be one contained in history books. It has furthered detailed some observations and tips for including these ingredients in your home.

My prayer is that God would restore our churches with mature, God pleasing young people, and the instrument He would use to produce these children would be your home!

Practical Tips

On the next page is a list of recommendations which may help you disciple your children. These are practical tips for bringing more diligence to your home. There are many more you could research on your own, however here are a few to get you thinking about it. Below the recommendations are a list of books and resources you might check out which further discuss this topic.

<p>Prayer (ages 0-5) - Establish a nightly routine of praying for friends and family members before a child goes to bed. Try to focus on the spiritual rather than just the natural things.</p>	<p>Bible Studies (ages 2-5) - Establish weekly expectations for Bible study at home. This should include the whole family and should be directed towards familiarizing the child with Bible stories. Forming a proper mental construct for God is the most important thing you can do at this age.</p>
<p>Prayer (age 4-7) - As the child is learning to read and write, keep a prayer journal next to their bed. This will help them read, but will also let them look back at people who needed prayer and allow the parent to show the child when God answered prayer.</p>	<p>Bible Studies (age 3-8) - Review, review, review. A child at this age is beginning to develop enough cognitively to remember stories. This is also the time when you can begin to use Biblical instruction in the milieu. The patterns for the rest of their lives are being established now. Be very conscious of that.</p>
<p>Prayer (age 3 and up) - Teach the child to pray in public. It may require repeating your prayer but help them become more comfortable in that setting. It could be useful later in life.</p>	<p>Bible Studies (age 2-5) - Try to stretch your child's tolerance for Bible Study by slowly lengthening it over time. When a child is 2 it may be 14-18 minutes. At age 3, try it for 20-23 minutes, etc. It may differ from day to day but be thoughtful about it. Don't allow their</p>

	temperament to always dictate the length of your lesson.
Prayer (all ages) - Allow the child to be present when both parents are truly calling out to God in heart-rending prayer. Young children may wander around the room seemingly not paying attention, however realize they are taking in its importance. They will eventually ask why you cry, rejoice, etc. It can be a wonderful teaching moment for parents.	Memorizing Scriptures (age 2 and up) - Set family goals. Each month try and memorize 20 verses as a group. Take it serious and have the children memorize ones which are ones you want to know. When you achieve your goal let there be a reward for doing so. Progressively raise the number with more children and with age. Dividing it by topic is always helpful and will be much more useful when they get older.
Character Building (3 and up) - Apologize for mistakes and ask your children to forgive you. If you have sinned in front of you children against someone else, allow them to see you apologize or tell them that you did.	Bible Study (age 2 and up) - Role play, crafts, and other supplementary material is important. There are plenty of websites which can help you find interactive lessons. The key is not to wing it, but plan lessons according to your child's ability.
Memorizing Scriptures (age 2-5) - Fill in the blank to help them learn verses. Start out by saying something like, "The Lord is my _____ I shall not _____." Eventually make them fill in more and more scriptures until they have completely memorized it.	After Church (age 7 and up) - As you drive home from church, take turns explaining what parts of the sermon was impactful. This is a good time to apologize if you are guilty of sins which were mentioned or show vulnerability to the Lord by acknowledging how much the sermon impacted you.
Routine (all ages) - By this point routines should be established. If you have not established them, apologize to your family and tell them that God has convicted you that things need to change. Start small and slowly change your routines to accomplish some of the things mentioned above.	Bible Study (age 6 and up) - Your kids are intelligent and are becoming more aware of the world around them every day. Most likely, at some point in this age they will be lost. This is the time when it is important to teach them about the gospel and the plan of salvation. Go to mysalvationexperience.com and let them hear various testimonies. Assure them that God loves them and wants to save them.
Bible Study (Age 12 and up) - Begin asking your children to teach a lesson to	Prayer (post-salvation) - Tell your child of a real, yet age-appropriate struggle you might be having

<p>the family once a month. They should choose the topic themselves and initially, you will probably have to help them develop their thoughts. This is when they need to learn how to teach lessons to their future homes.</p> <p>Especially young men, MUST be taught how to do this.</p>	<p>and ask them to pray for you.</p>
<p>Routine (all ages) - Allow your Saturday evenings to become the start to your Sundays. Lay out your clothes ahead of time, turn all electronic devices off, and begin calming the home at some point in the early evening. During this downtime, require children to read their Bibles, other religious books, pray, talk about spiritual things, etc. This will help the Sunday Morning to be less hectic and will soften their hearts to what happens the next day.</p>	<p>Discipline (all ages) - When you correct your children explain why it is sinful and use Biblical examples and scriptures when it applies. If you act as though the scriptures is irrelevant than it will be, but if you reprove with applicable scriptures regularly then it will be a regular part of discipline.</p>
<p>Singing (all ages) - Learn new songs as a family and if possible, learn to play instruments along with it.</p>	<p>Family Worship (all ages) - Don't forget that God desires to be worshipped. Spend time together talking about the goodness of God toward you and don't forget to emphasize his general greatness apart from how it directly relates to you.</p>
<p>Reading (age 6 and up) - Find age appropriate Christian books which cover all sorts of topics. Books about missionaries, Christian doctors, people who suffered as Christians, biographies, theology, history, science, literature, poetry, songwriters, etc. Furthermore, allow them to see you reading some of those same books. Then discuss it as a family.</p>	<p>Evangelism (post-salvation) - Role play opportunities to evangelize. Create situations which require kids to respond to combative people, misinformed people, sincere people, people who desire to be saved, etc. Expect them to rely on more than just their testimony of salvation. Require scriptures and sound biblical logic.</p>

Giving (age 2 and up) – Set up a system where your children can earn money and divide their allowance in three mason jars. One jar is for them to spend, the other to save, the other to give. Then, present them with options to give their money for the spread of the gospel, feeding the hungry, helping the sick, etc. Let them choose. This can be very useful in identifying their interests and gifts. It shows where their heart is.

Sit toward the front at church (age 5 and up) – After your child learns to be quiet in church, don't continue to sit in the back. Do we ever want a back row seat at anything we value? Sports, entertainment, concerts, and almost any other activity we want the best seat in the house. There are less distractions in the front and will help your child to pay attention. .

Recommended Resources

- *Christian Living in the Home*, Jay Adams
- *Shooting for the Mark*, James Keen
- *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, Ted Tripp
- *Future Men*, Douglas Wilson
- *Teach them Diligently*, Lou Priolo
- *Bringing up Boys*, James C. Dobson
- *Bringing up Girls*, James C. Dobson
- *Family Driven Faith*, Voddie Baucham