

Leaders
Teachers
Parents

Balance Your Growth

DEVELOP DISCIPLES IN THREE DIMENSIONS (3-D)

Discipleship is often labeled a “spiritual” activity. Nothing could be further from the truth! Jesus Christ showed His followers that discipleship encompasses every aspect of life. Parents and teachers of children who hope to raise devoted disciples must balance their kids’ growth in three essential areas—knowledge, character, and conduct.

First Century Parenting

Just for fun, put yourself in the sandals of Joseph or Mary, Jesus’ earthly parents. While raising a child who never lied, never talked back, never undermined their authority, and always obeyed—what unique challenges did they face?

A solitary verse summarizes Joseph and Mary’s parenting efforts: “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). However easy or difficult raising Jesus may have been, His parents achieved a remarkable balance with their remarkable Son. His formation progressed intellectually (wisdom), physically (stature), spiritually (favor with God), and relationally (favor with men).

Twenty-first Century Parenting

Now replace those first century sandals with your favorite 21st century footgear. Educators today use different terms (cognitive, affective, and sensory-motor) to identify ways that children develop. Cognitive = intellectual growth (knowledge), affective = emotional growth (character), and sensory-motor = physical growth (conduct).

Christian educators explore how these interdependent dimensions contribute to a person’s spiritual formation. Discipleship is the ongoing process whereby believers grow in Biblical knowledge, Christlike character, and faithful conduct—to the glory of God. Your goal in discipling your child to be like Jesus is to effectively interweave all three dimensions: knowledge + character + conduct.

- **Knowledge:** Kids develop a reservoir of knowledge based on a Biblical worldview.
- **Character:** Children display Christlike character in every area of life.
- **Conduct:** Students demonstrate faithful conduct that honors God and helps people.

Walking in Jesus’ steps and being His disciple is the Christian’s highest privilege! The Bible illumines a finite number of “must know” topics to understand (knowledge), “must be” traits to exhibit (character), and “must do” activities to experience (conduct). When a child’s development includes that knowledge, those traits, and those experiences, you can be reasonably assured that you have done your part to build a balanced, lifelong disciple of Jesus Christ.



DiscipleLand
Children’s Ministry
Tools

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Where do you start? Take a close look at your child. Children are inclined to favor either knowledge or character or conduct. One of those three dimensions is his or her area of natural strength. Each child also shows a reluctance or inability in one dimension. Strengths have corresponding weaknesses. Balanced discipleship training encourages children to grow in areas of natural strength and to reinforce areas that are prone to weakness. What will happen if your child's Bible knowledge, or Christian character, or faithful conduct is neglected? Let's find out.

Seven Growth Paths

One-Dimensional Growth Paths

Children who favor only one dimension show significant promise in that area. But over time, they will be greatly limited unless parents counterbalance a child's natural strengths with effective training that props up weaker areas.

- 1. THINKERS (Knowledge):** Thinkers love to analyze and reflect. These kids naturally gravitate to knowledge. They like to learn new things and usually do well in school. However, as their intellects grow, these same children need to develop their personal relationships, and their ability to get things done.
- 2. RELATERS (Character):** Relaters love to be with people. These children are often sensitive to the Lord and skilled with other people. They have tender spirits and are careful not to offend others. Friendships come easily, but these kids must push themselves to learn academic subjects, and to become dutiful workers.
- 3. DOERS (Conduct):** Doers love to get things done. These people like to be involved doing projects. It is second nature for them to accomplish things quickly. But these children need to think before they act, and to develop their interpersonal skills.

Two-Dimensional Growth Paths

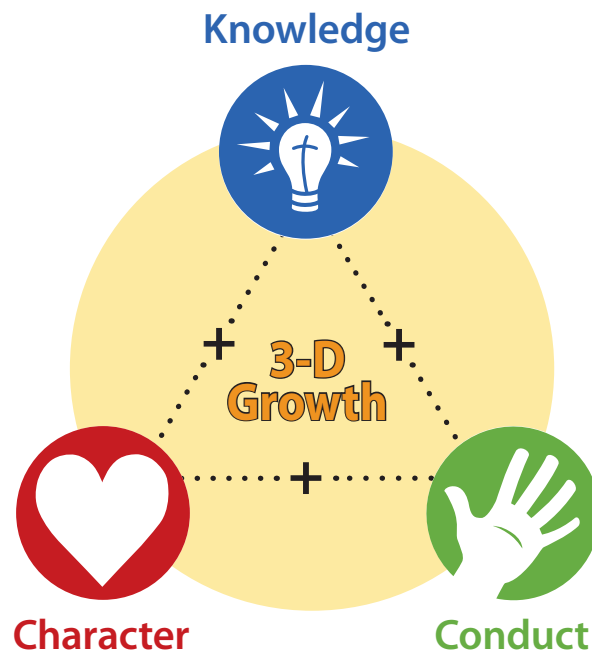
Kids who favor two dimensions display great potential. Their strengths are readily apparent, but if parents aren't proactive to reinforce the weak area, these children will eventually show disappointing signs.

- 4. PLANNERS (Knowledge + Character):** Planners love to strategize and prepare. These children think clearly and carefully weigh how their ideas will affect themselves and others. But they have trouble implementing their plans, rarely completing tasks on time.
- 5. DIRECTORS (Knowledge + Conduct):** Directors love to be in charge. These kids evaluate options and move ahead with well-conceived efforts. But children who neglect the feelings of others or who lack personal integrity tend to alienate their friends.
- 6. MOTIVATORS (Character + Conduct):** Motivators love to energize people. These kids work well in groups and are good at encouraging others to get involved. But they don't always think about long-term consequences, leading to poor results or broken relationships.

Three-Dimensional Growth Path

Jesus Christ is our model for balanced growth. As a boy, He developed all three dimensions: growing in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and people (Luke 2:52). Christ calls His children to follow in His footsteps so they reach their full potential.

- 7. SERVANT-LEADERS (Knowledge + Character + Conduct):** Servant-leaders love God and people. These people establish meaningful goals and influence others to make good choices. They seek God's wisdom to accomplish God's purposes God's way.



Why Build Balanced Disciples?

Jesus told a parable that describes the delights of building a balanced life—and the disaster that results when one dimension is neglected (Matthew 7:24-27). As a “wake-up call” to conclude His Sermon on the Mount, Christ compares the lifework of two remarkably similar people. Both attended the same church, heard the same sermons, and enjoyed relationships with the same people.

Jesus likens their activities to building two identical houses. One person started on a solid foundation, but the other built on a soft foundation. What was the singular difference between the activities of these two people? (Look closely at verse 24 and verse 26.

In this often-misinterpreted parable, the solid foundation is not “Jesus, the Rock.”) Christ tells His listeners that the bedrock is “application”—doing—acting upon His words. The person whose house rested on the sand listened to all the truths, but failed to apply them. Consequently, his accomplishments were washed away! The only way to build a solid foundation is to respond to God’s Word—putting Biblical principles into daily practice.

As you apply Christ’s principles to your life, your children will also begin to build a solid foundation. As they apply the Scriptures to their own lives, they will be prepared to weather the coming storms. With your love, encouragement, and direction, they will grow in **knowledge + character + conduct**.

Now let’s fast-forward to Jesus’ adulthood. When a lawyer challenged Christ to select the most important of the 613 Old Testament laws, Jesus responded, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31, NIV).

Again, notice the balanced growth: love God with all your heart (emotional/character), all your soul (spiritual), all your mind (intellectual/knowledge), all your strength (physical/conduct); and love your neighbor (relational/conduct) as yourself. God calls each of us—every Christian man, woman, teen, and child—to love the Lord by growing in these three ways!



DiscipleLand™

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How Does DiscipleLand Build Disciples?

Here's how DiscipleLand helps you equip kids to reach their peak potential as Jesus' disciples. DiscipleLand's family of resources forms a complete Children's Discipleship System™ with five components:



DiscipleLand Preschool

launches children ages 2-5 to begin walking with God.

Preschoolers establish a solid foundation through 200 different Bible stories.



DiscipleLand Kindergarten

inspires kids ages 5-6 to follow amazing Bible heroes.

Children grasp God's plan and purpose as they overview the entire Bible.



DiscipleLand Core Bible

challenges children in grades 1-6 to become victorious disciples.

Kids are equipped for Christian service through 24 quarters of sequential Bible curriculum.



DiscipleTOWN

equips kids in grades 1-6 with essential discipleship skills.

Children enjoy group learning in a creative Kids Church format.



DiscipleLand Adventure

motivates kids in grades 1-6 to pursue their discipleship journey.

Children travel to exciting locations around the world to experience topical Bible adventures.

DiscipleLand
Disciples for Life™

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DiscipleLand—Children's ministry curriculum, ideas, and discipleship resources for life.

This free Children's Ministry tool is provided for parents, teachers, and others who want to help make disciples for life!

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