

ONE SIZE DOESN'T DISCIPLE ALL

developing a family ministry
coaching strategy



LAYING A STRONG FOUNDATION

the starting point of a
healthy coaching strategy

Maximum Impact: Discipling the Disciplers

- We **cannot** and we **should not** be the **primary disciplers** of children and students
 - Our calling is to **partner with the home**
- One of the greatest ways we can disciple children and students is by **discipling their primary disciplers**—their parents

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Maximum Impact: Discipling the Disciplers

- The church gets at most **4 hr/week** (some report the average to be **1.8 hr/month**)
- Parents can get **48 hr/week**



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A Basic Discipling the Disciplers Strategy

- Provide **large group trainings**
 - What is family discipleship?
 - What is family discipleship's goal?
 - How do you engage in family discipleship?
- Provide **effective resources**
- This is a **critical triage** step: It's time and resource efficient

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THE LIMIT OF A SIMPLE STRATEGY

why large group trainings and
generic resources have limits

A Lesson from Axe Throwing



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Every Family Is Unique

- The **composition** of the family
 - Nuclear family, single parent, blended, # of children, etc.
- The **culture** of the family
 - Laid back, busy, education, serious, fun, etc.
- The **context** of the family
 - Socio-economics, place of origin, place of residence, etc.

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Every Family Is Unique

- The **challenges** of the family
 - Of the parents, of the kids, etc.
- The **Christlikeness** of the family
 - Salvation, sanctification, etc.

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Single Solutions Aren't as Effective

- It's like driving a **golf ball** through a **chain link fence**
 - It will **pass through at times**, but many times it will not
- Consider the variety of family discipleship **books**
 - Books focused on theory and theology
 - Books focused on practical tools (e.g. devotions)
- **Cultivate** a library and **know the contexts** each resource might work best in

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The Sweet Spot: One-on-One Coaching

- One-on-one coaching allows for **customization**
- Yes, it is **time-consuming**
- Yes, it requires significantly **more preparation and investment**
- But doing that heavy lifting now, might **pay off** for generations to come

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THE COACHES

developing a
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Developing a Team of Coaches

- Except for in a **very small church** (and probably not even then), the primary ministry leader **cannot coach all the parents**
- **Options**
 - Other **staff**
 - Ministry team **leaders**
 - **Empty nesters**
 - **Mature parents**

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Developing a Team of Coaches

- What to **look for**
 - **Experience**
 - Right **temperament**: patient encouragers
 - **Humble honesty**: there is no perfect parent
 - **Committed**: for at least one year

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A One-Year Practicum

- Coaches and parents **meet once a month**
- Start with your **current parents**
 - **All** at once (if the numbers are right)
 - In **waves** (prioritize potential future coaches in first waves)
- **Longer-term**
 - New parents who **join** the church
 - Those who **become parents** (prerequisite for child dedication?)

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At Each Monthly Meeting

- Review how the **parent is doing** in family discipleship
- Cover the **new content**, being sure to share **helpful resources**
- Wrap-up with a few **standard questions** such as:
 - “Thinking about what we just covered, what do you agree with? What do you disagree with?”
 - “What concerns or frustrations do you have?”
 - “What frightens you? What excites you?”
 - “How can we help you more?”

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THE RESOURCES

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Resources Needed

- **Leader training** workshop/video training
- Monthly **scripts/outlines**
- Family discipleship **library**
 - Books, websites, brochures, etc.
- Counseling and therapy **references**

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THE SCHEDULE

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Month 1

Relationship Building and Overview

- Get to **know one another**
- Provide an **overview** of what you will be covering.
- Affirm that the parent is entering a **safe space** where you each will be honest and any questions and concerns are welcome.
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to **focus on building a relationship** with their **child**.

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Month 2

Family Prayer

- Convey to the parent that prayer is often the **best place to begin** the journey of family discipleship.
- Give tips and strategies for **how to pray** as a family.
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to **begin praying** with their child on a regular basis.

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Month 3

How to Share the Gospel

- Teach the parent **how to share the gospel** with a child.
- Offer tips for sharing with children of **different ages**.
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to **share the gospel** with their child.

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Month 4

The Why of Family Discipleship

- Walk through the **biblical case** for family discipleship.
- Hit on the **key passages** in Scripture (e.g., Deut. 6; Ps. 78; Eph. 6), being sure to emphasize **God's heart** for family discipleship.
- Position this less as what parents must do, and more as what **parents get to do**.
- Convey the **blessing** it is for a parent to point their child to Jesus.
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to **prioritize their own spiritual growth**.

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Month 5

The Goal of Family Discipleship

- Clarify the **goal** of family discipleship.
- It's not just a kid **learning about** Jesus. It's not even just a kid **trusting in Jesus** and **loving Jesus**. It's all those things *and* a kid **living like Jesus**.
 - Our goal is to make **Christ followers**, not just **Christ knowers**.
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to **look for ways their kid looks like Jesus** and to praise it when they see it.

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Month 6

The Church and Home Partnership

- Explain how the church and home **ideally should work together** to disciple a child.
- Be sure to clarify that the **home is the center**, with the church supporting it.
- Share what your **church does** to support family discipleship.
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to consider their **involvement in both arenas**.

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Month 7

Ages and Stages

- Provide an overview of the **different ages and stages** of childhood that the parent will experience.
- Be sure to connect each stage to what the child is capable of knowing and doing, and **how to disciple** in age-appropriate ways.
- Talk about **generational differences** (e.g., Gen Alpha).
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to **learn more about where their child is**.

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Month 8

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

- Talk about what **baptism and the Lord's supper are**, the church's beliefs concerning both, and how the parent can explain each in the home.
- Be sure to share the **process of being baptized** in the church.
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to **talk about baptism and the Lord's Supper** with their child.

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Month 9

Family Worship

- Give **tips and strategies** for how to have a regular time of family worship.
- Offer tips of how to **expand** that worship time.
- Share **resources** to help them.
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to have a **5-minute family worship** once a week, or, if they are already doing family worship, how to **improve** it or **expand** it.

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Month 10

Family Conversations

- Explain how the **sweet spot** of family discipleship is the as-you-are-going conversations with a child.
- Give tips on how to **weave faith into everyday living**.
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to look have at least **one spontaneous conversation** about Jesus each week.

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Month 11

Family Missions

- Cast **vision** for how a family can serve Christ together on mission—locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Share any **missions opportunities** through your church, or in the community.
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to do **one missional activity** in the next month.

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Month 12

Difficult Conversations

- Provide **tips and guidance** for how to navigate difficult conversations and how to respond to the challenging questions a child might ask.
 - E.g., pornography, death, war, truthfulness of Christianity
- ACTION: Encourage the parent to let their child know that **any questions or concerns** they have are welcome.

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EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS

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How to Measure “Success”

- Deeper **understanding** of family discipleship by parents
- Healthier **disposition** of parents
- Better **practices** of family discipleship by parents
- Kids and students **maturing** in their faith
- **Relationships** formed between parents and coaches
- “Graduates” becoming **coaches**

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FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

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Not all Ministries are One-Size-Fits-All

- You know your **ministry** and your **context**
- Let this idea prompt you to **adapt** or inspire you to **create** your own
 - Different **duration**
 - Different **topics**
 - Different **objectives** at each meeting
- What matters most is that we are **partnering with families to fuel family discipleship**

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