

# *HOFCC Family Discipleship Plan*

*Prepared by Eric Burd*

As we look forward to home discipleship, let us consider some current conditions in church and home:

**Southern Baptists, George Barna, Ken Ham and other researchers have affirmed scripture's endorsement of the Christian home as the church's most powerful discipleship center:**

- 1) "Both the Bible and Research show that the Christian family is God's primary tool for building faith and character in future generations of the church."
- 2) "The home is 2 -3 times more influential than any church program in passing to children lifelong faith."
- 3) "Parents have the most influence in faith development (of their children)."
- 4) "Parents who raise spiritual champions place a high premium on spiritual development and see themselves as the primary spiritual developers of their youth."

## **The need for discipleship...**

Christian studies indicate that we may be losing our youth to the world at a rate of up to 80% per generation. Surveys have shown that even among young people who remain in the church that up to 90% do not maintain a biblical worldview. If these stats are anywhere near accurate, would it not seem obvious that the church is failing in its most significant role – making faithful disciples to replenish the church of tomorrow?

## **The Source of the Problem?**

While there are many cultural forces in play, we believe the central problem is that householders are neither informed of their responsibility nor equipped by the church to make disciples of their own households.

## **We Might Ask:**

If making disciples of a world we do not know is the *Great Commission*, would not the *Greatest Commission* be to disciple our own children, Children whom God has already placed directly under our own stewardship?

**George Barna:** *"...a majority of churches are guilty of perpetuating an unhealthy and unbiblical process wherein the church usurps the role of the family and creates a sometimes exclusive dependency upon the church for a child's spiritual nourishment."*

## **A Complementarian Relationship**

We celebrate the complementarian relationship between man and woman while often missing the complementarian relationship that exists between church and home. We can readily recognize the usurping of a father's role by his wife. Do we believe that a similar, unbiblical usurping of the father's role by the church can bring equally-devastating results? Relationships are healthy only when they are kept inside their biblical boundaries, and it seems clear that the church's encroachment upon the family's role in discipleship has rocked millions of fathers to sleep. The Church must return to its biblical role of enlightening, encouraging, equipping and empowering parents – but not replacing them. God's Word makes it clear that parents are the primary disciplers of their own children and in order for the church to thrive, moms and dads all around the world must successfully assume that role again.

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## **The Home Runs on Regular**

Are you familiar with the term, “The Church Runs on Regular.” With the Apostle we say: *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth (1 Cor 1:26-27)*. But, you don’t have to be a seminary grad to be recognized as a “man of God.” The Lord often “calls” men into church leadership who may not seem to be overly wise or powerful or of noble birth. God has used many whose greatest “proof” of their faith and calling was a clutch of godly children and a cheerful and submissive wife. Having disciplined their own children, the contemporary model is for them to disciple the children of others; others we assume to be either ill-equipped or oblivious to their responsibility to pass the baton of Christ to their own children. This must not be. While orphans and absentee fatherhood does exist, within nuclear Christian families the emphasis upon the spiritual leadership of fathers must be restored. Fathers must be challenged step up to their God-assigned mandate of connecting spiritually, at a heart level, with their own children. This is God’s plan! – connecting with one’s own children – discipling them – 24/7! In a million years, no amount of social engineering or dazzling technology will give us better results than: “Fathers, teach your children!”

## **God’s Secret Weapon**

“My dad is stronger than your dad!” – and so the boasting goes. Yes, kids are naturally proud of their dads. Why? Because God has created a dynamic that *the glory of children is their fathers (Prov 17:6)*. While this built-in factor can greatly enhance a father’s voice in the life of his children, many parents throughout the west have inadvertently shrugged off this insider’s advantage to outsource the responsibility of discipling their children to youth leaders or other church staff. Parents may think: “Finally, someone who really understands my kid,” but in reality they are trading away the greatest potential advantage of all. Family discipleship is the Bible’s primary model? Will God consistently bless any other method? God has woven a natural awe in the hearts of their children for their dads, and parents who grasp this favor will avail themselves of this Secret Weapon in discipleship. This natural admiration, coupled with the parent’s loving discipleship, uniquely leverages them to nurture their children’s hearts better than any other people on Planet Earth.

## **So, Church, What Now?**

Do we continue as we have for the past 60+ years? One of my favorite quotes from Albert Einstein is: “We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” Do we really want to keep going the way we have been? Is there another manner of thinking that will better engage the hearts of our youth in the faith? We need to consider another approach. Can we truly advance by going round and round in our “tread mill” methodologies? Would a more biblical model be for church leaders to recognize that their role is not to disciple all of the children in the church; but to encourage, train and empower parents to do it in their own homes? The church must be awakened – it must be reformed. It must foster the principle of the family being God’s primary conduit of the gospel from one generation to the next.

## **The Next Step**

While it is not necessary for every church to do everything the same, we can make great headway in retaining future generations by re-building the biblically-unique role of mom and dad. The church must engage its members in proven and practical ways to attain the desired results. Churches may excel in reminding parents of *what* they should do, but we must excel all the more at helping them to develop a specific vision for *how* to do it. This plan is offered in that spirit. Completely voluntary, it allows the family to engineer a deliberate path for the whole family to participate in a well-rounded discipleship experience. The home runs on regular. No one will have perfect results, and the church staff does not legislate family discipleship. But, we are confident of this – that many sober-minded fathers and mothers – and their children – will be eternally grateful for some gentle and loving guidance. So, with this in mind, we present to you the *Family Discipleship Plan*.

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## The 7 Stages of Life and Their 14 Desired Outcomes

Before we begin to discuss the *Methodology* for the *Family Discipleship Plan* let us consider some goals – some targeted, biblical objectives for the discipleship of our children.

Offering an analogy, when firing a missile we have a specific target, or destination, in view. Missiles may have several built-in stages of firing in order for them to successfully make their flight. A 3-stage missile, for example, must fire all 3 stages – hot and true – in order for it to arrive at its destination intact.

So, with a life. Human existence, from cradle to grave, has different stages. We might label the stages differently from age to age and culture to culture; but each civilization has its markers for evaluating the progress of the generations behind. So, in the church; but here our yardstick must be the Word of God. In order for the church to go on, in order for the church to sustain a genuine influence in a culture, each generation simply must reproduce disciples for Christ in the succeeding generation.

With this in view, we have identified *7 Stages of Life* that define the lifespan of a typical person in our contemporary “western” culture. There are other ways that these stages could be labeled, but these are presented in a way in which most of us can easily relate. Each stage is accompanied by two *Outcomes*. These outcomes are specific objectives which scriptures\* teach that Christian parents should be discipling their children to attain. If we can reach these “target” outcomes with our children, we will have served them well! – and likely have done well ourselves in the *7 Stages of Life*.

1. **Salvation:** This stage must fire – and if genuine, it will burn all of one’s life, never flaming out.
  - Growing as a **disciple of Jesus Christ**.
  - Embracing a doctrinally sound, **biblical worldview**.
2. **Graduation:** This is recognized, symbolically, by all of western culture.
  - Representing a **shift from childhood** to adulthood.
  - **Assuming full responsibility** for the trajectory of one’s life.
3. **Career:** Notice, career comes before marriage!\*\*
  - Setting specific **career-development objectives**.
  - Setting one’s self on **firm financial footing** before seeking a life’s mate.
4. **Marriage:** This stage cannot misfire (be not unequally yoked).
  - **Developing the personal character** of a sacrificial leader or godly helpmeet.
  - **Identifying a life’s mate** that will help to establish a God-honoring household.
5. **Household:** One’s crowning ministry to both the church and the world.
  - **Establishing an Embassy for Christ** that reflects a lifetime of devotion to Christ.
  - **Launching one’s own children** into the world as effective witnesses of the gospel.
6. **Calling:** We all have unique callings - which we often find later in life.
  - **Cultivating a life of faith** that makes us responsive to God’s will for our lives.
  - Identifying and **fulfilling the unique work** for which God has prepared us.
7. **Legacy:** Leaving something of value for those coming behind.
  - **Finishing the race** in a way that has brought glory to God.
  - **Inspiring others** within the circle of influence to fulfill their appointed callings.

\*An excellent introductory exercise is to go through this list of stages and outcomes with your children. Research specific scriptures that affirm each outcome, then seek your children’s commitment to make it a life-time pursuit to attain to each of these outcomes in their lives.

\*\*Young women may use the season of “Career” for: 1) **sharpening home-management skills** and, 2) engaging themselves in helping to **accomplish the ministry vision** of her father’s household.

# HOFCC Family Discipleship Plan

*HOFCC* is an acronym for the 5 dimensions of this comprehensive family plan...

**H**ouseholder Development

**O**versight of Education

**F**amily Discipleship

**C**hurch-related Ministry

**C**ommunity Impact

## Methodology:

**Purpose:** The purpose of this workbook is to have parents, under the leadership of the father / or other single parent, develop a unique *Family Discipleship Plan* for Their Family.

**Objectives:** The objectives suggest some basic values or goals for 5 dimensions of family living. These 5 arenas of family life should be seized as significant areas for discipleship:

- 1) The father's / mother's own personal spiritual development as the leader.
- 2) The general education of their children.
- 3) The daily family life of the household.
- 4) The church life of the family.
- 5) The community life of the family.

**Guidelines:** The Guidelines refine the objective and offer practical ideas for that item.

**Householder's Vision:** The householder should prayerful consider how the Holy Spirit would direct him to implement this aspect of the plan – asking the Lord to give him his unique “Householder's Vision” for each of the 5 points of his family's plan. It may or may not reflect the entire scope of the “Objective” offered for that particular aspect of family life. (Appendix A offers sample Householder Vision statements and Action Steps).

**Action Steps:** Once a general vision is stated, Actions Steps outline the specific details of what your family is going to do to implement the Householder's Vision. Due to scheduling and other family dynamics, it may often be helpful if both parents participated together in creating this portion of the plan. This even makes a fun family project and is often helpful in giving a sense of “ownership” of the plan to every member of the family.

**Journal of Changes...:** A space is provided under each of the 5 points for the householder to journal success or to document changes that he would like to make in his plan.

**Mentor's Comments:** Finally, for those who have implemented their family plan under pastoral oversight, there is a place for comments by the church leader that is mentoring this householder through the plan.

### Note:

- 1) It seems that this plan may be most effective when multiple families are engaging in it together. This provides a venue for sharing challenges and successes with others – even offering some degree of gentle accountability for following through or modifying the plan so that the family actively maintains an effective discipleship model in their home.
- 2) Above all, this is not a law. This is not to be received as a structured, ritualistic model for cranking out perfect children. We will do nothing spiritual if *The Spirit* has not transformed the hearts of our children. Doing the work will not win our children – but, *The Spirit of Grace* will. This plan is about being intentional in making a place for grace in our homes. The work, then, is each father charting a clear path, bathing it in love, and watching for 360 degree consideration of every aspect of household discipleship.

# Householder Development

**Objective: The Father / mother or other head of household is involved in some intentional plan to advance their personal discipleship and accountability. *Householders's Development*** is based upon the premise that the father, as shepherd and theologian of his own household, is to personally be both exemplary in lifestyle and equipped to instruct his wife and children in the word of God. ...**seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...** ( *Matt 6:33*)

**A. Guideline:**

1. Comprehensive, self-motivated personal discipleship is in view, including cultivation of one's devotional / prayer life and the faithful execution of one's biblical responsibilities as a householder, father and husband.
2. Suggested resources in this process are one-on-one discipleship with an elder, Apologetics, Leadership Institute, targeted book-reading programs, local elder / deacon development programs, and other intentional discipleship groups or methods.
3. This is most effectively implemented when one employs some kind of accountability with other believers who possess similar goals and responsibilities.

**B. Householder's Vision:**

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**C. Action Steps:**

	Proposed Action	Target Date
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____

**D. Journal of changes, improvements and successes.**

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**E. Elder / Deacon / Mentor's Comments:**

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# Oversight of Education

**Objective: Parents are engaged in the comprehensive oversight of the education of their children.** Capturing their children’s hearts, parents must establish themselves in their children’s eyes as their primary educators, including every dimension of spiritual and secular education, regardless of the method of education, whether public, private or home education. *My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. (Prov 4:20-22)*

**A. Guideline:**

1. Fathers / parents can delegate the activity of teaching their children to others - they cannot delegate the responsibility for the outcome.
2. It is the biblical obligation of all parents to ensure that both parents and children see dad and mom as the primary educators of all their children.
3. Regardless of the method of education, parents are to be engaged, controlling and / or monitoring the curriculum, values, worldview, environments and relationship to which their children are being exposed and in which they are being educated.

**B. Householder’s Vision:**

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**C. Action Steps:**

	Proposed Action	Target Date
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2.	<hr/>	<hr/>
3.	<hr/>	<hr/>

**D. Journal of changes, improvements and successes.**

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**E. Elder / Deacon / Mentor’s Comments:**

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# Family Discipleship

**Objective: Father / parent leads family in regular devotions and models “lifestyle discipleship.”**

This may include regular family worship with singing, prayer and study; personal devotions; and a 24/7 emphasis on family discipleship. Failure to maintain a godly family lifestyle and testimony will be the undoing of this aspect of the model. *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deut 6:6-7)*

**A. Guideline:**

1. Fathers should lead regular family devotions and encourage family members to have a daily devotional time with God for personal study of scriptures and prayer. (See Appendix B)
2. Family discipleship is not about rules, but about winning the minds and transforming the hearts of one’s children; and since biblical family discipleship is a 24/7 ministry, moms and dads should be alert to “learning moments,” using the circumstances of every-day life to shape a biblical worldview in the minds - and biblical values in the hearts – of their children.
3. Many families have been blessed by inviting other families into their homes that they may experience meaningful family devotions and lifestyle discipleship first hand.

**B. Householder’s Vision:**

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**C. Action Steps:**

	Proposed Action	Target Date
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____

**D. Journal of changes, improvements and successes.**

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**F. Elder / Deacon / Mentor’s Comments:**

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# Church-related Ministry

**Objective:** The family participates together in some form of ministry within their local church. HOFCC has a strong belief in everyone fulfilling their personal mandate of “body ministry.” We are each to ... *grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph 4:15-16)*

**A. Guideline:**

1. The church’s encouragement and support of household-led initiatives offers a host of opportunities for families in each congregation to minister within their local church.
2. Householders should seek to develop family ministries that will both fulfill genuine needs within their local churches and employ the giftings and callings of each of their family members.
3. Appendix C offers a list of ideas for possible family ministries to the church.

**B. Householder’s Vision:**

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**C. Action Steps:**

	Proposed Action	Target Date
1.	<hr/>	<hr/>
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**D. Journal of changes, improvements and successes.**

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**E. Elder / Deacon / Mentor’s Comments:**

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# Community Impact

**Objective: With a view toward the Great Commission, the family is intentional about becoming a Household Embassy.** Through the demonstration of Christian hospitality, community involvement, neighborhood evangelism, and other activities, each family seeks the fulfillment of the Great Commission in their community. *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... (Matt 28:19)*

**A. Guideline:**

1. The Great Commission is an urgent command from Christ which offers every believer a sense of mission and purpose - it follows then that every significant decision we make regarding the use of our time and resources should reflect Jesus' priority on discipleship and evangelism.
2. Fathers should seek to "marshal" their families and resources to impact the community around them for Christ.
3. Appendix D offers a list of ideas for possible family ministries to the community.

**B. Householder's Vision:**

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**C. Action Steps:**

	Proposed Action	Target Date
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____

**D. Journal of changes, improvements and successes.**

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**E. Elder / Deacon / Mentor's Comments:**

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## Appendix A: Examples of Householder Vision and Action Steps

### **Householder Development:**

**Householder Vision:** My vision is to model Christ to my family at all times and to be ever-growing in my ability to disciple my wife and children from God's Word.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Accountability for my personal reading program .
2. Faithful to my personal devotions, 30 minutes a day, 7 days a week.
3. Regular participation in our men's study group.

### **Oversight of Education:**

**Householder Vision:** My vision is to establish myself and my wife in our children's eyes as their primary educators and to cultivate a biblical worldview in every aspect of their secular and spiritual education.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Continue to Homeschool our children using a Christian curriculum.
2. Engage our children in learning opportunities and activities that will strengthen biblical worldviews.
3. Develop the habit of discussing worldview issues with our children as a daily matter of course.

### **Family Discipleship:**

**Householder Vision:** My vision is to establish a devotional atmosphere in my home where all members of my family delight in regular personal and family devotions and we practice lifestyle discipleship.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Practice regular family devotions 5 days a week with the entire family.
2. Make time available for all family members to enjoy their personal devotions each day.
3. Be intentional about developing a culture of lifestyle discipleship in my home.

### **Church-related Ministry:**

**Householder Vision:** My vision is that my family would all participate in some form of ministry in our local church.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Sign up for "kitchen duty" as a family to regularly help with shared meal.
2. Seek an opportunity for our kids to use their musical instruments on a worship team.
3. Involve my family as often as possible in my responsibilities as a deacon in our local body.

### **Community Impact:**

**Householder Vision:** My vision is that my household would be a Embassy for Christ in our community.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Seek opportunities to assist some of the elderly and sick people in our neighborhood.
2. Be intentional about hosting at least 2 parties for our block in the next year.
3. Engage the family in the local Pregnancy Resource Center fundraisers and one political campaign.

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## **Appendix B: The R.A.M.P. Family Devotions Model**

**R**ead the Scriptures (or passage from a book)

**A**sk Questions (of all family members)

**M**ake Application (to our contemporary lives)

**P**ray Together (as a family)

## **Appendix C: Intra-Church Family Ministries**

- Worship Team**
- Tech / Sound**
- Communion Preparation**
- Book Store Management**
- Kitchen / Shared Meal Helpers**
- Missions Coordinators**
- Meal Coordinator for New Births and Shut-ins.**
- Productive Fellowship Coordinator**
- Facility Care & Maintenance**
- Leadership Institute Host**
- Care Group Leadership / Host**

**How People Change**

**Crown Financial Ministries**

**Ladies Bible Studies**

**Weekly men and women's prayer meetings**

**Homeschool Support Groups**

**Marriage Care Groups**

**Speech and Debate / Apologetics**

## Appendix D: Family / Embassy Ministries\*

- Pictures in the Park – Evangelism
- Street Preaching
- Street Evangelism
- Skate Park Ministry
- E-Team – Evangelism Ministry
- County Jail Ministry
- Nursing Home Ministry
- Skype Discipleship
- Hands of Hope – PRC support
- Beneath the Surface Seminar
- Drama Troups (2 from HOFCC)
- Unchained – Abolish-slave-trade Conference
- Paul and Timothy Conference
- Short-Term Missions Trips
- Long-term Missions (OM, YWAM, ESL, Mongolia, Morocco)

\*Family Ministry does not necessarily mean that every person in the family participates “at the point” of that ministry, but that each member of the family is engaged in making the ministry endeavor a success. For example, in a jail ministry, the father may do the preaching with older sons attending for support. The wife may keep a roster of other preachers who join the family and the children may be faithful to pray for the ministry.

### *The 7 Stages of Life and Their 14 Desired Outcomes*

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  - Growing as a **disciple of Jesus Christ**.
  - Embracing a doctrinally sound, **biblical worldview**.
2. **Graduation:** This is recognized, symbolically, by all of western culture.
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  - **Cultivating a life of faith** that makes us responsive to God’s will for our lives.
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