



---

# A DISCIPLE-MAKING PARENT

---

**CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA**

## **Texts**

### **1 Timothy 3:4-5:**

<sup>4</sup> One who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence <sup>5</sup> (For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?).

## **Introduction**

As Jesus addressed His disciples, He gave them their marching orders:

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. Matthew 28:19-20*

Those marching orders were not only for Jesus' disciples then; they are also our marching orders today.

Many of us have taken Jesus' Gospel Commission to heart and have been doing all we can to bring God's message of salvation to people, and bringing them to the foot of the cross.

At the same time, sometimes we are so involved in working for the salvation of others that we tend to forget and neglect the salvation of those closest to us – our children.

In a very succinct way, Ellen G. White writes that, "Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home..." and then she asserts in a very emphatic

way, “There is no missionary field more important than this” (White, *The Adventist Home*, p.53)

The work of pastors, teachers, evangelists, or missionaries is extremely important and has yielded marvellous results, but the work that each of us get to do in our homes is crucial to the salvation of our children.

We all have been sent to the world to make disciples for Jesus. What we sometimes forget is that our children also need to be disciples of Jesus. And we, their parents, are the disciple-makers of our children.

Even in Moses’ day God taught the Israelites about the crucial role disciple-makers parents play in the life of their children. Through Moses, God instructed the Hebrews on the way to the Promised Land.

*And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:6-9.*

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul wrote to young pastor Timothy about the role of parenting among those who are in leadership positions as “one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence” (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

In the Old Testament we read of Eli the Priest who was disqualified from leadership because he did not restrain his children from doing wrong (1 Samuel 3:12-13).

So we need to ask ourselves, what kind of parents are we? One who is permissive? Who allows their children to do anything, go anywhere, without any kind of restraint or guidance?

Or are we the type of parents who, with God's help and His wisdom, guide and lead our children to be followers of Jesus?

Are we disciple-making parents?

Some parents are...

## **I. Lifeguard parents – the type that often rescue their child from the consequences of their actions.**

None of us like to see our children suffer, even if it is as a result of their own choices, their own decisions, their own actions.

And yet, letting them experience failure, letting them experience the consequences of their own decisions may be the best lessons for the rest of their life.

One of the those things we need to teach and remind our children of regularly is what Paul said,

*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. Galatians 6:7*

Other parents are...

## **II. Ocean-wave parents – coming and going, inconsistent**

Children need the consistency and security of a healthy home. If you tell them they can't do something one day and the next day you allow it, they won't know what to expect from day to day.

Two verse in the book of Proverbs remind us of the importance of the fair guidance and correction children crave from their parents:



*The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. Correct your son, and he will give you rest; Yes, he will give delight to your soul. Proverbs 28:15, 17*

Your children need the correction, discipline, and guidance from their parents if they will become disciples of Jesus.

By the way, correction and discipline must never become punishment and abuse.

In fact, the word discipline comes from the same root as disciple. The goal of discipline is not to break a child's will and force them to submit. Rather, the goal of discipline is to guide them to become disciples. Jesus led His disciples gently, wisely, and patiently; not angrily, impatiently, or abusively.

Keep in mind that discipline is not something you *do to* your child, but something you *do for* your child.

The author of Proverbs writes,

*Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death. Proverbs 19:18, ESV*

Discipline, loving discipline, is one of the best things a parent can do for their children. Or as a motivational speaker Zig Ziglar said,

*The child who has not been disciplined with love by his little world will be disciplined, generally without love, by the big world.*

Other parents are...

### III. Railroad track parents

While these parents may have the same goals and desires in mind, they work separately, without consulting with each other as to the best way to lead, guide, teach, or discipline their children.

Like railroad tracks, they live parallel lives, going in the same direction, but not working in unity as they try to disciple their children. Of these types of parents the prophet Amos asks the question, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3)

## Disciple-Making

The best example of disciple-making found in the New Testament is that set by Jesus Himself.

As Jesus began His messianic ministry, He surrounded Himself with a group of men whom He would train to be His disciples.

As Jesus preached His first public message, the first sermon delivered to the multitude gathered on the slope of a hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee, Jesus began to set the stage for His instructions for those who wished to follow Him.

In most cultures today when a teacher delivers their instructions to their students they stand up, but in Jesus’ time Jewish teachers would sit to expound the Scriptures, often with disciples sitting at their feet.

For many, the *Sermon on the Mount* was Jesus’ manual for beginner or “rookie” disciples.

While describing the scene, Ellen White writes that:

*The time had come for the disciples who had been more closely associated with Christ to unite more directly in His work, that these vast throngs might not be left uncared for, as sheep without a shepherd...A great work was yet to be accomplished for these disciples before they would be prepared for the sacred trust that would be theirs when Jesus should ascend to heaven...Jesus saw in them those whom He could train and discipline for His great work.*

A look at the methods Jesus used reveals several important aspects:

1. First of all, *Jesus gathered the disciples around Him*. Jesus used a small, intimate group.

While we read of several large gatherings, some as large as five thousand people, His work of disciple-making was done with a small group of twelve and later seventy (Matthew 10:1 ff, Luke 10:1 ff).

That is why in our home, with our family, surrounded by our children, our work as disciple-makers is most effective.

2. *Jesus spent time with them*. During three and a half years Jesus and His disciples travelled, ate, slept, worked and rested together.

Except for the times when they were sent on mission journeys (Matthew 10:5), or other errands (Matthew 21:2), the disciples were with Jesus constantly. Ellen White points out that this time together was no coincidence but rather very much part of Jesus' training program for His disciples.

Disciple-making parents spend both quality and quantity time with their children. One cannot be a good disciple-maker unless one invests time in the life of their disciples.

3. In addition, *Jesus taught and trained them*. This teaching and training was done at times privately, like the time the disciples came to the house where Jesus was staying and asked Him to explain to them the parable of the tares of the field (Matthew 13), or when they could not cast a demon out of a child suffering from epileptic seizures (Matthew 17:14-21)

At other times Jesus' teaching and training of the disciples was done while addressing a larger group (Matthew 5, 13, 15).



There were times when Jesus even had to teach them by settling some disputes and questions among the disciples (Matt 18; Luke 9:46, 22:24).

Disciple-making parents must keep in mind that we are always teaching our children. Our daily interactions with others, how we spend our time, what we do and say, everything is teaching them. Our children are watching us, listening to us, learning from us.

4. *Jesus paired them with a mentor.* When Jesus sent seventy other disciples on their first missionary journey (Luke 10:1 ff), they were not haphazardly matched, but rather carefully selected for the benefit of the younger, less mature ones.

Ellen G. White writes that usually an older, more experienced man was paired with a younger man, and while they did not live together, as a Rabbi and his disciples might, they often met for prayer and counsel.

As a result both were strengthened in the faith.

In her book *Evangelism*, Ellen G. white shows how Jesus practiced the mentoring method among his own disciples by pairing Peter, whose temperament was impulsive and zealous, with John, the beloved disciple, who was milder in character (Luke 22:8; John 20:1-6; Acts 3:1, 4:13, 8:14).

The result was that the shortcomings of one were partially covered by the strengths and virtues of the other.

As disciple-making parents, we can also pair our children of different temperaments for the benefit of both.

5. *He sent them to work for others.* For Jesus, disciples are co-labourers with Him, so while the other aspects of disciple-making are important, His commission to His disciples is to “go and make [other or more] disciples” (Matthew 28:18-20).

Ellen G. White explains that Jesus, when He sent the Twelve and later the seventy, was training them for the individual labour which would multiply in numbers and reach to the far corners of the earth.

It was crucial for them to learn that they “held in trust for the world the glad tidings of salvation”.

Disciple-making parents are preparing their children for future ministry, regardless of what career path they choose to take.

6. One final step in Jesus’ training of His disciples was that He left them with the assurance that after *He was gone, He would send them the Holy Spirit* (Luke 12:12; John 14:26; Acts 1:8) to be with them and thus they would continue to grow spiritually and in numbers.

Again, Ellen G. White speaks of this transition from Jesus to the Holy Spirit when she writes that Jesus prepared His disciples for the reception of the Holy Spirit by leading them to feel their need of Him, and it was under the Spirit’s teaching that they received the final qualification for their ministry and lifework.

Disciple-making parents prepare their children for the time when they will be on their own, and for the time when their parents may rest in death. Disciple-making parents assure their children that they will never be alone but that the Holy Spirit will be their constant companion.

The result of Jesus’ training of His disciples was that they were not the same uneducated, uncultured men He first called, but had been changed to reflect Jesus in mind and character, and the result was that people noticed this drastic change. (Acts 4:13).

The ultimate goal of discipleship; that His disciples may be like Him.



The role of a disciple-making parent is to nurture the children by loving them and relating closely with them, helping them to love others (cf. John 13:35) so they will grow up to be mature, healthy disciples. Parenting small children is not just about teaching them rules and regulations.

Paul refers to the role of parents in the spiritual growth of the child when he challenges them to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

The Greek word for nurture in this text is *paideia* and means “training, learning, instruction.”

This word is used in Hebrews 12:5, 7B8, 11 with a spiritual sense where it was translated as “discipline” or “chastening.”

Therefore, the author of Hebrews urges parents to nurture or disciple their children with the use of God’s Word, the Bible, borne of the parents’ love for God like that described in Deuteronomy 6:5: “you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.”

And by the way, your marriage also provides an opportunity for discipleship, even when one is married to an unbeliever.

Paul counsels a church members whose spouse is not a believer to remain married to them, if they so consent, because it provides the church member with an opportunity to witness to their spouse and hopefully to help them be sanctified (1 Corinthians 7:12-14, 16).

## The Dust of Discipleship

I love the phrase “in the dust of the Rabbi.”

It is so foreign to our 21<sup>st</sup> century ears, but so important for us to understand today.

The implication for disciple-making parents is powerful.



In the dust of the Rabbi. That's where you want to be.

That's where you want your children to be.

And when you see where that is, if you haven't already, you will want to get there as soon as possible

And you will want your children to be there as soon as possible.

You will want to live there.

And you will want your children to live there, too.

So, what does it mean to be "in the dust of the Rabbi"?

To help us understand that phrase, let's go back to first century Israel.

Jesus, the Son of God, came to do something very special in the grand plan of God.

He came to save His people from their sins.

While on earth He undertook a public teaching, preaching and healing ministry to show them how to live a righteous and godly way of life in proper relationship with God.

It was His life and message and ministry that led up to the point of his saving act – his death.

Jesus has many important things to say, do and teach.

So important, in fact, that He called disciples to come after him not only so they could witness it all, but so He could impart to them His way of living His faith.

And some of them He specifically charged with the leadership of taking His message to the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20).

He called disciples after Him just like the religious Rabbis and sages of His day.



A Rabbi or sage of Jesus' day would take disciples after him whose main job was to follow the Rabbi everywhere he went.

But it wasn't simply to follow him; it was to be with him. It was to learn everything he had to teach.

It was to watch and learn his lifestyle, how he practiced his religion.

It was to ask him questions.

It was to get answers.

It was a first-hand, on-the-job learning and training experience.

Disciples of Rabbis memorized their Rabbi's words.

They literally wanted to become as much like their Rabbi as humanly possible, gaining all his knowledge and wisdom, adopting for themselves how he practiced his religion.

They wanted to eat like him.

They wanted to recite Scripture like him.

They wanted to pray like him.

They wanted to teach like him, serve others like him, help like him and so on.

And they left everything and gave their lives to be their disciple, for life. It was full-time, 27-7-365.

No vacations, no time off, no breaks.

That's why a potential disciple would have to count the cost of discipleship to a famous Rabbi before embarking with him (this is what is happening in Luke 9:57-62).

It was not a fad, a passing interest, or a simple curiosity.

Following a wandering teacher would not always be easy, and often the sleeping arrangements for the night were uncertain.

The next meal could also be uncertain.

If they were married, a potential disciple would need to get his wife's permission to leave her for a set time while he was off following the Rabbi.

Others would need to sell some or all of their possessions in order to be detached from them so they could follow the Rabbi.

It was a 100% life commitment for a set period of time.

It was serious business.

It was a complete honour.

So, the phrase "in the dust of the Rabbi" refers to the disciple following closely behind his Rabbi, so much so that the disciple would literally be walking in the dust kicked up from the Rabbi's feet.

It symbolizes the teacher-disciple relationship which often would become closer than the disciple's relationship with his own father.

It symbolizes the adherence of the disciple to the teacher.

It symbolizes the disciple's deep yearning, desire, passion, and willingness to learn everything the Rabbi has to teach.

It symbolizes where God wants us to be today, and where He wants our children to be.

Jesus still calls us to follow Him and his teachings.

He still calls us to give up everything that gets in the way of our disciple walk with Him.

He still calls us to count the cost of discipleship to Him before embarking with Him.

He still calls us to watch His life and learn everything He has to teach; this is where Scripture comes in.



He still calls us to be with Him, to learn how He practiced His religion, to memorize His words, to become as much like Him as humanly possible, to gain all His knowledge and adopt His religious practices, to recite Scripture like Him, to pray like Him, to put Him before any other thing or relationship we have to, to make and keep a total life commitment of discipleship to Him for the rest of our lives.

Jesus still expects us to become and live as His disciples.

We can still walk in the dust of the Rabbi; in fact, that is right where He wants us.

And when you are there, the dust that covers you will be the relationship with Him that is closer than a father.

The total commitment of the disciple to His teacher.

The deep yearning, desire, passion and willingness to learn everything He has to teach and to strive to put into practice.

The only thing left to do is to strap on your sandals and come follow in the dust of the Rabbi.

When we follow Jesus as His disciples, “in the dust of our Rabbi,” something miraculous takes place...our children walk “in our dust” which is nothing less than the extension of our Rabbi’s dust.

When we walk in Jesus’ dust, our children will also walk in the dust of their Rabbi, Jesus.

That is how we as parents are disciple-makers.

Not simply to make our children into our disciples, but more importantly, to make them into disciples of Jesus.