
PARENT TALK

Week 4: Cory Zimmerman

Child development is such a joy to witness as a parent. Whether it is smiling, first steps, or riding a bike, seeing our children mature evokes a feeling of accomplishment after many years of diligent investment and care. This is especially evident in the way our children expand their vocabulary. A child's first word is certainly a magical moment for us as parents. But children do not stop with this initial phrase; their supply of words explodes as they realize they are able to put together syllables and communicate with others. By the time this adorable toddler enters high school, they will amass a treasure trove of roughly 50,000 words.

It would be silly, however, if we as parents never helped our children move past their first word. This would hold our child back from a vast array of wonderful words that would allow them to communicate with other people on a much higher level than just a jumble of "ah's" and "oh's." Our children speaking their first word is not the end goal of our parenting; it is only the beginning. In the same way, we as parents should not stop discipling our children once they make a profession of faith; discipleship is a lifetime commitment to helping our children understand what it means to follow Jesus in every season of their life. What does this lifetime commitment to discipling our children look like? There are several things to consider when it comes to answering this question.

First, our goal as parents should be to make disciples, not converts. This is at the heart of the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Jesus calls his disciples together and sends them out to make other disciples, teaching them all that he had commanded them. Having the goal of making converts out of our children is insufficient as well as unfaithful. Jesus calls us to make disciples, so teaching our children all that Jesus commanded is our joyous privilege.

Second, there is no "end" when it comes to discipleship. God desires for us to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29) but this goal will not be fully accomplished on this side of heaven (1 John 3:2). In the meantime, we as parents come alongside our children to help them grow in godliness and we work hard until Christ is formed in them (Gal. 4:19).

Lastly, we must disciple our children with future generations in mind. I love 2 Timothy 1:5 because it is a powerful testimony regarding Timothy's rich, spiritual heritage: "I [Paul] am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well." A lifetime commitment to discipling our children presents the opportunity for future generations to become disciples as well. Oh, how wonderful it would be to walk with your grand children as they learn what it means to follow Jesus.

Parents, God has entrusted you with the wonderful responsibility of bringing your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). Delight in the truth that this is a life-long commitment to see them come to saving faith and help them to obey all that Jesus has commanded. Trust in the Lord to provide the growth (1 Cor. 3:7-8) and be faithful to show your children what it looks like to follow Jesus in every season of life.