



Discipling Your Child or Teen

Dear Parents,

Greetings! We welcome you to Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church and hope that your time with us today was encouraging and fulfilling as you drew closer to God.

As parents, you are the most powerful influence on your children's spiritual growth. God also gives you the phenomenal responsibility and blessing of being your children's primary faith teacher and mentor. Deuteronomy 6:5-9 contains God's instructions to parents and guardians on how to relate faith to young people:

“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

At CELC, we understand that parenting is complicated. Parents deal with a multitude of issues from setting appropriate boundaries to

building self-esteem to maintaining discipline to balancing school, work and other time demands. And raising young disciples of Jesus Christ is a 24-7 job, which means it must be done *in the home* and not just in church. With all this in mind, we seek to work with and equip parents to build Jesus-centered homes and disciple their children.

Why is it important to disciple children and teens?

Some people falsely believe that spiritual growth is primarily an adult endeavor and that children cannot make sincere faith decisions until they are grown up. But a 2003 study by Christian researcher George Barna of the Barna Research Group (please see www.barna.org) found that what children believe by the time they are 13 years old is generally what they will believe for life. Barna, author of [Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions](#), found that:

- “Moral foundations are generally in place by age 9.”
- A majority of Americans make a lasting determination about the personal significance of Christ's death and resurrection by age 12.”

Building stronger families in Christ Jesus...

- Reaching out with the love of Jesus (evangelism)
- Connecting with other believers (fellowship)
- Growing in faith (discipleship)
- Using our God-given gifts in ministry to others (service)
- Falling more deeply in love with Jesus Christ (worship)

... Developing families of faith.

- “A person’s response to the meaning and personal value of Jesus Christ’s life, death and resurrection is usually determined before a person reaches 18.”
- “In most cases, people’s spiritual beliefs are irrevocably formed when they are pre-teens.”

Barna found that it’s often difficult to tell a Christian from a non-Christian in terms of attitudes, values and lifestyles because Christians “were not sufficiently challenged to think and

behave differently — radically different, based on core spiritual perspectives — when they were children ... Simply getting people to go to church regularly is not the key to becoming a mature Christian.”

Instead, parents must be the leaders in their children’s spiritual development, Barna’s research found, and the church must encourage and equip parents as those leaders. Neither parents nor the church alone can raise spiritually mature children.

How important is a parent’s faith in discipling his or her children?

The Bible says, “Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it” (Proverbs 22:6). There are thousands of books and other resources designed to help parents fulfill this responsibility, but a second Barna study (October 2004) found that few parents are relying on the best parenting resources available — the Bible and their personal faith in Jesus Christ — to make parenting decisions.

“You might expect that parents who are born again Christians would take a different approach to raising their children than did parents who have not committed their lives to Christ — but that was rarely the case,” Barna wrote. For purposes of the study, Barna defined “born again

Christians” as people who said they had made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that was still important in their life today.

Particularly surprising was that only three out of 10 parents who

have given their lives to Christ said leading their children into a saving relationship with Jesus was one of their critical parenting goals. “Parents cannot force or ensure that their kids become followers of Christ,” Barna wrote. “But for that emphasis to not be on the radar screen of most Christian parents is a significant reason why most Americans never embrace Jesus Christ as their savior ... The fact that most Christian parents overlook this critical responsibility is one of the biggest challenges to the Christian Church.”

What Can Parents Do?

Pray, pray, pray! The Bible tells us to “pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), remind-

***“Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it.”
(Proverbs 22:6)***



ing us to “cast all your anxiety on [God] because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7). Prayer is the most powerful tool we have as we face the challenges in our lives. Philippians 4:6-7 reminds us of the power of prayer: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”



Join a small group! God speaks through his Word and through other faithful followers of Christ. There is no better way to be equipped for parenthood than to be in prayer, Bible study and supportive relationships with other Christians. The small group setting provides wonderful opportunities to talk through difficult issues, bounce ideas off one another, encourage each other, pray and read Scripture together, and usually laugh a lot. For parents to raise spiritual champions, they must first allow

themselves to be nourished and nurtured by God in a small group.

Remind yourself daily of the spiritual responsibilities that come with parenthood!

We encourage you to set aside some quiet time each day to read your Bible, journal and pray. God will use this time to speak to you, to guide you and to encourage you. We also encourage you to memorize and reflect on the Family Ministry mission statement: “Building stronger families in Christ Jesus ... Developing families of faith.” Each day, team up with your children to live out God’s five purposes for your lives:

- Reaching out with the love of Jesus (evangelism);
- Connecting with other believers (fellowship);
- Growing in faith (discipleship);
- Using your God-given gifts in ministry to others (service);
- Falling more deeply in love with Jesus Christ (worship).

This serves as an awesome reminder of the role God has given you as your children’s primary faith teacher and mentor.



Create a God-centered home environment!

We encourage parents to create a culture in their home where Jesus is the focus each day, not just Sundays. While it is extremely important to bring your children to worship and to Sunday school every Sunday, it is equally important to pray, read the Bible, and discuss spiritual issues with them throughout the week. Simply setting aside 15-30 minutes at the end of the day to share highs and lows (the best and worst thing about the day), read a passage from the Bible and talk about what it means, and pray together will do wonders for family closeness and spiritual growth. Resources are available at the church to help you with this.

Get involved! We encourage parents to make weekly involvement in the larger spiritual community at CELC a high priority for their families. Faithful and regular participation in worship, Sunday school and other church activities sends a strong message



to children about spiritual disciplines and what it means to be committed to their spiritual journey. Irregular participation sends an equally strong message to children about their parents' priorities – priorities they are likely to model into adulthood. We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities at CELC

for your family to live out God's five purposes for our lives by participating in discipleship, evangelism, fellowship, service

and worship opportunities with your children. Help your children discover the gifts God has given them and seek out opportunities for them to use those gifts in service to others.

For more information on ways to be involved, please read the flier entitled "What's Available for Families at CELC?"

Be equipped! Retreats, conferences and workshops provide wonderful opportunities to grow in your personal relationship with Christ and your spiritual leadership at home. In addition, there are a variety of resources available in the Family Ministry Resource Room to help you disciple your children and give you sound

Biblical advice on how to handle a variety of difficult parenting situations. Please feel free to sign out these resources to use at home with your families. Please also visit the "Resources for Parents" bulletin board outside the resource room for information, inspiration and freebies.

Welcome others! Invite your friends and your children's friends to come to church or a small group with you. Make the most of opportunities to share God's love with children and teens who don't know Him. You might be the only person in their lives who does!

Communicate with us! Let us know how we can pray for you, how we can support you, and what sort of Biblical

teaching and information you need. We are always happy to help.

***"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."
(3 John 1:4)***

If you have questions about Family Ministry at CELC, please call Laura North, minister of children and families, at 301-652-5160, or email families@heartmindsoul.com.

God's richest blessings for your family!

