

What Kids Really Need

(from a training series by Mark Steiner, DiscipleLand founder)



#1—Kids Need God

(1 Chronicles 29:11; Proverbs 2:4-5; Acts 17:24-25)

The Situation: Children ask, “What is God really like?” Schools, friends, television, and other sources expose children to a variety of ideas. Much of what kids hear about “god” does not even resemble the God who reveals Himself in the Bible.

The Solution: God delights to reveal Himself to all who seek Him. Knowing God personally and enjoying His greatness is the highest privilege of every Christian. The Bible is the one inspired place to find out about God—His personality, His attributes, His Names, and His character.

What You Can Do: In every lesson during this quarter, your child will be introduced to one facet of our majestic God. To know God truly and intimately, encourage your child to explore each one. To discover even more about God’s greatness and about family life in Bible times, refer to “XploreMore”—part of DiscipleZone.com.



#2—Kids Need Family

(Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 5:33—6:4)

The Situation: Children wonder, “What is a ‘family?’” Tragic testimonials and sobering statistics document the traditional family’s fragmentation. Kids are bewildered by today’s widely divergent family configurations and lifestyles.

The Solution: Remember that the family is God’s idea, a vital part of His kingdom plan. God establishes and endorses the family as a fortress to withstand the world’s hostile influences. God calls Himself “Father”—the One who leads His children. The Bible describes how to maintain healthy, dynamic relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren.

What You Can Do: Work on generating family loyalty. Building this allegiance will promote family teamwork to withstand the world’s hurricane-force winds. Make home a priority; express sincere appreciation for each other; spend time together.



#3—Kids Need Work

(Ecclesiastes 2:24-25; Colossians 3:23-24)

The Situation: Children ask, “Why work so hard?” Some kids question the value of hard work. Many adopt the attitude that work should be avoided as something evil. Peers make fun of students who put forth their best efforts. They ridicule or trivialize exceptional performances.

The Solution: From the very beginning, God gave Adam a job—to cultivate the Garden (Genesis 2:15). Work is a gift from God and can be a source of satisfaction and joy. God gives skills to each person and wants us to develop those abilities to serve Him and others. God created work; He blesses those who show diligence in their work.

What You Can Do: Maintain a positive attitude about work. Help children view work as a divinely appointed task for God’s eternal glory (Revelation 14:13). As you assign chores and give children responsibilities, encourage them to work hard. Work is honorable. Almost nothing of lasting value comes easy or free.



#4—Kids Need Reverence

(Luke 12:4-5; Philippians 2:12)

The Situation: Children wonder, “Why fear God?” Though kids often hear about God’s love, they rarely learn about the fear of the Lord. They are largely unaware that God commands people to fear and revere Him. As a result, children show disrespectful, indifferent, or flippant attitudes toward God.

The Solution: To those who fear Him, God promises deliverance, love, protection, restoration, and reward. Those who know the Lord God Almighty possess a deep reverence and awe for Him. The “fear of the Lord” provides exclusive access to the halls of knowledge and wisdom. In fact, learning cannot take place until we fear the Lord! (Proverbs 1:7).

What You Can Do: Teach children about God’s majesty—His character, attributes, and nature. The more they know about God’s holiness, the more they will revere and love Him. God’s very name is holy; speak about Him with great reverence (Exodus 20:20). Fear of the Lord sets God’s children apart from those who profane the Almighty.



#5—Kids Need Worship

(1 Chronicles 29:11; Revelation 4:11)

The Situation: Children wonder, “Why bother with worship?” Many kids understand very little about the purpose of worship. Rather than focus on God, they often center on themselves. Children want to be “entertained” not “bored.” They lose sight of the fact that God is the primary audience.

The Solution: God made people for the express purpose of worshipping Him. Worship is our primary purpose in life—not an optional activity each week to endure or to enjoy. Worship means “worth-ship.” We give God special devotion and honor because He is worth-y of worship.

What You Can Do: Jesus explained that worship involves both the head “truth” and the heart “spirit” (John 4:24). Take time to know more about who God is. The better you know Him, the more heartfelt your worship. Shallow understanding of God’s character leads to superficial worship. Deep understanding of God’s qualities opens the door to wholehearted worship.



#6—Kids Need Faith

(John 20:30-31; Hebrews 11:1,6)

The Situation: Children ask, “Can you prove it?” Some kids are taught to believe that the scientific method is the ultimate test of validity. In their worldview, people who believe in miraculous events are simple-minded and uninformed. Faith is a weakness that cannot stand up to scientific reasoning.

The Solution: In reality, faith forms a bridge that connects truth and hope. At one end, the bridge of faith rests securely upon the tangible foundation of Scripture. The events revealed in the Bible are factual and historically reliable. On the other end, the bridge of faith reaches toward God’s intangible promises yet to come. Because we know certain things that are true, we have faith. Because we believe, certain things will become true.

What You Can Do: Faith is like a muscle—the more you exercise it, the stronger it becomes. To express faith doesn’t require a long leap, but it does include short steps. Practice small steps of faith with your kids. Read frequently (Romans 10:17). Pray expectantly (Matthew 21:22). Walk uprightly (Galatians 5:16).



#7—Kids Need Responsibility

(Matthew 25:21; Luke 16:10)

The Situation: Children often hear, “You are so irresponsible!” Most kids desperately want to measure up to our expectations. They want to gain our approval. But sometimes adults do not show children how to be responsible in performing a duty. Our neglect results in their negligence.

The Solution: God holds each person responsible for his or her thoughts, words, and deeds. Responsibility (or irresponsibility) is a learned behavior. Unless a child is trained to be responsible, he or she will probably follow the path of peers or pleasure. If you teach your children to be faithful in small ways, they will become responsible in large matters, too.

What You Can Do: Study the examples of Joseph (Genesis 39-41), Samuel (1 Samuel 2-3), Ruth (1-4), Daniel (1-2), and Esther (2). Consider together how these individuals learned to be responsible before God and people. Discuss ways your child can gain privileges as he or she grows in responsibility (showing respect, caring for a pet, doing chores, cleaning up, etc.).



#8—Kids Need Love

(John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-8)

The Situation: Kids wonder, “Does anyone really love me?” Children are aware that human love often comes with conditions and exceptions. They hear about people who are passionately “in love” who soon find themselves infatuated with someone else. They are often exposed to selfish, performance-based love that’s “here today, gone tomorrow.”

The Solution: God’s unconditional love is selfless; it remains constant regardless of circumstances. In the Bible, love is not a feeling or emotion; it is something we see in action. Love has arms and legs that serve. Love is the disciplined will and resolve to seek the welfare of others. Selfless

love motivated Jesus Christ to abandon heaven’s glory. Love kept Him on the cross, paying for the sins of His beloved.

What You Can Do: Dispense generous dosages of selfless, unconditional love to your kids. They need undiluted affection that consistently mirrors the qualities described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Tell your children that God loves them—and you do, too. Validate the presence of God within you by finding creative ways to express love to them.



#9—Kids Need the Bible

(Joshua 1:8; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The Situation: Children ask, “What’s so special about the Bible?” Billions of beautiful and interesting books are printed every year. Some children treat God’s Word like any other book, missing out on its guidance and power.

The Solution: The Bible stands alone, the only Book from God—His inspired, relevant, and life-changing message. God has preserved His Word through the centuries so that it might continue to speak to us today and transform us tomorrow. Cultivate a deep appreciation for the richness and power of Scripture so the Bible will become your child’s trusted companion.

What You Can Do: Make it your personal goal to read, appreciate, and apply God’s Word more than you ever have before. As you fall in love with the Scriptures, you’ll model the behavior that your child needs to see. Encourage him or her to follow your example.



#10—Kids Need High Standards

(Daniel 1:8; Philippians 3:13-14)

The Situation: Adults wonder, “Why are many Christians ‘mediocre’?” The world belittles selflessness, righteousness, and humility, but God prizes these virtues. In an effort to be “cool” and to fit in, many children become satisfied with lackluster spiritual growth.

The Solution: Children rarely rise above the level of our expectations. They reach only as high as we hold the bar. We often place the “spiritual growth” bar far too low, causing them to believe that their faith is not all that important. By establishing higher standards, we can motivate children to keep growing as Jesus’ lifelong disciples.

What You Can Do: It is time to “raise the bar.” Kids have untapped potential to learn practical skills for using God’s Word, relating to people, and living out their faith in the real world. Challenge your child to reach his or her full potential as a Christian. Establish expectations based on your child’s ability, raising or lowering those expectations when appropriate.



#11—Kids Need a Foundation

(Matthew 7:24-29; Deuteronomy 6:7)

The Situation: Parents ask, “What will they learn?” Every child is different. They bring a variety of abilities and backgrounds to the classroom. Some children know a great deal about the Bible; others have no Christian instruction. Teachers are perplexed about how much to communicate to their classes.

The Solution: Learning is like climbing a ladder. Each rung must support us before we step higher. The early years lay the foundation for all other learning. Jesus’ parables illustrate this. He used familiar settings to communicate new principles about God’s kingdom. Higher-order information makes sense only when we add it to an existing foundation of knowledge.

What You Can Do: Reinforce your child’s foundation. Remember that new learning builds on previous learning. Become the expert of your child’s abilities and experiences. Don’t push too hard; but don’t let him or her slide into mediocrity, either. When appropriate, supplement the curriculum. Ask your child’s teacher where to begin.



#12—Kids Need to Serve

(Matthew 25:35-40; Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Peter 4:10)

The Situation: Adults wonder, “Why are many children spoiled?” Children are selfish by nature. They enjoy the limelight. They like to receive gifts. They have learned to expect much from others. Children become so accustomed to having their needs met that they rarely think about serving others.

The Solution: Becoming a Christian is a selfish act. We need forgiveness—and Jesus Christ is the only source. Christian conduct, however, ought to reflect selflessness. Christians live as Christ lived—for others. We can freely give because Jesus has promised to meet our every need. In addition, the Holy Spirit empowers us and distributes spiritual gifts for us to serve others.

What You Can Do: Honestly appraise your child’s tendency toward selfishness. Model servanthood. Don’t let your child selfishly take advantage of people who do not expect them to reciprocate. Use your time, talents, and treasures to serve others together.



#13—Kids Need Boundaries

(Psalm 1:1-3; Proverbs 4:26-27)

The Situation: Kids complain, “My parents won’t let me do anything!” As children grow older, they want fewer restrictions and more freedom. Kids cannot understand why parents don’t trust their judgment. They view parental boundaries as roadblocks to their independence.

The Solution: Boundaries provide both security and freedom. At birth, children are entirely dependent upon their parents. The Bible directs Christian parents to wean their children from dependence upon themselves to dependence upon God.

What You Can Do: Establish clearly-defined boundaries with your children. Make sure that they understand why each boundary is important. Explain that fences keep good things in and bad things out. Inside the fence, kids enjoy freedom to roam within a safe environment. Outside, dangerous influences lie in wait.



#14—Kids Need Correction

(Proverbs 22:15, 29:15-17; Hebrews 12:5-11)

The Situation: Kids protest, “Why are you punishing me?” Children can see only that correction results in a rebuke, spanking, or loss of privileges. They cannot yet appreciate the long-term value of learning an important lesson that molds, strengthens, and perfects their character.

The Solution: A seasoned preacher observed, “About the time folks stopped training horses and started driving cars, parents lost their child-raising skills.” He knew that both horses and children have individual needs and personalities. Both learn through correction. Both must be led. Children are predisposed to make foolish choices. Correction, though painful at the time, leads to righteous living.

What You Can Do: Encourage your child to view correction as an essential good rather than an unwarranted evil. The Lord identifies Himself as a loving Father who always shows concern for the welfare of His children. God knows what each person truly needs, and He disciplines us accordingly. Never discipline in anger. Always follow up correction with affection and affirmation.



#15—Kids Need Direction

(Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 4:14)

The Situation: Kids ask, “Where does this path lead?” They are looking for clear direction. Many parents feel inadequate, so they leave academic and social training to the school and spiritual training to the church—or to chance. As a result, children wander, or worse, choose dangerous courses.

The Solution: God has given parents primary responsibility to train their children (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Parents must rise to this challenge, or worldly influences will win the hearts of their kids. Churches must rescue families by encouraging and equipping parents to carry out this responsibility. Together, parents and churches can lead children along righteous pathways.

What You Can Do: Acknowledge that God has entrusted you with the responsibility of providing direction for your child. Ask the Lord to reveal His unique identity and purpose for each one. Be proactive every day—in every area of his or her life. Pursue a variety of meaningful experiences together. If necessary, get help—before it’s too late!



#16—Kids Need Prayer

(Matthew 7:7-8; James 5:16)

The Situation: Kids wonder, “Will God really answer my prayers?” Some children think that God is too big or too busy to hear their requests. Others feel too awkward or unworthy to speak with Him. Still others stop praying after a request is not granted.

The Solution: God yearns to hear from His children! The Lord speaks to us via the Scriptures. We respond to Him via prayer. God created people to enjoy unbroken communion with Him. Prayer can be as natural as eating and sleeping.

What You Can Do: Pray together—from the time you awaken your child in the morning until you tuck him or her in bed at night. Practice using the “H-E-A-R-T” acrostic:

Honor God with praise and respect.

Examine your life, confessing any sins.

Ask God to supply your personal needs.

Request God’s help for the needs of others.

Thank God for blessing you every day.



#17—Kids Need Jesus

(John 14:6, 20:29-31; Matthew 28:18-20)

The Situation: Children ask, “Is Jesus Christ real?” Some people honor Jesus as an important historical figure, some worship Him as God, still others reject Jesus and use His name with contempt or indifference. Many children are confused about His true identity and don’t know Him as Savior.

The Solution: Though 2000 years have elapsed since He walked the earth, Jesus Christ remains the central figure of human history. Jesus’ messages, miracles, passion, and triumphant resurrection confirm that He is truly God and truly Man, the Savior of the world. Children can affirm Jesus Christ as personal Savior and exalt Him as Lord over all.

What You Can Do: Read through the Gospel accounts with your child. Focus on Jesus’ great love for those around Him; talk about what He says and does. Help your child develop a fuller appreciation of who Jesus is. Make a personal commitment to follow Jesus Christ everywhere He leads.



#18—Kids Need Motivation

(Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

The Situation: Children wonder, “What difference does it make?” Some children are discouraged about trying to please God. They have lost interest in spiritual matters and are not motivated to be involved. Instead, they focus on their own interests and let the world guide them.

The Solution: Throughout the Bible, God uses a variety of cause-effect techniques to motivate His people. Some are positive and some are punitive; some are earthly and some are eternal. Sometimes children need to be reminded that every human being will someday meet the Creator face-to-face—and give an account to Him.

What You Can Do: Every child can be motivated—though not every child responds to the same stimulus. Find ways to lift your child’s eyes from self to God. Help him or her realize that God is real. Establish an appropriate system of rewards and penalties. Reinforce and motivate attitudes and behaviors that honor God. Show how faith is relevant to life. Encourage; affirm; model; pray.



#19—Kids Need Character

(Matthew 12:33; Luke 6:45)

The Situation: Some people challenge established Christian virtues. They ask, “Why value a righteous lifestyle?” Many children grow up without the benefit of role models who exhibit positive character traits. Qualities such as honesty, diligence, and respect are in short supply. Homes and schools do not necessarily reinforce these basic values.

The Solution: “Character” describes who we really are, the person we choose to be. Jesus modeled character traits all Christians can develop. We build character through thousands of choices, one decision at a time. Outside, everyone can see our attitudes and actions (our reputation). Inside, only God knows about our hidden thoughts and dreams.

What You Can Do: Download the simple chart with eleven character traits that your child will learn about during this quarter (DiscipleLand.com/parents). When he or she reflects one of these characteristics, draw a “happy face” beside it. When your child “misses the mark,” sit down together and talk about it privately.



#20—Kids Need Balance

(Luke 2:52; Mark 12:30-31)

The Situation: The adage, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” is true! Similarly, “All play and no work makes Jill a lazy girl.” Some children receive an overdose of sports, TV, school, video games, or even church. Few kids experience the energizing vitality that takes place when their minds, hearts, and bodies are stretched to reach their full potential.

The Solution: Achieving balance is the key to a child’s overall development. Even as a child, Jesus kept things in balance. One simple Bible verse summarizes His childhood: He grew intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially (Luke 2:52). Balanced discipleship links three dimensions—growth in knowledge, in character, and in conduct. Children must embrace all three.

What You Can Do: These three pursuits will help you build balanced, lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ:

- 1) Know God intimately—help your child develop a reservoir of Bible knowledge.
- 2) Love God passionately—practice displaying Christlike character in every area of life.
- 3) Serve God selflessly—demonstrate faithful conduct that honors God and helps people.



#21—Kids Need Mercy and Grace

(Exodus 33:13-19; Ephesians 2:4-9)

The Situation: Kids ask, “Do I deserve this?” They feel wronged when they experience treatment that they consider to be “unjust” or “unfair.” On the other hand, children can also be overwhelmed when they receive undeserved favor. Children need to appreciate God’s mercy and grace to extend the same to others.

The Solution: Mercy and grace are like two sides of the same coin. “Mercy” is not getting the punishment that we truly deserve. “Grace” is getting VIP treatment that we truly do not deserve. God displays mercy—He doesn’t treat us as our sins deserve—because Jesus Christ took our punishment. God also extends grace—He treats us to blessings that we have not earned.

What You Can Do: Use a coin to explain these two concepts to your child. Because Christ satisfied God’s holy standard, He can now shower His people with both mercy and grace. Look for ways to mirror God’s compassion by expressing mercy and grace. Point out any clear examples of mercy and grace in your family encounters.



#22—Kids Need Forgiveness

(Isaiah 55:6-7; Psalm 103:10-12; Ephesians 4:31-32)

The Situation: Kids declare, “I’ll never forgive you for that!” They learn to hold grudges and to get revenge. This practice begins a downward spiral that leads to bitterness, bondage, and even health-related issues. But forgiveness leads to freedom. It is foundational to the Christian faith.

The Solution: Through Christ’s death, Christians are beneficiaries of God’s ultimate forgiveness. He has forgiven us thousands of times! God obligates His children to model His own unlimited capacity to forgive—even with people who are truly difficult. His example to us demands nothing less!

What You Can Do: Practice repentance and forgiveness. Teach your child that “repent” means to reverse directions, to turn away from one thing and to turn toward another. Repentance requires genuine sorrow for your sin against God. It includes an inward change of attitude and an outward change of action. Forgive one another as freely as God has forgiven you.



#23—Kids Need Doctrine

(Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The Situation: Kids wonder, “Are the things I learn in Church true?” Children who have routinely swallowed teaching about relativism and tolerance have little regard for absolute truth. They view doctrine as restrictive and meaningless. Western culture no longer reflects a Biblical world-view.

The Solution: Based on God’s revelation in the Bible, doctrine offers a clear and connected explanation of what Christians believe, the essential truths of the faith. Our doctrine must be stated anew for each generation—in the language of that generation.

What You Can Do: Validate your child’s faith by showing practical ways that his or her beliefs relate to life. Read or recite the Apostles’ Creed together. Discuss each phrase, looking up Scripture passages (download at DiscipleLand.com/parents). In your home, reinforce positive attitudes about the Bible, the Church, and Christian living. To a child, if Christianity doesn’t work at home, then it must not be true. Christian faith must be fortified by consistent Christlike behavior.



#24—Kids Need Salvation

(Luke 19:10; Acts 4:12, 16:31)

The Situation: Kids ask, “How can my sins be forgiven?” Children are acutely aware that sin separates them from God. More respond to the Good News between the ages of 4 and 14 than any other time. But many children are never given the opportunity to receive new life.

The Solution: Salvation is a free gift through personal faith in Jesus Christ. When are children ready to trust Christ as Savior?

- 1) Hearts—when they feel sorrow for their own sins.
- 2) Heads—when they understand that Jesus took their place, dying to pay for their shortcomings.
- 3) Hands—when they are ready to respond by repenting in attitude and action, receiving His new life.

What You Can Do: Deal with each child individually. When you sense the time is appropriate, present the Gospel twice. The first time, clearly explain the Good News. Use visuals, stories, or diagrams to help communicate the message. The second time, review the Gospel and offer an opportunity to respond. Encourage your child to express his or her faith through prayer.



#25—Kids Need the Church

(Acts 2:46-47; Ephesians 4:11-13)

The Situation: Children ask, “Do we have to go to church?” Many kids don’t want to attend church activities because they don’t sense personal responsibility to God. Children don’t feel as if they belong or that they matter to the church as a whole. They have not yet learned to appreciate the importance of their church family.

The Solution: Being part of a local church is a great privilege! Members of the body of Christ enjoy a vertical relationship with Jesus Christ—their Head. Participating in worship is essential to remain close to Him. Christians also enjoy horizontal relationships with other believers. God gives each church member spiritual gifts to serve and build each other up.

What You Can Do: Communicate to your child that your family’s most important activity of the week is meeting with God. Model this priority by showing enthusiasm, speaking positively, and being prompt. Build ‘community’ with other church families. Be involved with each other. Belong!



#26—Kids Need the Holy Spirit

(Galatians 5:16; John 16:13)

The Situation: Children wonder, “Why do I sometimes do what is wrong—even when I don’t want to?” For many kids, the spiritual life feels like a tug-of-war. Evil pulls on one side and good tugs on the other. The flesh battles against the Spirit.

The Solution: The “Spirit of life” has set Christians free from the power of sin and death. God’s Spirit *indwells* (lives permanently inside) every Christian (1 Corinthians 6:19), but many Christians are not *filled* (directed and empowered) with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). To walk in the Spirit, Christians must be under the full influence of God.

What You Can Do: Be an example and live the Spirit-filled life every day. Here’s how:

- 1) Deny your own selfish interests. Say “no” to self (Matthew 16:24-26).
- 2) Yield to Jesus Christ who lives in and through you. Jesus is the Master. You are His slave. From now on, He has final say in everything (Galatians 2:20).

The Spirit-filled life = my death to self + Jesus’ life in me



#27—Kids Need Good News

(Matthew 19:14; 2 Timothy 3:14-15)

The Situation: Some people say, “Children need to grasp the Gospel’s deep significance before they respond.” This thinking marginalizes the power of the Good News. As a result, many kids don’t become aware that Jesus can help them face difficult challenges.

The Solution: As soon as children become aware of personal sin, they are ripe to respond to the Gospel. By the age of 8-10, kids develop the ability to think abstractly. They can understand the concept of substitution—that Jesus took their place and died to forgive their sins. Present the Good News to them—clearly and enthusiastically!

What You Can Do: Discern your child’s spiritual condition. Is he or she ready to respond, struggling to understand, or resisting the Gospel message? Don’t manipulate a child to simply do what you want. After your child responds to God’s offer of forgiveness and new life, encourage him or her to publicly profess faith in Christ to friends, family, and others.



#28—Kids Need Encouragement

(Ephesians 4:29-32; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

The Situation: Kids hear, “You’ll never amount to anything!” Many children are exposed to an onslaught of criticism, sarcasm, and derogatory comments. These words tear down a child’s confidence, competence, and self-esteem. As a result, kids have growing problems of insecurity and fear. They believe the messages that they hear!

The Solution: Just as a battery continually needs to be recharged, your child requires a constant supply of encouragement. To counterbalance negative messages, kids need large doses of support, affirmation, and praise. Look for ways to build your child up. Be his or her biggest cheerleader. Let your kids know that you believe in them—no matter what!

What You Can Do: Negative messages come from a variety of sources. Reduce or eliminate the number of times your child is exposed to hurtful words or detrimental conduct. Surround him or her with sources that will provide positive input. The changes in your child’s outlook and performance might amaze you!



#29—Kids Need Good Friends

(Proverbs 17:17; Proverbs 27:17)

The Situation: Children ask each other, “Will you be my friend?” Most kids are desperate to “belong.” They are afraid of being excluded and want to fit in with their peers. But many children lack the ability to distinguish good friends from bad. They fall prey to those who do not reflect Christian values.

The Solution: God created people to enjoy a variety of relationships. The first step to having good friends is being a good friend. King Solomon summed up friendship in one sentence: “A friend loves at all times” (Proverbs 17:17). Teach a child to love, and he or she will develop solid, healthy friendships.

What You Can Do: Help your child search for good friends, just as he or she would seek valuable treasure. Discuss each phrase of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 together, substituting the word “friends” for “love.” Explain that friendships take time to grow strong. Pray for your child, asking God to make him or her a good friend—and to provide many good, lasting friendships.



#30—Kids Need Routine

(Proverbs 3:23-26; 1 Corinthians 14:33,40)

The Situation: Kids wonder, “What’s going on?” Children tend to be overwhelmed by the chaotic pace of our helter-skelter world. Constant change confuses and frustrates them. An unstructured environment that lacks a daily regimen is counterproductive. Few kids thrive on chaos.

The Solution: When the Church carries out its activities with structure and order, harmony and peace result. To develop secure, stable, and confident children, establish a consistent routine at home and in the classroom. Daniel is a glowing example of someone whose personal regimen proved to be a great asset throughout his life (Daniel 6:10-11).

What You Can Do: Establish activity patterns for your child. Make a daily checklist that includes responsibilities such as: make bed, clean room, do homework, read Bible, feed pet, etc. Though occasional variations from the normal schedule can add excitement, kids welcome predictable patterns. They thrive on doing things in a prescribed order.



#31—Kids Need God's Worldview

(Acts 1:8; Acts 17:24-28)

The Situation: Kids ask, "Why should I care about people on the other side of the globe?" Many children are nearsighted and self-focused, showing concern only for what immediately affects them. They are largely indifferent about what matters most to God.

The Solution: Our worldview is the lens through which we interpret everything we see. It becomes the basis for our beliefs and decisions. A correct worldview begins with the infinite, personal God revealed in the Bible. God wants people to see the world from His perspective. The Scriptures form the framework for living out a consistent, Christ-centered worldview.

What You Can Do: Use a globe, maps, or Internet source to introduce your child to God's panoramic view of the world. As you "zoom in" to your own community, talk about what God sees and what He desires. Find practical ways to affect those around you: participate in local missions ministries, learn about church missionaries, pray for revival, take a family missions trip.



#32—Kids Need Confidence

(Philippians 1:6; Philippians 4:13)

The Situation: Kids protest, "I can't possibly do that!" Many children don't believe they are capable of attempting new tasks and challenges. Insecurities, low self-esteem, and feelings of inadequacy often undermine their confidence, making them fearful or apprehensive.

The Solution: The Biblical words for confidence mean "to trust" and "to be bold." For Christians, confidence begins with trust in God and in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. God, Himself, is at work within believers, enabling us to accomplish everything He asks us to do. We are His workmanship—and God finishes what He starts!

What You Can Do: Explain to your child that confidence is like a muscle; it grows with practice and experience. What Christians cannot do in our own strength, God can do through us! Memorize Philippians 4:13 together and discuss ways to foster a "can do" attitude. In addition: always believe in your child, affirm every effort, and don't compare him or her with other kids.



#33—Kids Need Candor

(Ephesians 4:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:21)

The Situation: Kids ask, “What am I really good at?” Some children are accustomed to candy-coated compliments and praise for mediocre efforts. But they see through superficiality and can spot insincerity a mile away. Kids don’t receive a genuine appraisal of their abilities.

The Solution: Children expect people to be honest with them, but they are often disappointed. Many adults are disingenuous when it comes to “speaking the truth in love.” We are overly concerned about hurting a child’s feelings or damaging his or her morale. This approach often backfires. Kids appreciate people who are frank and sincere with them.

What You Can Do: Inventory your child’s strengths and weaknesses. Be candid and affirming as you build on the strengths and address the weaknesses. When you point out a concern, be sure to provide encouraging solutions. Speak openly, but be careful not to exasperate or deflate him or her. Your child will value your assessment and greatly benefit from it.



#34—Kids Need Godly Heroes

(Matthew 20:25-28, Luke 16:15)

The Situation: Kids wonder, “When I grow up, can I be like him (or her)?” Television and other media exalt sports stars, super-models, and Hollywood celebrities. Nearly every child today idolizes these heroes and wants to emulate the rich and famous.

The Solution: Jesus could have established a cult-following. He could have basked in His popularity and His power. But Christ’s mission transcended the lures of wealth or status. The greatest people in God’s kingdom are those who serve others. In fact, God detests what the world values! We must ensure that our kids set their eyes on eternal ends, not on earthly idols.

What You Can Do: Know who your child’s heroes are. Evaluate the values that he or she esteems. Carefully filter your child’s experiences. Surround him or her with people who mirror godly traits and Christlike attitudes. Kids will look up to the people you admire and respect. Choose role-models who will contribute to your child’s spiritual growth and support your Christian values.



#35—Kids Need Goals

(Jeremiah 29:11, Philippians 3:14)

The Situation: Kids say, “This is too hard. I can’t do it!” Some children get frustrated because they have trouble accomplishing tasks. They learn to doubt their ability to get things done. Their lack of success erodes self-confidence, derails ambition, and breeds aimlessness.

The Solution: God made people in His own image—to be like Him. This includes being creative, taking action, reaching new heights, and finding pleasure in achievements. Here are some guidelines to help establish personal goals: 1) Good goals are Biblical. They line up with God’s plan. 2) Good goals are specific. They tell exactly what you want to do. 3) Good goals are measurable. They say when you have finished. 4) Good

goals are realistic. With God’s help, you can accomplish them.

What You Can Do: Set some exciting goals for yourself, and show your child how to do the same. Write those goals down and check your progress often. Help small children get the idea of taking incremental steps to accomplish a larger goal. Affirm your child’s progress. Celebrate his or her successes!



#36—Kids Need Gratitude

(Colossians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:18)

The Situation: Kids wonder, “What is there to be thankful for?” Some children show very little appreciation for the blessings that God gives. They possess an “entitlement mentality,” taking things for granted and assuming that God will be back tomorrow with more.

The Solution: Again and again in the Bible, God tells His people to “give thanks”—because the Lord is good and because His love endures forever. Many people learn to appreciate their families, possessions, and God’s blessings only after unexpected disasters take them away. God commands His children to “give thanks in everything”—even in the midst of difficult situations.

What You Can Do: Cultivate an attitude of gratitude in your home. Introduce “thanks-living”—a holiday that kids can celebrate every day of the year! Remind children of the effort and the sacrifices that people have made to provide the things they enjoy. Teach your kids to count every blessing, to say “thank-you” at every opportunity, and to send a thank-you note each time they receive a gift or an invitation. Start your own “thanks-living” list today.



#37—Kids Need History

(Deuteronomy 6:20-24; Psalm 90:12)

The Situation: Kids grumble, “Why should I care about things that happened long ago?” Children don’t relate to ancient people and events. In some cases, they don’t even care about their own family heritage or ancestors. They think that today’s issues aren’t connected to anything that has gone before.

The Solution: History is endlessly fascinating! God reveals Himself through history. All the events essential to Christians—most notably Jesus’ birth and His resurrection—are rooted in history. The past helps us understand the present and make plans for the future. History had a beginning and it will come to an abrupt end.

What You Can Do: Build bridges from your child’s personal interests to historical figures and events. As you introduce him or her to ancient stories that parallel life today, the past will come back to life—illuminating the present. A reservoir of historical knowledge will enable your child to walk wisely into the future.



#38—Kids Need Challenges

(Isaiah 40:30-31; Philippians 4:13)

The Situation: Kids complain, “This is too hard for me!” They protest when assignments, chores, or situations they face seem to be unreasonably difficult. Children are short-sighted. When left to themselves, they almost always choose the “path of least resistance.”

The Solution: Adults are tempted to respond to complaints by “dumbing down” a task. This results in a cycle of continually lower expectations. But God doesn’t want us to trust in our own strength. Sometimes the Lord places challenges in our path so we learn to rely on Him. The Bible is full of examples of people who pushed through difficult challenges and emerged with a significant victory!

What You Can Do: Discuss with your child why it is always more difficult to climb to the summit than to coast downhill. Emphasize that the summit offers exhilaration and a sense of genuine accomplishment! Encourage your child to tackle difficult assignments (perhaps breaking the challenging task into manageable pieces) and to always do his or her best!



#39—Kids Need Priorities

(Matthew 6:33; Mark 12:30-31)

The Situation: Kids ask, “What’s wrong with just ‘hanging out?’” Everyone needs time to unwind and to enjoy leisure activities, but when children “hang out” too much, they squander many hours, accomplishing nothing significant with their time.

The Solution: Priorities have to do with the way we choose to invest our time—our most precious commodity. Jesus told many stories to explain that seeking God’s kingdom is every person’s greatest prize and highest priority. He compared God’s kingdom to a rich treasure and to a valuable pearl (Matthew 13:44-46). Pursuing righteousness is the wisest investment any person can make.

What You Can Do: Study the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21) together. Then create a “personal planner,” talking about your own schedule and your child’s use of time. Explain that unplanned hours often become unproductive, wasted hours. Revisit your planner and make changes that will yield eternal dividends!



#40—Kids Need Rewards

(Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

The Situation: Christian kids think, “I’m going to heaven, so how I live on earth doesn’t matter.” Though salvation is a free gift to all who believe, some people in heaven will have nothing to show for their lives on earth. They will be ashamed when they meet Christ (1 John 2:28).

The Solution: Every attitude, thought, and action has both earthly and eternal consequences. For believers, bad attitudes, negative thoughts, and selfish actions will burn up at Christ’s judgment seat. But God will reward good attitudes, positive thoughts, and selfless actions—generously multiplying their value in heaven (Matthew 19:29).

What You Can Do: Study the “judgment seat of Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:10-15) together. Discuss how rewards motivate people. Explain that someday God will reward each Christian according to his or her good works. Look for opportunities to offer assistance, to share a word of encouragement, and to perform a kind service. Those deeds will never be regretted—and they may yield eternal rewards!



#41—Kids Need Discipleship

(Matthew 28:18-20, Deuteronomy 4:9)

The Situation: Many kids wonder, “If Christianity is so special, why don’t Christians live like Jesus?” Children readily distinguish between what they read in the Bible and what they see in real life.

The Solution: Jesus calls all His followers to unswerving allegiance to Him—and His word is never negotiable. Being a disciple is much more than “part-time Christianity.” First and foremost, Jesus Christ calls the Church to make disciples. Discipleship is Christ’s sole weapon to win the world. He never mentioned “Plan B.” The vitality of the next generation of Christians hinges on the willingness of parents and churches to disciple children.

What You Can Do: Churches must plan purposeful ministries to disciple parents who will, in turn, disciple their children. Encourage your church to equip parents to carry out their responsibility. Recommit yourself to disciple your child—it’s the one thing you cannot afford to neglect!



#42—Kids Need “Meat”

(Hebrews 5:12-14, Ephesians 4:13-16)

The Situation: Some older kids think, “The Bible is for little children who like to hear stories.” These “tweens” believe they’ve outgrown the Bible—not because God’s Word has nothing more to offer, but because they continue to receive baby food when they’re ready for more substantial nourishment. They don’t see how simple Bible stories relate to their daily lives.

The Solution: A Christian’s desire for God’s Word should mirror an infant’s yearning for milk (1 Peter 2:2). As babies grow up they still need nourishment, but their interests move to solid food. If kids have lost their appetite for the Bible, modify their diet! Milk alone will not produce lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 5:14).

What You Can Do: A healthy diet for kids includes both milk (basic Bible stories, beliefs, and values) as well as meat (more challenging concepts). Never forget to make Bible truths part of everyday life! Build bridges from the past (what the passage meant to Bible-times readers) to the present (what the passage means in today’s culture). As you do these things, you will help “bring the Bible to life” in your child!



#43—Kids Need Quiet-times

(Isaiah 40:31; Jeremiah 9:23-24)

The Situation: Kids think, “I’m too busy to read my Bible and pray.” The truth is, most children enjoy more discretionary time now than ever. They spend hours watching TV, or mastering video games, or “hanging out” with friends, or... Kids have more time now to develop a pattern of daily quiet-times with God than they ever will!

The Solution: God delights in His children! He is eager to meet with us—and He wants us to seek Him. The Lord made us for Himself. Therefore, no human being can afford to neglect pursuing God as his or her utmost priority. Daily quiet-times are the most effective way to nourish our relationship with God.

What You Can Do: Help your kids schedule five to fifteen minutes each day to meet with God. Although they may object at first, soon they will look forward to each opportunity to enjoy the Lord’s fellowship. To promote conversation, your entire family may want to follow the same devotional guide or Bible reading schedule. Make personal quiet-times with God a priority—for you and your children.



#44—Kids Need Openness

(Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4)

The Situation: Kids wonder, “If I ask that question, will someone think it’s dumb...or will I get in trouble?” As children grow older, they learn that they can confide in some people—but not everyone. They know that some topics are “safe”—and others are not. While some people foster inquiry and discovery, others squelch learning.

The Solution: Our heavenly Father is the “perfect parent prototype.” He is always approachable, welcoming us into His presence. The Lord has no interest in intimidating or disheartening His children. God speaks openly and honestly. He communicates the “whole truth” and is willing to interact with us on any subject.

What You Can Do: Provide a receptive, non-threatening environment that is conducive for your child to explore new ideas and to ask honest questions. Assure him or her that you are glad to answer any question and that you welcome open dialogue on any subject. Encourage an atmosphere that will open the door to healthy conversations and a desire for lifelong learning.



#45—Kids Need Respect

(Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:4)

The Situation: Kids ask, “Why should I show respect?” Some children resist showing courtesy or appreciation to others. This behavior is often a response to not feeling respected or valued themselves. Children who receive little esteem rarely respect other people or their property.

The Solution: Respect is a critical ingredient in all human relationships—and a two-way street. God commands parents to treat their children with love and consideration. Similarly, God requires children to honor and respect their parents. Just as parents should insist on receiving respect from their children, they are obligated to model it in return.

What You Can Do: Above all, teach your child to respect and honor God. Reverence for God and His Word directly influences every person’s self-concept and the way he or she treats others. Explain the “spiral principle”—the more respect your child shows to others, the more respect he or she will receive from others (Galatians 6:7-10). Live in such a way that you merit respect. Your child will treat you and other adults accordingly.



#46—Kids Need Wisdom

(Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9)

The Situation: Kids wonder, “How can I make good choices?” On issues related to their values, character, and conduct, many children are exposed to very conflicting perspectives. They are pulled in divergent directions and need help to choose wisely.

The Solution: Proverbs 1-9 is God’s guidebook for parents to direct their children. These chapters extol the way of wisdom and condemn a life of folly. The last chapter personifies wisdom and foolishness as two opposing voices that beckon to children. Wisdom calls youth to follow a righteous path (9:1-12). Folly cries out for kids to listen to ill-advised ideas (9:13-18).

What You Can Do: Encourage your child to choose wisdom over folly. Make a poster showing two paths that grow further and further apart. Wisdom’s narrow path leads to righteousness, insight, and integrity. Folly’s wide road leads to selfishness, sinfulness, and emptiness. Read and discuss Proverbs 1-9 together, writing words on the poster that describe the two paths. Help your child see the long-term implications of his or her choices.



#47—Kids Need Skills

(Proverbs 22:29; Ecclesiastes 2:21)

The Situation: Kids moan, “Why do I have to do this?” They often resist parents’ efforts to develop a new skill or hone a talent. Left to themselves, children would spend all their discretionary time playing sports or games, watching TV, or having fun with friends.

The Solution: After the Exodus, the Holy Spirit imparted special skills so God’s people could construct the tabernacle (Exodus 35:30—36:1). In Bible times, every Hebrew boy learned a marketable trade—even though he might not continue it as a profession. Paul was trained as a tent-maker, Jesus learned carpentry skills, and David tended sheep.

What You Can Do: Talk with your child about discovering hidden talents and skills. Encourage him or her to acquire at least one special skill that could become a lifelong hobby or part-time job. Consider ceramics, carpentry, sewing, baking, gardening, painting, cooking, auto upkeep, music, or embroidery. Choose something that fits his or her interests—and do it together!



#48—Kids Need Contentment

(Luke 12:15; Hebrews 13:5)

The Situation: Kids demand, “I need to have one of those!” Many children don’t distinguish between “needs” and “wants.” As a result, contentment is short-lived. Many bedrooms, closets, and garages are filled with “needs” that have become little more than clutter.

The Solution: Jesus viewed materialism and consumerism as enemies (Matthew 6:19-21). A person’s life does not consist of possessions or material goods. Indeed, “things” cause many believers to lose their focus on what is truly important and miss out on life’s essentials. Discontentment often leads to greed, the monster that can never be satisfied.

What You Can Do: Explain to your child that “wants” and “needs” are very different. Compile a list of things that you truly need, then compare your list to 1 Timothy 6:6-8. Select your child’s privileges and possessions carefully. In the long run, giving kids less may actually provide them with more. Go through your things together and donate the unneeded stuff to a local charity.