**A Spiritual Plan for Children:**

**Parenting Handbook**

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**INTRODUCTION**

What is the most important thing in life to you? All of us would, no doubt, respond that it is our spouse and our children. Our children are a gift to us from God and we have maybe twenty years to work with them most directly in the hope that they will then belong to God forever. And God has given to parents the primary role in nurturing children to Christian maturity. While a congregation with its children’s classes and youth program can certainly help, as we shall see from many Scriptures, *God gives* *the primary responsibility and opportunity for training children to the parents.* This handbook is designed to help you to fulfill your parental role.

Unfortunately, it is clear from a variety of studies that too many children in most “Christian churches” do not remain in the faith of their parents. Surveys across the Christian community say that 60% to 70% of children raised in “Christian homes” leave the faith after they leave home. According to a study commissioned by presidents of universities from churches of Christ, the loss rate among these churches was 45% with about 12% eventually returning. And, in addition, some are never baptized into Christ in their youth. It is easy to ignore these numbers and assume that your child will be among those remaining faithful, but you will make that much more likely if you have a well-planned, intentional strategy for training your child in the faith. *What you do or do not do will make a huge difference!* Think of the joy you will have when your child continues in the church and is a strong part of a congregation of God’s people, and think of the sorrow you will feel should that not be the case.

We encourage you, therefore, to give the spiritual training of your children the highest priority. Years from now as you look back, you will want to say with John, “I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk with the Lord” (3 John 4). While John had reference to his spiritual children rather than to physical ones, the message is timely as we consider each of our children.

Of course there are other elements of parenting which are vitally important which are not covered in this Handbook such as teaching children how to use money, making the best use of their time, and learning to work. While the Bible teaches about such matters, such concepts are not the focus of this material. This Handbook, rather, deals with how you can best pursue the spiritual development of your child.

The Handbook was designed initially for use with a parenting class taught regularly at the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, but is intended for use in many other locations. This plan seeks is to give parents helpful suggestions as they develop a strategy for the spiritual development of each of their children. Those not in a parenting class can, of course, still use this Handbook on their own to prepare a spiritual plan for a child. The Handbook mentions a number of resources to use for additional assistance.

From our study and more than a hundred years of combined parenting experience among us, the authors propose that parents develop an intentional spiritual plan for each child. We suggest you have a loose leaf notebook into which you can place the following elements for the plan as we guide you in developing them: (1) a well-designed title page, (2) a family vision statement to express the spiritual goals of your family, (3) a family motto as an easy-to-remember capsule of your vision, (4) a personal letter to your child stating your strong desire that he will be faithful to God for a lifetime, (5) a record of treasured memories which recall special family occasions such as the time of the child’s baptism and a record of services she has rendered to the Lord, and (6) a set of spiritual objectives, listed year by year, which you and your child will work together to achieve and a record of when these objectives are accomplished. (We use “he” and “she” interchangeably throughout this Handbook.)

Each section of this Handbook is designed to help you to develop your child’s plan. Some Handbook sections give specific instructions about a particular element of the plan while other parts inform you about how you can develop specific objectives for your child to achieve. The items are listed in the order they would appear in the final spiritual plan although we may vary from that order somewhat in teaching the class. Through the class instruction and discussion with other parents, those taking the course will, week by week, develop a spiritual plan for one child. By the time the course ends, parents should have developed the plan for that child from whatever age he is currently for at least two or three years in the future. Of course, as the child actually moves through each year, parents will need to adjust the plan according to the progress of the child. While the class will focus on preparing a basic plan for one child, having developed the plan for one, parents can proceed to develop a plan for other children they have.

One practical note. You may be preparing your child’s plan on a computer and then printing a hardcopy to put in a notebook for you and your child to review together. In the study of Section 5D in the Handbook, you will be selecting objectives from a list we provide. The Handbook is also online so that after choosing an objective to include, you can copy it from the online copy of the Section 5D of the Handbook and then paste it into your own plan for the child. We also have in Appendix 11 and Appendix 12 some sample objectives with related material which you could copy and include if you wish.

Since nothing we do in life is more important than bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, we can approach the task of developing a plan for each child with determination and joy. As children grow into maturity, they make their own choices, but they are much more likely to make those choices in harmony with the will of God if their parents have developed and executed a specific spiritual plan for their spiritual growth. **We should also add that the example parents set before the child is a huge element for good or bad in the spiritual development of the child.** You must model what you want your child to become as well as to develop the specific spiritual plan which this Handbook will help you to devise.

**A Word to Teachers**

As the material in this Handbook suggests, the role of parents is critical in the spiritual development of a child. While parents may use others to help, God gives them the fundamental responsibility for raising their children “in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). While all parents want their children to be spiritually successful, they often are not *intentional* about having a well-developed *strategy* for reaching that goal.

This Handbook guides parents as they devise a successful plan to help a child to be faithful throughout life and, thus, to be with them in heaven. Coupled with class sessions, the material in this Handbook can move parents to help their children know the Scriptures, to have personal qualities that follow “in His steps,” and to have hope to motivate them along the way.

We believe it best for you to provide each individual parent or parent couple in the class with two loose-leaf notebooks. One of them will contain the copy of the Handbook which you print out for them. Also in this notebook, the parents can put other class materials you make available such as worksheets for class sessions you teach, ideas the parents want to keep, and notes they may take from other sources about parenting. The other loose-leaf notebook will contain the actual plan which they develop from the sections proposed by the Handbook. You may want to provide tabs for the latter notebook with headings for the elements of the Handbook described in Sections 2, 3, 4, and 5. Some may wish to ask students to pay a small fee to cover the cost of the notebooks and printing of materials for the class. Paying a few dollars for these materials might even cause some to take the class more seriously.

At [www.mrcc.org/spfc](http://www.mrcc.org/spfc) we provide lesson plans to use for teaching the classes along with instructions for the teacher, PowerPoint slides for these classes, and worksheets on which students can take notes. You may download these free. A good pattern for learning in this class is for you to speak the information in class lectures with questions and answers as possible, for the students to see the information in PowerPoint on the screen, for them to write it down on worksheets with blanks to fill in, and then for class members to do what has been taught.

The teachers’ job in leading parents in a class on developing an intentional strategy for raising a child to be faithful to the Lord is two-fold: first *to motivate* the parents to commit themselves to developing the plan and second, *to provide information and encouragement* as they go through the process. As you use this strategy, you can follow the lesson plans available at the website. These will provide the information you need both to teach and to motivate the parents and to guide parents as they move through the process of crafting their plan. The Appendix in the Handbook has reference material that will be of help and Appendix 1 provides a list of other material available on the website listed above.

If there is no higher calling than to raise children to be faithful, then what more vital work could one do to help parents in achieving this goal? So give yourself fully to motivating and informing parents in this task.

**Section 1: Title Page**

As you prepare your child’s spiritual plan, you may be anxious to get to the “meat” of the document, the parts you consider most important. If so, the Title Page and the two following sections may seem mere “window dressing.” But there is more to these portions of the plan than might at first appear. Someday they will be among the most cherished parts of your plan because you are not the only one to be looking at this document. You will eventually want to pass the plan on to your child who can review it to re-think her spiritual development.

The Title Page shows that the document is a “spiritual plan” and so should contain the child’s name and age and the date of the plan. Having the child’s own name on it impresses the child that this plan is made especially for him, and helps him “take ownership” of the document. In fact, that idea of “ownership” will become very literal as the child reaches adulthood, leaves home and takes the *completed* spiritual plan as a keepsake of his years of spiritual growth.

Beyond becoming a keepsake, consider the possibility that the child would continue to use her spiritual plan, or some form of it, when she leaves home, even to college. It is worth noting that some Christian universities are either introducing new programs or are strengthening existing programs to focus more on students’ spiritual development while in school. Parents and the child should certainly consider the continuing spiritual development of the child in choosing the university the child will attend and should investigate what activities and resources the child will have while attending. Also in choosing the university, they should assess the factors there which would work against the child’s spiritual development.

The Title Page is not simply to produce a label for a binder, or a cover sheet for a file. As you show your child the spiritual plan (whether it is in a three-ring binder or produced in an electronic format), the Title Page is an opportunity to demonstrate that the spiritual plan is a document of importance and value, reflecting *the importance and value you place on your child* and on his or her spiritual development.

If you have an artistic bent, the Title Page can be an occasion to allow your creativity to flow. When we give a gift, we don’t just toss it in a brown paper bag and hand it to the person. Instead, we carefully wrap the gift in bright, colorful paper and usually top it off with a bow. The care with which we wrap it demonstrates the value we place on the gift, as well as the value we place on the person to whom we are giving it. In the same way, the Title Page should be seen as the “gift wrapping” for the spiritual plan. If using a physical binder and it has a clear, plastic “pocket” on the front, insert the Title Page there.

**Title Page (Sample)**

**A**

**Plan**

**for the**

**Spiritual**

**Development**

**of Our/My Beloved**

**Son/Daughter**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Name**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Age**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date**

**Section 2: Vision Statement and Family Motto**

**Spiritual Dream: The Vision Statement**

What is the purpose of a vision statement? Why have a vision? A vision serves as a compass to guide us to our destination. “Where there is no vision, . . .” Prov. 29:18

What does it take to achieve a vision? How do we make it reality? Part of the answer is to define it specifically, to articulate clearly what we want to accomplish. Then we can create a plan to achieve the vision.

God has always had a vision of what He wanted His children to look like, a vision of how He wanted us to conduct our lives in a relationship with Him, His Son and His Spirit, with each other, with our neighbors and with the world. And, in order to communicate clearly His expectations and His goals for His people, He documented the vision. He wrote it down! That document becomes the source from which we draw a vision, not only for ourselves, but for our children as well.

When God called the prophet Habakkuk to speak His message to the people, He gave him these instructions):

“Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it” (2:2).

The wisdom of God as expressed in this verse has application for us today—that a vision written down in plain words will spur the reader to action.

Articulating a vision is truly essential to developing an effective method of discipling. Was Christ’s method of discipling in response to a vision of what he wanted his disciples to be?

Think of a vision statement as a spiritual picture of your children in the future. But it is so much more than that. That vision becomes your inspiration, the framework for all your careful planning for the future. What you are doing when creating a vision is articulating dreams and hopes, the spiritual goals God and you have for your children. The statement becomes a reminder of what you are trying to build. As Christian parents think about the possibility of what their children can become in the Lord, they increase the likelihood the children will reach that goal. Developing a clear vision statement is a first step of parental leadership which will enable children to find their most effective and productive place in God’s kingdom.

Do you have a vision of what you want your children’s relationship with the Lord to be by the time they leave home? Or, in other words, are you clear regarding God’s vision for your children? Is your vision reflected in a clearly defined plan? Are you monitoring and measuring the progress toward realizing the vision?

In order to make the vision reality, you will want to implement the long-term vision by using more manageable periods such as monthly, quarterly, and yearly plans corresponding with measurable objectives. These objectives become targets for “what we want the child to know” and “how we want the child to act” by the end of each period. At the appropriate age as you determine, your children can participate in this process. Their involvement will be “spiritually healthy” both for you and for them. In Section 5D of this Handbook, you will find instructions to assist you in developing specific objectives to help your child achieve the vision statement.

Reinforcing the wisdom of God, study after study tells us the importance of writing our goals. We need to remember that if we only speak the goals, we significantly diminish the prospects of achieving them. The most effective way to set and achieve objectives is to write them down.

So, in the words of God: **“Write the vision . . . make it plain!”**(Habakkuk 2:2)! Write down on paper your vision for your children’s relationship with the Lord. Write down your vision for your children’s spiritual development as they mature. Then expand on it and clarify it—“make it plain.” Identify in your own words clear, specific spiritual objectives that you and your children can strive for together.

Here are a few questions you might think about as you begin to write a vision statement:

* How do you expect your children to demonstrate respect to God, ties the church and a relationship to others?
* What specific knowledge of God’s Word do you want them to demonstrate?
* What Christ-like character traits do you want them to display?
* How do you want them to demonstrate their commitment to being faithful “servants of righteousness?”
* What evidence could show that your children are being transformed by the Word?
* What final outcome do you have for your family?

No doubt you have other ideas for picturing a vision for your children. Think through such things and note ideas that come to your mind and then put them together into a vision statement for your family.

Finally, it may be helpful to personify the vision. Certainly, you can always look to Christ as the ultimate example of what you want your children to be like spiritually. You can consider His spiritual attributes. But also consider others. For example, is your vision one of “raising up” someone with the leadership of a Nehemiah, or the benevolence of a Dorcas, or the faith of an Abraham, or the courage of an Esther, or the heart of a missionary like Paul, or an evangelist like Timothy?

Or, might you state your vision in terms of how your child can serve such as being a shepherd, a shepherd’s wife, a deacon, a teacher, an encourager, a servant of others, or a godly parent who will “train up a child?” Each of these will require certain Christ-like characteristics, which you can capture in the vision.

The vision statement should be carefully worded and as brief as you can make it while still expressing your thoughts. It should be a spearhead from which you develop a plan so it needs to be sharply worded. It should capture fully what you eventually want your child to “look like” when she is grown. Pray for God to bless your efforts as you to write it. And remember that there is no greater joy than for your children to be faithful (3 John 4).

**Family Motto**

The number one goal for Christian parents should be to equip their children for an eternity in heaven. Nothing should interfere with achieving that goal. There are many ways in which parents can communicate and live that goal. One very compelling technique is the use of a “family motto.” You might also refer to it as a family slogan which encapsulates your vision.

For decades a brother in Christ and his wife have had a family motto designed to remind the family of its number one goal—to spend eternity in heaven together. This motto is simple in its design, but powerful in the message it communicates throughout the family. It has now been shared among four generations. And, for many years has been the license plate on their car! It is, simply: “Be There.” The motto is so much an inherent part of who they are as a family that they have a four-generation photo in which all family members have their thumb pointed skyward.

Does your family have a motto? If not, please consider creating one that is clearly recognizable in its intent: eternity in heaven together. While you may choose to develop your own, it is certainly permissible if you want to adopt “Be There.” Or, perhaps, “E.T.” (“Eternity Together”) You could have fun with this one with family members frequently touching their index fingers together, reminding each other of the family’s number one goal.

A family motto is yet one more way in which you can instill within your children your desire for all family members to live in heaven eternally together. While the vision statement will be somewhat more detailed, the motto should capture the vision.

**Section 3: Personal Letter**

A hand-written personal letter will become one of the most cherished portions of the spiritual plan. It is an opportunity to share your heart with your child. It is an opportunity to express your commitment to guide his or her spiritual development. In a sense it is a continuation of the thoughts from your vision. The letter should be used to communicate clearly and lovingly your spiritual hopes and dreams for the child. Think of the impact Paul’s letters had. A letter can be a striking tool!

Use as many pages as you need. Tailor the letter to fit the situation. For example, the age of the child will influence the tone and content of your message. If the child is either yet unborn or soon to be adopted, you will express your thoughts appropriately. Simply open your heart and let your love pour forth. If the child is older, then fit the message to that age.

Below are suggestions for you to consider as your write your letter:

* Describe your love for and devotion to the child. Use language which will communicate how very special and important the child is in your life. Discuss how the child’s unique qualities set him apart from others and contribute so much to the family. Use this portion of the letter to also talk about all the things you look forward to sharing in his life.
* Let the child know how you prayed for her birth and how God answered the prayers and blessed your life by giving you her.
* Discuss your desire for the child to become a Christian, to live a faithful Christian life and to spend eternity with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.
* Discuss the “family motto/slogan” and how you will use it to help keep the family on a path to heaven.
* Communicate to the child how important God, Christ and the church have been and are in your life. You may wish to comment about your own decision to become a Christian, who or what influenced your decision, and when it occurred.
* Discuss the spiritual expectations that you have for the child.
* Emphasize your commitment to fulfill God’s expectations of you as a parent.
* As surely as nothing can separate a child of God from “the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39), assure the child that you will apply the same standard regarding your love for him.
* Talk about your commitment to model the life of Christ for the child, to also grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, just as you want the child to do.
* It’s okay to admit your own failures. Your child either already knows or will realize in time that you’re not perfect. Admit it. To the extent that you need to apologize for anything, do so. Make a commitment to do better.
* Describe the intent of the spiritual plan and how you intend to implement the plan.
* Talk about some of the important precepts which you want to emphasize in the spiritual development of the child and which you believe are imperative that the child understand.
* If there are particular character traits which you believe to be most important, mention them and your intent to help the child develop them. You can also speak in general terms about the child’s acquisition of spiritual traits.
* It is certainly appropriate to also talk about topics not covered in this material such as how much you enjoy spending time together, what pleases you about the child, the plans you have for shared interests as the child matures, and your commitment to support the child in her interests as she develops.
* Be sure to include hopes you have for the child, both in this life and in the next.
* Personalize the letter for each child.

A good plan would be to write an initial letter to the child at an early age. Then you could add an additional letter each year in which you praise him for progress he has made on the spiritual plan and milestones he has reached. As the child advances in age, you can show her the letters and let her read the new letter each year. By the time your child becomes an adult, these letters may be documents she refers to again and again for counsel and inspiration.

**Section 4: Treasured Moments and Memories**

As you think about developing various parts of the plan, be sure to keep in mind that you are working on a strategy to help your child be faithful to the Lord for a lifetime. Letting the child know how important this is to you can have a strong impact on the child’s decisions along the way.

The purpose of a spiritual memorial is to bring to mind God’s work in our lives and hearts. It encourages us and inspires us to deeper faith and trust in Him. Samuel had this in mind after Israel’s victorious battle against the Philistines: “Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer [literally, a stone of help], saying, ‘Thus far the Lord has helped us’” (1 Samuel 7:12).

The “Treasured Moments and Memories” section of the spiritual plan is designed to be a record of what your child has accomplished – with the Lord’s help. Use it to chronicle the milestones on the spiritual path. Dedicate this section to charting your child’s progress along the journey. Use it in much the same way as you would use the height marks on a wall to chart a child’s physical growth year after year.

Think of this section as a spiritual scrapbook or journal for recording your child’s spiritual progress. Consider it to be an event-driven section which implements the vision and moves the child toward the desired outcome of the plan. Note times when people have had a positive influence on your child and occasions when she has served others.

It can also be used as a wonderful source of encouragement along the child’s spiritual journey. Include photographs of accomplishments and milestones to capture each special memory.

Record here events such as:

* Vacation Bible School attendance.
* Occasions when the child demonstrates remarkable knowledge of God’s Word.
* The child’s spiritual birth into Christ and annual celebrations.
* Spiritual progress as indicated by achieving objectives appearing later in the plan.
* Evidence of discernible, spiritual growth in the child.
* Specific “good works/deeds,” such as participating in a Bible study with a friend who is not a Christian, assisting a widow or neighbor in some activity, participating in feeding or clothing someone in need, relinquishing a desired personal activity to serve someone in need, visiting a hospital, going on campaigns, participating in Leadership Training for Christ, etc.
* Incidents in which the child succeeded in applying a Biblical principle in a difficult situation, e.g., “turning the other cheek,” doing good to someone who had been unkind to the child, or a similar accomplishment.
* His obtaining a job where he can demonstrate Christian living.
* Particular times in life when the child has made an important moral choice.
* Other accomplishments and milestones you deem worthy of capturing.

Record evidence/incidents with a frequency which you deem appropriate. Positive behavior is always deserving of immediate feedback, and is recommended. To maintain a focus on the plan and to reinforce behavior, consider a quarterly review of the documented record of spiritual growth during that period.

No less frequently than annually, arrange some type of special celebration in recognition of the progress made during the past corresponding period. If the child is a Christian, you may wish to schedule the recognition with the celebration of the spiritual birthday.

Also, you may want to organize this section by assigning tabs to the types of events that you want to acknowledge and celebrate, such as those indicated by the bulleted items above. Enjoy!

CAUTION: While the intent here is encouragement via recognition, be careful not to communicate that obedience to God is done for recognition. Guide the child toward humility, a characteristic which God applauds. Seize each opportunity to teach a spiritual lesson. For example, combine the recognition with a teaching opportunity to stress the “absence of self” in anything the child does. The objective is to glorify God and Christ, not oneself!

**“Spiritual Birthday” Record (Sample)**

I/we rejoice with (Name) , that on this day, (Date) , our/my beloved daughter/son made the most important decision of her/his life by determining to commit her/his life to God.

You expressed that commitment:

1. by confirming and publicly acknowledging your belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God,
2. by determining to change your life, via repentance, thereby committing that life to God and Christ,
3. by being united with Christ in the likeness of His death through a “burial” in water, and thus you were born into Christ by immersion for the forgiveness of your sins, in order that you might live a new life in service to God.

You are now “in Christ” and afforded all the spiritual blessings therein.

* You were reconciled with God (2 Cor. 5:17-19)
* You have received forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16)
* You have received the gift of the Holy Spirit to give you a sense of God’s presence in your life and to help you with your prayers (Acts 2:38; Rom. 5:5; Rom. 8:9,11, 26; Eph. 1:13; 1 John 4:13)
* You now have access directly to God through prayer (Acts 2:42; Rom. 12:12; Rom. 15:30-31; Heb. 13:15
* You are now a child of God and “joint heir” with your brother, Jesus Christ, who now is your mediator with the Father (Rom. 8:16-17, 34)
* You are now a “new” person (2 Cor. 5:17)
* You are a citizen in God’s kingdom and a member of His church which is the body of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13,27; Gal. 3:26-27)
* You now are a priest before God (1 Pet. 2:9).
* You must remain faithful in your walk with God (1 John 1:7).
* You can now expect to wear the crown of life (2 Tim. 4:5-7; Rev. 2:10).
* You have the hope of eternal life (2 Tim. 4:17-18),

I/We commit to remember and to celebrate (Name)‘s “spiritual birthday” every year.

Signed: Dad Mom

**Section 5: Objectives for Your Child to Reach**

1. **Assessing Your Child’s Spiritual Progress**

Assessing spiritual progress is essential if we are “to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). How do we know whether our children are growing in this way unless we assess their progress? Remember that with this section, as with all the others, you are seeking to increase the likelihood that your child will be a faithful, well-developed Christian who is headed for heaven. What could make you happier in the long run than to know that your child is faithful to the Lord? Stay with the plan shown in this Handbook to make that more likely.

One of the most interesting stories of the evaluation of a child’s progress found in the Bible comes from Luke 2:52 where the writer records Jesus’ development in these words: “And Jesus grew in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and man.” Four areas for assessment: progress in knowledge and its application, physical growth, increasing in favor with God, and increasing in favor with people around Him. While all of these are important, we are particularly interested in developing a plan for improving our child’s favor with God. When that happens, of course, the child will also grow in favor with people because the qualities God wants us to have also make us better in dealing with other people. Spiritual growth also means that a child will be increasing in many elements of wisdom such as making better choices and assisting others to do the same. Even physical growth will be enhanced as the child follows God’s moral teaching and avoids doing things which are physically harmful.

Here are two passages that encourage us to evaluate spiritual progress. “Examine yourself as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5) and “Each one should test his own actions” (Galatians 6:4). God wants parents to check up on themselves to see how they are doing. Certainly that assessment also applies to parents who are evaluating their children. Also as fathers “nurture” their children in the teaching of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), they must evaluate their child’s spiritual condition and progress.

Unfortunately, most parents have no systematic, intentional plan for assessing the spiritual progress of their children. They may assume that as long as their child is attending church and Bible class that the child is making acceptable spiritual growth. Many studies demonstrate, however, that a high percentage of youth attend church as long as they are at home but, when they leave home, they no longer continue to attend because they were not spiritually well grounded.

This Handbook is built on the concept of planning a detailed strategy for the spiritual development of each child. That strategy includes devising a plan with carefully stated objectives for the child to reach along with an assessment of whether the child has reached the objectives. So, we encourage you to study carefully this section about assessment of your child’s spiritual progress.

We are recommending two types of evaluation for the spiritual progress of your child. One will be an annual review that you do on a specified date every year. The other evaluation will be conducted throughout the year as you assess the completion of specific objectives you have designed for that particular year. The next sections of the Handbook will help you develop a set of objectives for each year along with a plan for evaluating each of those objectives. So assessment, as presented in this section, involves (1) nine questions for the annual review and (2) the specific evaluation of each objective which you choose for your child to achieve in a given year. Remember that the total package needs to go together: objectives and assessment.

**Evaluation Through an Annual Review**

The first type of evaluation to use for your child is an annual review to assess some general qualities which will mark his spiritual growth. In the child’s younger years, you will need to answer these questions from your own observation, but as the child grows older, let her participate in answering these nine questions each year. If the child knows ahead of time that these questions will be asked at the time of his birthday or some other annual time, he will likely hold them in mind through the year, thus making it more likely your child will do well. So here are the nine questions plus a way to remember them.

1. Does the child’s prayer life show regular prayer and an increasing depth in what she prays for?
2. Is the child regular in careful Bible reading and Bible related books?
3. Is the child regular in attendance at Bible school and church?
4. Does the child increasingly become involved in adult conversations about spiritual matters?
5. Is the child learning to use his talents for the Lord by serving and by bringing others to Christ and by showing Him to the world?
6. Is the child involved in serving at home, at school, at church?
7. Is the child growing in her likeness to Christ?
8. Does the child always live by biblical moral standards?
9. Is the child growing in spiritual leadership among his peers?

(At [www.mrcc.org/spfc](http://www.mrcc.org/spfc) you will find additional assessment questions from which you can choose if you wish to expand those listed above. Review the list to broaden your evaluation of your child’s spiritual growth.)

To help remember these nine questions from year to year, think—P for Prayer, R for Reading the Bible, A for Attendance, C for Conversations, T for using Talents in spiritual ways, I for Involved in service, C for like Christ, A for Always moral, and L for Leadership. Put together these spell PRACTICAL. So each year you can assess your child’s spiritual progress by conversing with your child about these “practical” matters.

Let’s elaborate a little on each of these annual markers.

P for Prayer. For your child to develop his own prayer life, he is going to have to see prayer in the life of the family—and more than just at the table for meals. For young children, you can start by asking them to pray at bedtime, but as they grow older you will need to find other ways to encourage them to pray. Family devotionals and prayer time on vacation are excellent times for additional prayers. Most children’s Bible classes involve praying so be sure your child is involved in leading or in thinking about the prayers in her class.

R for Reading. Again, parents will need to demonstrate their own regular Bible reading to inculcate that habit in a child. Regular family devotionals are a good time for Bible reading together, but you will want to find ways for your child to read on her own. In addition to daily Bible study, when the child is young she may read Bible story books and when older she may read Bible-related books.

A for Attendance. You will, of course, bring the child with you as you regularly attend worship so that this habit will be formed early, but you will want to help your child accept responsibility for making the choice as early as possible. You will also want the child to choose to be part of youth activities and other church events. This regular contact with other Christians is essential. Don’t let a job or sports or other activities encroach on regular church attendance. Be sure you begin by making worship both regular and a positive experience for the child.

C for Conversations. Your family should discuss spiritual matters at the table during meals, when you are riding in the car, at the time of your family devotionals, when you are on vacation, and at other times as possible. Encourage your child to be part of these conversations and always commend them when they express a thought. Be sure not to engage in criticism of the preacher or elders or other things at church in front of the children because such negative thoughts can easily lead the child to think you do not value the church and will, in their own mind, give them a reason not to continue. After all, if mom and dad think the church is full of bad people and bad choices, why should they be part of it? Be sure to use “teachable moments” for good conversations and evaluate your child’s ability to take part in conversations about spiritual matters including the spiritual connection with all of life’s activities.

T for Talents. Every child will have special talents and parents must be alert in discerning what those talents are. As a child, that talent may be for encouraging or for memorizing. Be sure these talents are used in spiritual ways. As children grow older, they may have talents for speaking, for writing, for sports, for team work, for computers, for serving others, for connecting with people. Help your child to find ways to use whatever talents he may have in spiritual ways. Even those with limited skills or handicaps can find ways to use their abilities for the Lord. Eventually you will want to help your child choose an occupation which will allow her to use her talents in a successful way and in a way in which she can demonstrate Christ to those around her. Our occupations should not just provide an income, but should also be a way for us to bless others through our talents and to place us in a position to serve Him.

I for Involvement. From an early age children can be involved in service. They can go with you to visit shut-ins or someone in the hospital. They can help you prepare materials for Bible classes, they can go with you to knock on doors or to have a home Bible study. As they grow older, they can go on a campaign, help on projects around the church building, assist with a children’s class, or be part of community service projects. If you want your child to be involved in service later in life, involve them in service early so this becomes part of their mind set.

C for Christ. Our goal in life is to love Christ deeply and to be as much like Him as possible. Peter and John said we should walk like He walked (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6). We should teach our children to love as He loved, be kind as He was kind, be unselfish as He was unselfish, and even to suffer as He suffered. Is the child learning, as Christ did, to take a long-range view of satisfaction rather than thinking only of immediate gratification? A very good home study would be to learn the characteristics of Christ which we are to follow and to find ways in which to put such qualities into action in our lives. In particular, you must demonstrate to your child the qualities of Jesus if you expect your child to develop them.

A for Always Moral. We should teach our children what the morally right things are to do and encourage them to live in this way. We want them always to tell the truth, always to fill their minds with helpful things and not evil things, to be sexually pure, and to do what will be best for others. From their earliest years, we must build such morality into their worldview so they will always make decisions based on the moral standards they have learned as youths.

L for Leadership. Every child should be a leader in some way. She may just be a leader among a small group of friends or in a Bible class either through setting a good direction or just by showing a Christ-like example. Or your child may be president of his class at school or the speaker at a gathering of youth. In whatever way is appropriate for their nature, skills and circumstances, however, we should teach our children to take a stand when necessary, to encourage others to do right, and to lead in more formal ways when possible.

So, your annual review—PRACTICAL.

**Evaluation Through Specific Objectives**

A second form of assessment to utilize in your child’s spiritual development plan comes from specific objectives you will design for your child to reach each year, usually each quarter of each year. As we shall explain in detail in the next four sections, these objectives will use a design that involves four elements. First, you should develop specific, observable outcomes for your child to reach at each stage of her development. Second, you will design a series of learning experiences or paths your child can do to enable him to reach each stated outcome. Third, you will plan a way for the child to demonstrate the extent to which he has reached this described outcome. And fourth, you will provide a reward for the child when she can demonstrate that the objective has been reached.

Let’s illustrate this type of assessment. (1) Let’s suppose that your child is five years old and you have chosen as a specific observable outcome that the child can recite the 23rd psalm. So you would state your **objective** like this: At the age of five years, Mary can recite without prompting the 23rd Psalm and can explain the meaning of key expressions in the psalm. (2) Then you would plan some **learning paths** to help your child learn to do this. So you might say that every night for as long as necessary, we will work with Mary to memorize the 23rd psalm. We will first explain with pictures what a good shepherd does with his sheep. Then we will begin explaining and memorizing the first verse and when Mary can repeat the first verse from memory, we will add the second verse and so on until she can say the psalm from memory. We will also teach her the meaning of key expressions in the psalm. (3) Then, comes the third part—**evaluation**. We want her to demonstrate to others that she has achieved this objective. So, our evaluation part might read like this: Mary will recite the 23rd psalm to a family gathering and will answer questions they ask about key expressions in the psalm. (4) Then step four—**reward**. When Mary has demonstrated this objective, we will take her to her favorite ice cream parlor to celebrate.

Another objective might be a follow up to the one above which would state “Mary will follow God as her shepherd by praying daily.” This objective might be followed by another one: “Mary will show the humility of a sheep following her shepherd by showing a spirit of humility and a desire to follow God’s instructions.”

Just as an aside, we know five year old children can learn the 23rd Psalm because for many years Joyce McBride taught her five-year-old class to do just this. At her funeral, the speaker asked all those present who had learned the 23rd Psalm in her class to come to the front to recite the psalm together and more than a hundred came to repeat the psalm. What a moving moment!

So think of four elements of an objective: (1) the statement of the objective, (2) the learning paths to reach the objective, (3) the evaluation to show the objective has been reached, and (4) the reward for achieving the objective. Now let’s look at each of these in detail because working with these elements will constitute a large part of the development of the spiritual plan for your child. Sometimes we think in very broad terms like “I want my child to grow spiritually,” but we need to be much more specific than that if we are really serious about developing a careful strategy for spiritual growth.

So, how should we state the objective? An objective must use a verb which can be measured. The example above says that the child “can recite from memory.” That is a specific action that can be measured. If we had said the child will “know” the 23rd Psalm, we would not have used a measureable outcome because “know” is not a measurable verb. Other good words to use in measurable objectives are: explain, describe, find, draw, tell, sing, list, locate, define, identify, choose, discuss, apply, practice, demonstrate, solve, compare, summarize, critique, and decide.

In later sections, as you choose specific outcomes for your child’s spiritual development plan, we will provide lists of written objectives from which you can select to work up your plan. Of course, you can also add objectives to the list we will provide should wish to do that.

Now to “learning paths.” We have used the term “learning paths” in the plural because there are many different ways in which people learn, and some children learn better through one mode while other children will do better in another. And most of us learn best when we use a variety of learning paths. We can learn from hearing, from reading, from seeing, and from doing. Usually the more learning paths we use the more lasting the recollection will be.

So in a family devotional we might tell our children a Bible story, and one of them might also read the story from the Bible. We could ask them questions about it, show them pictures about it, and even ask them to act out the story. All of these would be learning paths for an objective that called for them to be able to tell the story to someone else.

A teenager, to take another example, who was working on an objective of presenting a ten-minute Bible lesson on unselfishness, might use a number of learning paths. He could use a concordance to find passages on unselfishness, and he might visit with a minister or Bible school teacher about the subject. He might ask someone to review his outline, and he might have someone else critique a practice of the speech.

So, be thinking of all the various ways in which the child for which you are preparing this spiritual plan can learn effectively. Then you will be ready to connect these learning methods with objectives when you start building your plan.

Now to the evaluation step. The verb in the statement of the objective, of course, sets up what the evaluation will be—can tell the story of, can recite, can demonstrate, can draw, can act out, can explain, can sing. But in the evaluation step, an elaboration on the verb will call for telling when and how the child will actually show she has achieved the objective. So, in the 23rd Psalm example, the child would recite the psalm without prompting at a family gathering. The teen to give a speech on unselfishness might present the speech at a Bible class, at a teen retreat or in some other venue. The more specific the description of the details of the evaluation, the better the student can work toward the demonstration of her achievement.

And finally the reward. God knew we would work toward rewards and so He set heaven as our ultimate reward. As Jesus says in Matthew 25:23: “Well done, good and faithful servant! . . . Enter into the joys of thy Lord.” In Hebrews 12:2, the writer says that Christ went to the cross “for the joy set before him.” While being crucified was certainly not fun, the ultimate reward of rescuing sinners gave Jesus the reward of great joy even in the midst of suffering.

There are many ways in which people work for promised rewards. A salesman tries hard to meet his quota because of a trip he has been promised. A basketball player gives himself to hours of practice and even suffering through the physical exertion of a game in order to receive the trophy—sometimes even playing through pain. Just go to a good athlete’s room and look at the ribbons and trophies displayed. She worked hard for these rewards. And there are rewards for teaching well and innovating well and even a discount reward on car insurance for driving well. Grades in school are a reward for a job well done.

So, to help your child work hard to reach an objective, have a tangible or intangible reward for her. A tangible reward would be to give an object or enjoyable event; an intangible reward would be to give the approval of the family or gain some additional responsibility or freedom.

For the specific objectives we are trying to reach in this plan, there should be rewards for achievement but not punishment for failing to reach them. While there are times when a child may need to be grounded, have privileges taken away, or receive other types of punishment, let’s not connect these with our objectives for spiritual growth.

We might add that while you want very much for your child to reach all the objectives you have set, there will probably be times when your child falls short. For this you may show your disappointment and the child may sense that. She can learn something from failures as well as successes if handled properly. You must not, however, make the child feel that you love him less or that you do not still want to see him succeed at the next evaluation. So set your objectives in a challenging but achievable range and work with your child to achieve them. Better to give her the satisfaction of having achieved a good objective than to have set the bar too high and create disappointment.

Rewards are a very strong motivation. Your family vision and family motto should reflect that the family wants to be in heaven together and that should be an underlying reward to pull us all toward spiritual growth. Help your child to see that these smaller steps you are seeking for him to make in the plan are ways to reach that ultimate reward.

From this section we have seen two levels of spiritual assessment: (1) the one you do annually by asking the nine key questions that connect with PRACTICAL, and (2) the evaluation as your child seeks to demonstrate that she can perform specific objectives set for her to do.

In the next sections, 5B and 5C, we are going to explain two categories of objectives: truths to believe and character traits to develop. In Section 5D we will provide lists of these categories by age level from which you can choose to build the annual program for your child as you choose objectives you want to use from both of these categories.

*As you work through these next sections, give very careful thought to how many objectives is the right number for your child to reach in a given year. You should have enough to provide the challenge for your child to become what you want him to grow up to be. You should not, on the other hand, have so many objectives that the child is turned away by the process. Better that you should make the child feel good about her spiritual accomplishments than to feel badly because she did not reach all the objectives.*

Vern Bengtson’s recent book called *Families and Faith* tells of a survey he did which asked “How close do you feel to your mom and dad?” Of the grown children who responded negatively to this question, only 30 percent carried on their parent’s faith. Sixty-eight percent, however, of those who said they felt close to their parents, carried on their parents’ faith. Bengtson concluded, “When a child feels close to a parent, he or she is more likely to imitate or model that parent.” So, as you work on spiritual objectives, make the activity something the child enjoys working on with you. Make it a family uniting experience which brings family members together. Give the child good, appropriate rewards for achieving the objectives. Make achieving the larger objectives a big event in the broader family—brothers, sisters, cousins, grandparents. So, have enough objectives to give them a challenge, but the process should not become such a burden that the child is turned off by the task.

In Section 5D we will also suggest learning paths from which you can choose to give your child the opportunity to reach his objectives. Among those suggested learning paths will be for you to have daily family devotionals where you work with spiritual development in a warm, caring, and rewarding atmosphere. Brian Haynes, in *The Legacy Path*, wrote, “If we are to raise a generation of kids who become adults who love Christ, we will have to worship the King in our living rooms. Our homes have been devoid of the worship of Christ in recent years, leading our children to one practical conclusion: Christ is King at church but not at home.”

The family devotional at home, then, provides an excellent opportunity for family worship but also offers both the chance to work with your child to achieve specific learning objectives and to for you the child to demonstrate before the family that she has reached many of the objectives.

So now to truths to believe and character traits to develop.

B. **Truths to Believe**

“I love the Bible; I love its stories true. I love the Bible; it tells me what to do.” This line from a song often used in Vacation Bible School, carries so much meaning. We certainly want to teach our children to love the Bible, to love its stories true, and to know that the Bible contains the most important message ever delivered. The Bible tells us “what to do” to have a good life here and “what to do” to have a great life for the hereafter.

Now the question becomes, “How shall we as parents teach our children to know the Bible?” Timothy’s grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice, taught him the scriptures from infancy (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-16). No better time to start than in infancy and continuing on to adulthood. Paul then said to Timothy that “All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16).

In a passage to the Colossian Christians, Paul wrote that he was praying that God would fill them “with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding . . . in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9-10). Don’t we all want our children to live a life worthy of the Lord and who will please Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in the knowledge of God?

Clearly the Bible teaches that being well-grounded in Scripture is fundamental to living as God wants us to live on earth so we can live with Him forever in heaven. Of course we want our children to do well in history and math and science. But nothing else should be as important to us and to our children as knowing and obeying God’s Word. Never signal by your actions that success in grades, sports, physical appearance, or social development has a higher importance than learning and living the Bible.

The findings of many studies and our own observations show that too many children are not staying with the faith of their families. To counter this with our spiritual plan, we want to provide for our child truths to believe, character traits to develop, and hopes to share. By working on such a plan with your child, she will know that you give her spiritual growth the highest priority in your family.

Now in this section, we will study about the truths we want our child to know and believe. Keep in mind that in Section 5D, this Handbook will list specific objectives about truths to believe but first, we want to explain more fully what we mean by making that commitment.

First, you as parents should be praying regularly that your child will grow up in and continue in the faith. Such prayer will establish your determination to God that you will do your part and will also bring God’s blessings on your efforts. It is good for the child to hear you pray for such faithfulness and good for the child to pray for the same outcome.

Second, you need to incorporate the larger family into your plan. Children who have a relationship with older Christians like grandparents or other older Christians who take an interest in them are more likely to remain faithful in adult years.

Third, review the list below of twenty basic terms which summarize the fundamental elements of the Christian faith. Think about how they cover the heart of Christianity. Recognize that if your child were solid in the knowledge of and belief in all of these listed concepts, you would have established a solid base for an enduring faith.

**God—**We can believe in His existence, know His characteristics, and accept His work as the planner.

**Creation**—God made the heavens and the earth and there are very strong reasons to believe in creation rather than in evolution.

**Choice**—The nature of humans includes the right to choose and how people have used choice explains many of the questions people raise about why bad things are part of our world.

**Obedience**—Submission to God is essential if we are to be pleasing to Him so we must know what He would have us to do and then obey His commands to the best of our ability.

**Sin**—Disobedience brings serious consequences in our own lives, in the lives of others, and results in our separation from God.

**Revelation**—The Holy Spirit has guided men to speak and to write the message He wants us to have and there are very good reasons to understand that our Bibles accurately record this message for us today.

**Law**—God, through Moses, gave the Israelites a plan to follow which none of them was able to keep to perfection and knowing about this helps us to understand the need for someone to free us by taking the punishment we deserve.

**Prophets**—Before Jesus came, God sent prophets both to teach the Israelites what He wanted them to do and to prophesy of the coming Messiah.

**Christ**—The second person of the Trinity who has all the qualities of deity and who is the doer.

**Holy Spirit**—The third person of the Trinity who is the revealer. He enabled the early Christians to do miracles and empowers Christians today by dwelling in us.

**Incarnation**—Christ was born of a human mother and is the only person ever to live a sinless life.

**Death**—Jesus was crucified as if He were guilty of sins which He did not commit and, in so doing, took punishment for sins which we have committed.

**Resurrection**—Jesus was raised from the dead and, as the only person so far who died and was raised in a new body, He is the first fruits of what we shall all be like when we are raised at the end of time.

**Plan of Salvation**—God’s plan, which He developed before the creation, which Jesus carried out, and in which humans can share by faith, repentance, baptism, and a faithful life.

**Grace**—We are saved only through the grace of God, not by earning our salvation by any works of merit on our part.

**Church**—The body to which God adds all obedient believers, beginning when the gospel was first preached on Pentecost. This church, as approved by the apostles and described in the New Testament, was intended as a model for succeeding generations. Those who are members of this body should gather each Lord’s Day to share in worship of God through prayer, in study of His word, observing the Lord’s Supper, and to have fellowship with each other.

**Spread of the Gospel**—Christ commanded each of us as members of His body, to participate in sharing the gospel with others in whatever ways are appropriate and effective.

**Second Coming**—Christ will return to raise the dead and to judge the world. There are no signs to warn of this coming and it will bring to an end life on this earth.

**Heaven**—the destination of all those saved by grace and is a place of perfect protection, perfect provisions, perfect fellowship, and perfect joy.

**Hell**—the destination of all those who did not obey God’s plan and where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Fourth, commit yourself to developing a plan so that by the time your child is eighteen she can converse with scriptural accuracy about these concepts, often citing verses AND will have chosen to accept the teaching of Scripture on these matters. The key elements here are “can demonstrate knowledge” and “will show commitment.”

Fifth, start to work on the plan. Look for ways both to build the knowledge base of your child about these foundational elements of the Bible message and to lead your child to a commitment on these topics to biblical truth. Your own knowledge and commitment will be a very important element in this entire process. Children often imitate their parents in knowing and believing. Section 5D in the Handbook will enable you to choose the specific truths you want your child to know and believe along with the necessary learning paths, methods for evaluation, and rewards.

One religion has said that if you let them have the child until they are six, the child will stay with that religion for the rest of his life. No doubt children can learn much by the time they are six. By then they have learned to speak a language—no easy task. At this point, many have learned basic reading skills and some concepts in math. They have formed much of the personality they will have for the rest of their lives. So by that age, they should have developed a good foundation for faith if we work with them properly. Thus, we need to begin early to develop a child’s understanding of these truths.

Helping your child to believe what God wants her to believe is essential if you are to train up your child. By using more passages of Scripture which teach about these topics, you can provide your child greater depth of understanding about them and the greater the depth of understanding, the greater the likelihood that your child will remain with the teaching of Scripture on the topic.

So, in addition to the list and brief explanation of truths given above, we have provided additional comments and Scriptures on a variety of truths and concepts in the Appendix and on a website at [www.mrcc.org/spfc](http://www.mrcc.org/spfc). Glance through the Table of Contents for the Appendix to learn about specific material we are making available. Different parents will want to emphasize different truths and on these sites you can get additional information on many of the truths mentioned in the objectives and find other truths to include if you wish.

One important study about children remaining faithful said that a major reason children leave the faith is because their parents did not teach them the fundamentals of the faith. And the study said the reason the parents did not teach them the fundamentals was because the parents did not know the fundamentals. So ground yourselves as parents and then ground your children.

**C. Character Traits to Develop**

In the last section we dealt with truths we want our children to believe. Faith in God, in Christ in the Bible and many more things are at the heart of what we want our children to learn if they are to reach the vision our family has set. But in addition to Bible teachings to believe, there are also character traits we want them to develop. Just believing is not enough, as important as it is. We must put our beliefs into our lives if we are to please the Lord.

James put it this way, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him?” He goes on to say “You see a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone” (James 2:14, 24). James also wrote that one must not be just a hearer of the Word but a doer (James 1:22). Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching” (John 14:21).

Moses gave instruction to parents in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 by telling them to teach the Scriptures diligently by discussing them at home and on their journeys. Just a few verses later, Moses said “Do what is right and good in the Lord’s sight, so that it may go well with you” (Deuteronomy 6:18). God expects our knowledge of His word to transform our lives. The Apostle John put it this way: “the one who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17).

Of course, the best guide for living God’s word is to follow the example of Jesus. He is the only one ever to have lived a perfect life and, in so doing, He demonstrated the character traits He wants us to have. Jesus said we should deny ourselves and follow Him (Mark 8:24) and Peter said we should “follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Paul asked the Corinthians to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

In the well-known book called *In His Steps*, published back in 1896, Charles Sheldon told the story of people who took the pledge to ask about everything they did, “What would Jesus do?” (Still a very good book for young people to read. Go to Amazon.com.) Some suffered tough times because they kept the pledge while others used their talents to help others rather than to make money. Whether the people in the story enjoyed good or bad times because of their pledge, they had joy because they were following Jesus. The expression from the book “What would Jesus do?” has become a popular expression, sometimes shortened just to WWJD and put on a bracelet. This concept is a great one to instill into your children as a way to help them seek to become like Jesus. Sometime when your child reads well enough to tackle a novel, get the book for him to read and then discuss it with him. Having a WWJD month to read and discuss the book would be a great exercise to help you to focus on living like Jesus.

There are many lists of the character traits of Jesus. We have selected twenty which we believe are the best for your family to work on. These are adapted from an article on the web by CS Clark titled “60 Character Traits of Christ.” These twenty make a very good set of qualities for parents to demonstrate to their children, to teach to their children, and about which to reward their children when they show these traits. We will introduce each of these qualities in this section and in Section 5D we will share with you objectives from which you can choose to use at various age levels. In listing the character traits, we have sought to give you some information about each that you can use in teaching that trait to your child.

1. Loving. Jesus is the perfect demonstration of love. He came because God loved us (John 3:16) and “he loved his own who were in the world” and “he showed them the full extent of his love” (John 13:1). By giving Himself as an offering on the cross He experienced undeserved suffering which He had the power to stop at any time. Thus Jesus showed the ultimate love. So “we love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Jesus taught us to love God and to love our neighbors and that these are the two most important commands. The love He is teaching us is called “agape” love because that is the Greek word from which it is translated and it means to do good for a person regardless of how they treat you. So we need to teach our children to love God deeply and with all their hearts. Such love requires that they truly believe God exists, that they can have a relationship with Him, and that they will obey Him. And we need to teach them to love members of their family, their schoolmates, and even their enemies. And they will learn that love best when they see it in us.
2. Patient. During His lifetime on earth, Jesus showed patience in many ways. His apostles often appear to be rather slow learners, but He is patient. They fuss among themselves about who is the greatest, but He is patient. They sleep when He needs their support, but He is patient. Even when He is on trial before Pilate, He is patient, not even making a reply to the false charges against Him (John 27:13). As parents we need to show patience with our children, not speaking harshly to them even when they do wrong. We must correct them, but with a demonstration of patience. And we must encourage them to be patient with their siblings and with others. Patience is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 and is a quality we need to teach our children.
3. Kind. Jesus showed kindness so many times—to the woman at the well, to many whom He healed, to Mary and Martha, and even to His enemies as He submitted to their harsh treatment when He could have called on twelve legions of angels, probably more than 30,000, to stop it (Matthew 26:53). So we should be kind in our family—kind to our spouses, kind to our friends, kind to our children. This would mean that we smile a lot, that we are helpful, and that we speak in a calm tone of voice.
4. Humble. Philippians 2:6-8 speaks of the humility Christ showed when He left heaven, where He exerted tremendous power, and took on human flesh which meant He accepted limitations. “He humbled himself and became obedient unto death.” Imagine the king of the universe being born in a stable to poor parents, His parents had to flee to protect Him, being poor all His life with no place to lay His head, and finally He greatest submitted to false charges of blasphemy and treason and was killed in the most humiliating way on the cross. Tremendous humility! In following Jesus, we likewise, should show humility. We should admit it when we are wrong. We should allow others to go ahead of ourselves. We should speak kindly when someone speaks harshly to us thus starting the cycle back in a good direction instead of making it worse. Children acting kindly will share a toy or let another go first. And as we see them acting kindly, we must praise them for it.
5. Unselfish. Again, Jesus is our model. In Matthew 4, Satan tempted Jesus to use His own power to feed Himself, to jump off the wall into the valley below to bring attention to Himself, and to become king of the world if He would only worship Satan. All of these temptations were to use power for Himself, to exalt Himself. And Jesus said “no” to all of them because He was unselfish. We all need to put others ahead of ourselves in so many ways: let the other person choose where to eat or what TV program to watch or to decide what to do on a day off. Unselfishness means to take time away from what we want to do to help another with what they are doing. Unselfishness will show itself in making sacrifices to benefit others even as Jesus unselfishly gave Himself to the cross for our benefit. So, demonstrate this quality and help your child to know when and how to show it.
6. Pure. Paul, in Philippians 4:8, says we are to think about things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. And in Matthew 15:19-20, Jesus said “For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. These are what defile you.” So by filling our minds with good things we can be pure and holy on the inside which will allow us to control our outward behavior. We cannot, for example, fill our minds with filthy reading, filthy TV and movies, and filthy talk and expect to live pure lives. We cannot hang out with people who talk about dirty things and expect to be unaffected. We must help our children fill their minds with good things from the Bible and other sources. They even need to memorize Scripture so when their mind is searching for how to behave, it will remember the right things to do. Purity in life is contrary to our culture of today. Thinking pure thoughts, keeping our speech and behavior within God’s limits, dressing modestly, and avoiding what would lead us away from a holy life is a great challenge. We must start early and work hard to help our children to develop such a lifestyle.
7. Self-controlled. No one has ever had to exercise self-control as much as Jesus did. Think of how hard it is to be falsely accused in a trial for your own life while knowing you could refute the charges or even overwhelm both the accusers and the judges with your power, but you stand quietly. So we must control our tempers and our tongues. Parents must not only help their children have the wisdom to know what to do but also to have the self- control to do it. Sometimes self-control means not doing the wrong thing and sometimes it means doing the right thing even when we would rather do something else. Self-control means resisting the urge to watch or read pornography and not participating in something wrong even if those around us are doing it. We must help our children learn to make right choices and to stick with them. No wonder self-control is listed among the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22.
8. Wholesome in speech. Jesus always spoke wholesome words, such as were good to edify. He never engaged in filthy speech or bad language. Paul wrote to the Ephesians about this saying, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths” (Ephesians 4:29) and “nor should there be any obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking … but rather thanksgiving” (Ephesians 5:4). In our culture, language is becoming more and more course. Words now appear regularly on television that would not have been permitted five years ago. We must resist such talk and speak in language that is becoming for Christians. This is one way we should stand out—and so should our children. We must both show and teach clean speech. Anyone remember having his mouth washed out with soap? James 3 calls the tongue a fire and says we must control it.
9. Honest. Jesus never spoke a lie or deceit. 1 Peter 2:22 says, “And no deceit was found in his mouth.” Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:25, “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor.” Many think one may speak “little white lies,” just no big ones, but such is not the teaching of Scripture. Not only must we not speak what is false, we must not even deceive. Sometimes people find a way to frame a sentence so it is not actually a lie but its end result is to deceive. Some think that a lie is proper if it achieves a good end. But again, the Scriptures tell us always to speak the truth. We must never lie to our children and we must teach them always to tell the truth both to us, their teachers, their boss, and their friends.
10. Forgiving. Again, Jesus is the prime example. When He was hanging on the cross having been convicted on false testimony and now being killed for crimes he did not commit, He said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). No forgiveness was every greater than this. Forgiveness is a wonderful trait. It frees a person of the burden of carrying a desire to retaliate and it improves relationships rather than destroying them. Parents should forgive each other and they should forgive their children. This does not mean that bad actions do not bring bad consequences, but it means that positive relationships can be built even while the consequences are playing out. Paul wrote that we should never “repay anyone for evil” and “do not take revenge” (Romans 12:17-19). Teaching children to be merciful and compassionate and to forgive is one of the greatest blessings we can give them.
11. Generous. No one ever gave as much as Jesus—giving up heaven and coming to live on the earth and then to be treated so badly (Philippians 2:6-8). He taught, He healed, He counseled, He fed—but He lived always in poverty. And He taught us to do the same—“Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:9). Paul taught Christians to “be generous on every occasion” (2 Corinthians 9:11). Generosity is the natural outcome of other traits like love, kindness, and unselfishness. One of our family sayings should be “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). So our generous giving should be joyful. Let your children see you being generous, let them go with you to help feed the poor, let them give their own money at church. Teach them to share what they have with others who need it more.
12. Grateful. Jesus liked to give thanks. He thanked God for the food before feeding the five thousand and He gave thanks before eating the Passover meal with His disciples. He even thanked God for raising Lazarus before it happened (John 11:40). Paul writes to the Thessalonians that we should “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thessalonians 5:13). In every situation there is something for which to be thankful. Toy broken? Be thankful you have other toys. Disappointed? Be thankful for another chance. Sick? Be thankful for medicines and doctors. Dying? Be thankful you are headed to a better place. We need to teach our children to be thankful for what they have and to express appreciation. A great habit would be to express appreciation to at least one person every day for what that person means to us and for what she has done for us. What if everyone in your family said “thanks” to every other family member every day?
13. Responsible. Jesus carried out what He came to do. In the Garden, Jesus asked God if there were another way to achieve what needed to be done and God replied there was no other way. So Jesus, in spite of what He faced, proceeded to give Himself up to the Jewish leaders. He was responsible to do what He needed to do. And aren’t we glad He could be depended upon! So we need to teach our children to be responsible. This means we must carry out our promises to them and thus they see in us one who can be depended on. We need to give them opportunities to show responsibility and to praise them when they fulfil their duty. Throughout out their lives, they will need to demonstrate that they can be trusted to do what they say they will—in school, in athletics, in their job, in their own family.
14. Encouraging. Jesus encouraged His apostles by telling them He was going to prepare a place for them (John 14:1-4). He also encouraged them to reach the whole world with His teaching (Matthew 28:18). He comforted them by promising the coming of the Holy Spirit to assist in their work (Acts 1:8). Barnabas was noted for being one who encouraged (Acts 4:36-37) and Paul encouraged Timothy to “fan into flame” the spiritual gift Paul had given him (2 Timothy 1:6). Parents should find ways to encourage and strengthen their children and also to teach their children to be encouragers. Set the example by praising them and thanking them and, thus, helping them to have that spirit with others.
15. Evangelistic. Jesus spent his three-year ministry in bringing people to Him. He preached, spoke in synagogues, taught one-on-one, mentored His apostles, and even blessed little children. In Matthew 28:18-19, Jesus told his apostles and Christians all through the ages: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” We are to go, to make learners out of people, baptize them, and then teach them more of what Jesus said. So, every Christian family should be active in bringing others to Christ and, in the process, developing among its children an evangelistic spirit. Peter said we must “always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). If you individually and your family as a group live the Christian life, people will ask you why you live that way. And when they do, you must be ready to explain it to them. Paul put it this way: “We, therefore, are Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:20).
16. Service. Jesus came on a mission and throughout His ministry He served others. He not only taught but he healed the sick, comforted the sorrowing, encouraged the wavering, and even raised the dead. He charged His followers to feed the hungry, help the sick, visit those in jail, to teach those around us. If we train our children properly, we must teach them to be men and women of service. They need chores to do to serve their family. We should take them with us when we go to visit and/or teach for the Lord; we should let them take responsibilities in doing good work. Let’s “give them the heart of a servant.”
17. Courage. Jesus was a man of courage. Even in the midst of opposition from those who should have received Him and even when carrying out His mission would ultimately mean death, Jesus showed courage. Our children need to be taught to be courageous Christians. More and more, our culture is moving away from the Bible as their guide so our children need to be taught how to share their faith in the right way—with gentleness and respect and yet with courage. As parents, we will have to demonstrate this balance for them—not scared to be different when we need to be and not afraid to share our faith.
18. Hope. Jesus had hope. He told the woman at the well He brought people a spring of living water by which they would never thirst again (John 4:13). He came to earth and endured all that He suffered because He hoped that would bring people to forgiveness of sin and eternal life. (Phil. 2:7-11). Paul said hope was like a helmet to help us withstand the hard blows (1 Thessalonians 5:8). We must teach our children to hope for heaven. If they see that hope in us and if we teach them why we have it, such hope can strengthen them throughout their lives. With God there is always hope. Without God, there is never hope. What a great contrast! Christians always have hope for tomorrow. Those without Christ never have hope so long as they stay out of Christ. Those who leave the church fail to realize they are turning from life to death—spiritual death. An element in your vision statement and your motto should speak of being together in heaven and we must instill in our children hoping for eternal life together with our family and with others in Christ. Jesus put it this way, “Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24-25).
19. Joy. How could someone going through the terrible pain and mistreatment Jesus had to suffer be having joy? But He did. “Who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Even through all of His suffering, Jesus did it with joy because He knew of the good outcome which would follow. Joy in suffering. So, we need to teach our children the joy of the Christian life, even if it should someday mean our death. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid” (Psalm 27:1). Our lives should be full of joy when we teach our children the Bible and full of joy as we do things together as a family. What a blessing to be able to face life with joy whatever comes our way.
20. Peace. Jesus often went apart to pray—sometimes when He was making an important decision, sometimes when He had opposition, sometimes when He was facing persecution. He prayed hard and sometimes prayed for the circumstances to be different. But He always came away from the time of prayer with peace in His heart. There is great contentment in living a life of service before God and we should live before our children in peace to show them the way of the Lord. 1 Timothy 6:6 says that “godliness with contentment is great gain.” Jesus could teach us not to be anxious (Matthew 6:25-33) because the Christian life brings peace. Show and teach your children peace.

This review of twenty qualities of Jesus shows us the challenge that lies before us in teaching our children to live like Jesus.

In addition to the qualities given above, we have provided an expanded list of traits from which you can choose even more qualities of Jesus you might like to use as you work with your child. (See Appendix 1 for a note about this list.) In addition to this expanded list, we have provided articles on several character traits as well as on how to apply the principles of Scripture to circumstances which children face in real life situations. How children choose to respond in various situations like Jesus did can determine where they eventually spend eternity. In Appendix 6 you will find a list called “Scriptures and Comments on Character Traits” about which we provide further Scriptures and comments in articles at [www.mrcc.org/spfc](http://www.mrcc.org/spfc). In addition, Appendix 6 also contains a list of some types of real life situations children can face. Guidance on how to apply spiritual principles to the situations is also available at the website.

**D. Choosing Your Child’s Objectives for Each Year**

In previous sections we have spoken of the need to have specific objectives for a child to reach and for each objective to have learning paths to enable the child to reach the objective. Also you need a plan for evaluation so you can determine whether the objective has been reached, and finally you need to have a way to reward the child when she has accomplished the objective. This section will help you to actually develop that part of your plan.

You should first picture your child when he is graduating from high school at age eighteen. Your vision statement should give you a good beginning for thinking of what you want him to be like at that age. Based on that, write down some broad statements that describe your child at eighteen in connection with truths to believe and character traits to develop. Having painted this broad picture, you can then move to specifics. What objectives will your child need to reach each year along the way if he is going to reach your picture of him at eighteen? What learning paths will you use and how will you measure along the way? And what rewards will you give?

While in this section we are emphasizing specific objectives which you and your child can plan for him to meet, it is very important for you to make it clear to your child that while you want him to meet the objectives, your love for him is not dependent upon whether he reaches the objectives or not. Your love must be unconditional. So we speak of rewards for meeting objectives but no punishments if they do not. And even if your child fails to meet an objective for whatever reason, you must find ways to assure her that your love for her is very strong. Having a strong personal relationship with your child is fundamental to everything you want to achieve with her. So, you want your child to reach the objectives and will reward her if she achieves them but you love her even if she does not reach them all. Think of it this way. You may want your child to win the race in track but even if he does not, you still love him anyway.

Under Sections 5B and 5C we described truths to believe and character traits to develop. In this section, we present under six age groupings a list of objectives covering truths and character traits. From the objectives listed or variations of your own, you can select the objectives you hope your child will reach for each year or span of years in his life. In each age range, have some objectives on truths and some on character traits. Once you have chosen an objective, select the learning paths you will use to help your child reach the objective, describe the evaluation for your child’s achievement of it, and select what reward you will give when the child achieves it. Later in this section are lists for objectives, for learning paths, for methods of evaluation, and for rewards to help you developi your plan. Appendix 12 has a sample plan for two years.

For some objectives, the learning paths may simply be to take advantage of situations that arise and to evaluate your child’s response, and to tell him “good job.” For others, maybe a memory verse, you might choose your daily family devotional as the learning path with the child reciting the verse to the family and with an appropriate treat when the child says the verse.

While you can now build the plan year by year as you hope it will work, you should review the plan each year. If your child did not reach one of the objectives set for a year, you can roll that objective forward and use it the following year. You also may find that you will want to put more or fewer objectives in a year or span of years based on how well your child is doing.

**One very important aspect of building a spiritual plan is for the child to find the plan something from which she will sense success.** Children are drawn to those things where they find success. If you are continually nagging the child about the spiritual objectives and finding resistance, the whole plan is likely to fail. So better to achieve success with fewer objectives than to have more objectives but make the child feel a failure. And be sure to find good ways to reward your child both for making progress toward objectives and for achieving them.

Eventually you should develop a prospective plan for each year from infant or your child’s current age up to age eighteen. You can do this year by year or you may wish to project out two or three years. As you implement the plan, you should review what you have developed as a new year begins to see if that is still what fits your child. Of course, if your child has a disability, you will work with the capabilities the child has, but even then the concept of objectives, learning paths, evaluation, and reward can achieve good results. Also, later in this chapter, look at the years before and after the one you are developing to see if objectives there will fit better. And be sure to let the child help you in making the plan for the coming year as soon as he is old enough because having a part in making the plan will give the child a great sense of participation in it. Also be sure to include the rewards when objectives are reached. Make it challenging and fun.

**OBJECTIVES FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE**

**INFANT THROUGH TWO YEARS OLD**

**TRUTHS TO BELIEVE**

**God and Creation**

Can speak the word “God” so as to be understood.

When asked “Who made the world?” can answer, “God.”

When asked “Who made the flowers, the animals, the trees, the rivers, the sky, the stars?” the child can answer, “God did.”

When asked “In how many days did God make the world?” can answer, “six.”

Can say from memory Genesis 1:1—“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

When asked, “Who made the people in our family?” the child can say, “God did.”

**Choice, Obedience, and Sin**

Can quote “Children obey your parents” and can explain what that means. (Appendix 6)

When the child does not obey his parents, can explain what he did wrong.

Will show regret when reminded that she disobeyed her parents.

Can explain that God is sad when we disobey.

**Revelation**

Can speak the word “Bible” so as to be understood.

Can respond with the word “Bible” when asked “What is the greatest book in the world.”

Can sing “The B-I-B-L-E.”

Can sing “I Love the Bible.”

Can quote Matthew 4:7 and explain that we must do what is written in the Bible.

**Law and Prophets**

When asked, “Who went to the mountain to get the ten commandments?” can answer, “Moses.”

When asked, “What prophet was thrown in the Lion’s Den?” can answer, “Daniel.”

**Christ and the Holy Spirit**

Can speak the word “Jesus” so as to be understood.

Can sing “Jesus Loves Me.”

Can quote John 3:16.

Can respond correctly to Bible drill questions related to Jesus’ miracles such as "Could Jesus heal the sick, make the blind see, make the lame walk, raise the dead?”

**Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection**

When asked, “Who is God’s son?” can answer, “Jesus.”

When asked, “How did Jesus die?” can answer, “On the cross.”

When asked, “Did Jesus stay dead?” can answer, “No.”

**Plan of Salvation and Grace**

When asked “Who came to save us?” can answer, “Jesus.” (Appendix 6)

**Church and Spread of the Gospel**

When asked, “What is the church?” can answer, “The saved people.”

When asked, “When did the church begin?” can answer, “Pentecost.”

**Second Coming, Heaven, and Hell**

Can sing “Heaven is a Wonderful Place.”

When asked where we all want to go, will answer, “heaven.”

When asked, “Where is Jesus now?” can answer, “heaven.”

**CHARACTER TRAITS TO DEVELOP**

Will respond warmly to hugs.

Will hug others.

Will share a toy. (Appendix 6)

Will say “thank you” when given something.

Will recognize the difference between obeying and not obeying parents. (Appendix 6)

Will participate in bedtime prayer. (Appendix 6)

Will like going to Bible class.

Will begin to love Jesus.

With help, can say the family motto.

In response to “Where will we all be together some day?” will respond, “In heaven.”

**THREE THROUGH FIVE YEARS OLD**

**TRUTHS TO BELIEVE**

**God and Creation**

When asked from what God made the world, the child can answer that He made it from nothing.

When asked what God made on each day, can respond with the answer from Genesis 1.

Can answer Bible drill questions such as “Who was the first man, first woman, what were they not supposed to do, what did they do, what happened as a result?”

When asked how God could do this, the child can answer that God is all powerful and all-knowing and so can do whatever He wants to do.

When asked to tell about the first people, the child can tell that God made Adam and Eve and put them in the Garden of Eden with many good trees from which to eat, but that there was one tree they were not to touch or eat the fruit.

When asked, “Who told them it would be OK to eat of that tree?” can answer, “Satan.”

Can pray daily using his own words. (Appendix 6)

When asked, “Why pray to God?” she can say that God can give us what we ask for if it is best.

Can repeat, “My God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there’s nothing my God cannot do.”

Can quote the 23rd Psalm and explain the expressions about God’s being a good shepherd.

**Choice, Obedience, and Sin**

Using pictures provided, can tell the story of Adam and Eve and Satan.

Can explain the difference between two choices which are before him, one to obey and the other not to obey.

Can explain that we can choose between right and wrong. (Appendix 6)

When asked why make choices that follow God’s instructions, she can answer that God knows best and that we do not want to make God unhappy with us.

When asked what the word “sin” means, can answer that it means to disobey God and separates us from God.

When given a list of items in which one choice is a good choice and one is a bad choice, can tell which one is good and why. (Appendix 6)

**Revelation**

Can say from memory the books of the New Testament.

When given pictures of some main Bible characters such as Moses and the burning bush, Gideon, David and Goliath, Solomon and his choice of wisdom, Daniel and the lions’ den, the birth of Jesus, Jesus and raising Lazarus, Jesus trial, Jesus’ death, Jesus’ resurrection, Paul’s conversion, he can tell the Bible story.

Can explain that God inspired men to write the books of the Bible so they would be just as God wanted them to be.

**Law and Prophets**

Can tell about Moses going to Mt. Sinai to receive the ten commandments.

Can tell that the Law of Moses was to guide the Israelites so they could show it is always best to do what God says.

Can tell that there were prophets among the Israelites who told that a Messiah was coming: Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, and Micah.

**Christ and the Holy Spirit**

Can explain that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different but act as one.

Can explain that the Father plans things and that the Son carries them out.

**Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection**

Can quote John 3:16 and tell that it means that Jesus came to save us from sin.

Can tell that Jesus had a trial but that he had not done anything wrong.

Can tell that Jesus was beaten and then was killed on a cross.

Can tell that Jesus was raised on the third day and that people found the tomb empty because Jesus had been raised.

**Plan of Salvation and Grace**

Can explain that God had a plan from before the world so that if people sinned He could forgive them.

Can tell that God sent Jesus to suffer in our place.

Can tell that God gives us salvation when we obey what He asks us to do. (Appendix 6)

When asked what to do to be saved, can repeat the five-finger exercise of “hear, believe, confess, repent, be baptized.”

When asked if we are saved by grace or by works, can answer, “by grace.”

**Church and Spread**

Can tell that when God saves people, He adds them to others who have been saved, and these people are the church.

Can quote Mark 16:15-16.

Can tell why she likes to go to church.

**Second Coming, Heaven, and Hell**

When asked, “What will bring an end to the world?” can answer, “The Second Coming of Jesus.”

Based on Matthew 25, can explain that when Jesus returns He will raise the dead and divide the people into those who will be saved and those who will be lost.

**CHARACTER TRAITS TO DEVELOP**

When asked in a situation “What is the loving thing to do?” can tell what it would be.

When corrected by his parents, will say, “I’m sorry.” (Appendix 6)

Will show kindness to others in the family.

Will let another child go first. (Appendix 6)

Will tell the truth about something she has done.

Will enjoy putting money in the collection plate. (Appendix 6)

Will help put up toys.

Can quote Hebrews 12:2a.

Will prefer to obey parents than to disobey them. (Appendix 6)

Can say a prayer at the table before a meal.

Will participate in giving to church and sharing with others. (Appendix 6)

Will participate in home Bible study.

Can quote the family vision and motto.

Can quote Romans 15:13a.

Will invite a friend to VBS.

**SIX THROUGH EIGHT YEARS OLD**

**TRUTHS TO BELIEVE**

**God and Creation**

Can sing “God is so good, God is so good, God is so good to me” and explain what each verse means.

Can quote John 4:24, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 14:15, and Ephesians 5:29 and through these verses tell what we should do in worship to God.

Can list five attributes of God: a spirit being, who has always been, and is all-knowing, all-powerful, and is present everywhere.

Can quote Matthew 22:37—“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” (Appendix 6)

Can tell what it means to look upward, outward, and inward during worship.

Can explain the meaning of the song “Our God, He is Alive.”

**Choice, Obedience, and Sin**

Can make choices based on spiritual truths she has learned from the Bible.

Can describe new choices that he must make at school and with his friends and will properly identify the correct choice. (Appendix 6)

Can quote John 14:23 and explain its meaning.

When his parents point out disobedient behavior, he will repent of it with regret. (Appendix 6)

His teacher at school will report to the parents that he is an obedient child and treats her with respect.

**Revelation**

Can tell that those who wrote the Bible are real people who lived when and where they said they did and that archaeologists have found things connected with people mentioned in the Bible such as David, Pilate, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, and Sargon, to name a few. (See Appendix 3)

**Law and Prophets**

Can tell that Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament which tell about creation, Abraham, the children of Israel going to Egypt, God bringing the children of Israel coming out of Egypt, their receiving the Law of Moses from God, and their time in the wilderness.

Can tell that the books written by the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel provide information about real events and that they urged people to change their ways to please God or He would oppose them in what they were doing.

**Christ and Holy Spirit**

Can explain that Christ and the Holy Spirit have the same five qualities as God, the Father, does.

Can explain that the Father is basically the planner of the team, the Son is the doer of the team, and the Holy Spirit is the revealer of the team.

Can tell that Jesus lived a sinless life so He would be innocent but was treated as if He were guilty.

Can tell the stories of three of Jesus’ parables, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son and share the message of each parable.

Can recite from memory the beatitudes from Matthew 5:1-12.

**Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection**

Can quote Philippians 2:5-8 and explain the meaning.

Can quote Isaiah 53:6 and explain why Jesus had to die for our sins.

Can explain the meaning of the words of the hymn “Wonderful Savior.”

When asked questions about details of Jesus’ birth, can respond with the correct answers.

When asked questions about details of Jesus’ death, can respond with the correct answers.

When asked questions about details of Jesus’ resurrection, can respond with correct answers.

**Plan of Salvation and Grace**

Can explain God must be just and punish sin but He also wants to be merciful to forgive our sins.

Can quote Romans 6:4 and explain that when we are baptized, we are repeating Jesus death, burial, and resurrection. (Appendix 6)

Can explain the background of the hymn “Amazing Grace” and its meaning.

Can respond to Bible drill questions that take him through the story of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Can quote Galatians 2:8-10 and explain what grace means as opposed to works.

In response to the question of “When did the church begin?” the child can say “On Pentecost.”

In response to the question of how many were baptized that day, the child can say, “3,000.”

In response to the question of “What is the bride of Christ, the kingdom of Christ, the family of Christ, and the body of Christ?” the child can say “The Church.”

**Church and Spread**

Will ask friends to come with her to VBS or some other special church event. (Appendix 6)

Can quote and explain Matthew 16:18.

Using Acts 13 and 14, can explain about Paul’s first missionary journey.

Using 1 Corinthians 1:2, can explain who makes up the church.

Can explain that the bread in the Lord’s supper represents the body of Jesus and that the juice represents His blood shed on the cross. (Appendix 6)

**Second Coming, Heaven, and Hell**

Can quote 1 Corinthians 15:20 and explain that as Christ was raised so all the dead will be raised.

Can tell that heaven will be a place of eternal joy with no tears, no sickness, and no one ever dying.

Can tell that hell will be a place of eternal sorrow with no chance of escape.

**CHARACTER TRAITS TO DEVELOP**

Can quote James 2:24.

Can quote 1 Peter 2:21.

Will show affection for siblings and cousins.

Will show affection for friends at church.

Will sometimes count to ten before making a response.

Can tell the story of Jesus when he came to be kind to Mary and Martha when Lazarus died.

Can admit it when she has made a mistake. (Appendix 6)

Will share toys.

Will tell the truth about what has happened.

Will show forgiveness. (Appendix 6)

Will show joy at being generous. (Appendix 6)

Will often express appreciation.

Will carry out responsibilities.

Will show an attitude of submission to those in authority.

Will pray by himself about matters in his life. (Appendix 6)

Will sacrifice time she could spend for herself in helping someone else. (Appendix 6)

Will join in worship experiences showing an understanding of the meaning of worship.

Will especially enjoy the fellowship of church friends.

Will go with parents to visit someone in the hospital or an elderly person in a rest home.

Will invite friends who do not attend church with him to come to church events. (Appendix 6)

Can quote John 5:24-25.

When asked “What is better than this?” when having a good time, he will say, “Going to heaven.”

Can explain the family vision and motto.

**NINE THROUGH TWELVE**

**TRUTHS TO BELIEVE**

**God and Creation**

Can make the case for creation and against evolution by explaining such points as something cannot come from nothing, that the evolutionary theory has no believable explanation for how life began, and that while there have been some changes within species over the years, there is no record of one species changing to another, evolution is not shown in the fossil record.

Can quote Matthew 6:9-13 and explain the various things mentioned there that Jesus tells us we should pray for.

Can explain the hymn “How Great Thou Art” and sing it with meaning.

**Choice, Obedience, and Sin**

Can quote John 14:15 and 15:14 and tell what the Bible says regarding obedience and disobedience and what the outcome of each means for this life and the next.

Can share with his parents the particular choices he is facing right now and those which are coming in the next two or three years and what the right choices will be in each situation. (Appendix 6)

Can discuss with her parents the importance of a commitment to obey God and the Bible. (Appendix 6)

Can tell the story of the Children of Israel at Mt. Sinai and the story of the spies and what the consequences were.

**Revelation**

Can answer questions about Moses at Mt. Sinai and receiving the Ten Commandments.

Can explain that a prophet was one to whom God revealed His message so he could give it to the people and sometimes this included foretelling the future.

Can begin to use tools for Bible study such as a concordance, a Bible dictionary, and some on-line resources about finding Bible information.

Can recite from memory the twelve periods of Bible history with the beginning and ending date of each. (Appendix 3)

**Law and Prophets**

Can tell the stories of such Bible characters as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

**Christ and Holy Spirit**

Can quote and explain John 1:1-3.

Can quote four prophecies about Jesus and tell of their fulfillment: Genesis 3:15; Deuteronomy 18:18; Isaiah 53:6; and Micah 5:2.

Can give circumstances in life about using Jesus’ example to lead her to make the right decision.

**Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection**

Using the Bible and with notes as needed, he can tell the story of the last days of Jesus’ life from the Triumphal Entry to the Resurrection.

Can quote Revelation 5:9-10a and explain what these verses teach about Jesus’ death, resurrection, and the church.

**Plan of Salvation and Grace**

Using the ten steps found in *God’s Mystery* by Stafford North, she can explain with scriptures God’s plan of justice, mercy, and salvation. (Appendix 2)

Using Ephesians 2:8-9 and James 2:20-24, can explain what it means to be saved by a demonstrated faith. (Appendix 6)

Can quote and explain Acts 2:38.

**Church and Spread of the Gospel**

Can quote Matthew 16:18 and Acts 2:47 and answer questions about who established the church, when, and who is in the church. (Appendix 6)

Can quote Hebrews 10:25 and tell why a person should regularly attend church for worship.

Can explain the difference between the concept of the church of Christ and the concept of a denomination. (Appendix 4.)

**Second Coming, Heaven, and Hell**

Can use the following passages to describe Jesus’ second coming: Matthew 25:31-46, 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, and Titus 2:13.

Can use the following passages to describe the final judgment and what happens to the righteous and the wicked: Matthew 7:13-14, Matthew 25:46, and Revelation 20:10-21:8.

**CHARACTER TRAITS TO DEVELOP**

Can quote John 13:34.

Will show love for parents by obeying them. (Appendix 6)

Can quote Galatians 5:22 to cite the fruits of the Spirit.

Can explain what it means to be patient with others and will demonstrate that quality.

Can tell how she has shown kindness to friends at school.

Will show unselfishness in family decisions about where to eat or TV to watch. (Appendix 6)

Will have wholesome speech, free from words that are impure or hurtful to others.

Will show a generous spirit in giving and sharing. (Appendix 6)

Can quote and explain 1 Thessalonians 5:13.

Will accept and carry out responsibilities at the home and at church.

Will visit with those who need encouragement.

Will show courage at school in standing for what is right in the classroom or when with friends.

Will express joy about living in a Christian family.

Will have peace as one who is a follower of God.

Will engage in Bible study on her own initiative and can show the outcome of such study.

Will have a regular prayer life. (Appendix 6)

Will prefer to associate with friends from church.

Will engage in service projects to help others and to aid the church.

Can quote 1 John 5:4 and explain the victory we win over the world.

Can quote 1 John 2:16 and explain the meaning of the lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and pride of life using the story of Adam and Eve as an example.

When a Christian he knows has died, can discuss how they have gone to a better place.

Will share her belief in the afterlife with friends.

**THIRTEEN THROUGH FIFTEEN**

**TRUTHS TO BELIEVE**

**God and Creation**

Can tell what he is being taught at school about evolution and the age of the earth and if it is not in harmony with the Bible account, can explain the difference and tell why he believes the Bible account. (Appendix 4)

Can explain the song “Come, Let Us All Unite to Sing, God is Love.”

Can compare the concept of “one God” with the polytheism of pagan religions such as the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans.

**Choice, Obedience and Sin**

Can discuss with his parents and others the choices about sin and salvation that face him at this stage in his life. (Appendix 6)

Can discuss how choices during teen years affect the rest of life and all of eternity. (Appendix 6)

Can discuss the sin of David and Bathsheba and its consequences.

Can explain how he makes decisions based on what the Bible teaches. (Appendix 4)

Can explain how one decides how much to give to the church and other good causes compared to how much to spend caring for family (See 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 along with 2 Timothy 5:8, Luke 10:20-37, and Mark 7:9-13.)

**Revelation**

Can place various Bible characters in their time period and can describe the events that marked the beginning and ending of each period. (Appendix 2)

Can discuss effectively the principles of biblical interpretation. (Appendix 4)

Can explain why Jesus sometimes taught in parables (Matthew 13:11).

Can explain that the Bible sometimes uses figurative language to make its point such as in the books of Daniel and Revelation and in the parables of Jesus.

Can interpret 2 Peter 1:20—21 to show that those who wrote the Bible were led by the Holy Spirit and that therefore what they wrote is from God and is without mistakes.

Can interpret John 17:13-18 about being in the world but not of the world.

**Law and Prophets**

Can explain what the American Standard Version means when it says in Galatians 2:24 that the Law was a tutor to bring us to Christ.

Can explain Galatians 2:15-16 and James 2:20-11 which say the law required perfection and that no one was able to attain it. And can explain that one purpose of the Law was to demonstrate the need for a Savior who could provide salvation that did not require perfection.

**Christ and Holy Spirit**

Can explain what led Christ to pray in the garden that God would find a different way.

Can explain from Acts 2:38, Ephesians 1:14 and 3:16-20 that all Christians receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at baptism who gives us a sense of God’s presence in our lives. (Appendix 4 and 6)

Can explain the difference between “miraculous” and “providential.” (Appendix 6)

Can explain what it means that Christ is the head of the church, Colossians 1:18. (Appendix 6)

**Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection**

Can tell the story of Jesus’ resurrection and present the reasons to believe in His resurrection. (Appendix 5)

Using 1 Corinthians 15, can answer questions about Jesus resurrection and the resurrection which Christians and others will have someday.

Can explain from 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 how the Lord’s Supper is related to Christ’s coming to earth in a human body (the incarnation), His death, and His resurrection and how important it is that in this part of our worship we hold our minds on these concepts. We also should be examining ourselves, and focusing upon how we seek to draw closer to Christ through partaking of His body and blood. (Appendix 6)

Can explain from Romans 6:3-4 that baptism is a “picture” of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in which we participate as we are buried in baptism and raised in a new life.

**Plan of Salvation and Grace**

Can explain how one responds to salvation by grace through faith and whether the time is right for her now to do that.

Can explain why God’s justice and mercy come together in Christ.

Will share with someone else about their need to become a Christian. (Appendix 6)

**Church and Spread of the Gospel**

Can use the book of Acts to trace the spread of the church during its early years.

Can explain the concept of restoring the New Testament Church and tell how this is related to churches of Christ. (Appendix 4)

Will take part in an effort to bring others to Christ such as a local effort or an evangelistic mission trip.

Can explain why churches of Christ do not use instruments in worship. (Appendix 4)

Will correspond with a missionary somewhere outside the United States.

**Christ and Holy Spirit**

Can explain what led Christ to pray in the garden that God would find a different way.

Can explain from Acts 2:38, Ephesians 1:14 and 3:16-20 that all Christians receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at baptism to give us a sense of God’s presence. Appendix 4.

Can explain the difference between “miraculous” and “providential.”

Can explain what it means that Christ is the head of the church, Colossians 1:18.

**Second Coming, Heaven, and Hell**

Can use 1 Corinthians 15:22-26 to explain that when Jesus returns he will raise the dead and return the kingdom to God.

Can explain that the terms Lake of Fire and New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:1-8 are used in a figurative sense to give us the concept that hell is more unpleasant than we can imagine and heaven is more pleasant than we can imagine.

Can demonstrate how she would share with a friend about how important it is to understand about eternity.

**CHARACTER TRAITS TO DEVELOP**

Can quote and explain the beatitudes from Matthew 5:1-12.

Can quote John 13:1.

Can demonstrate love even to those who may have done some harmful thing to him.

(Appendix 6)

Will show kindness to members of the family in these early teen years.

In school activities such as sports or clubs, can show humility. (Appendix 6)

Will show self-control when confronted with temptations to sin in these early teen years.

Will keep speech clean during these years. (Appendix 6)

Will always tell the truth about activities.

Will show a generous spirit about giving to others, sharing what she has, and giving to the Lord. (Appendix 6)

Will show responsibility in connecting with her youth group and to her family and to the church.

Will be active in youth and church activities.

Will show leadership in appropriate ways at church and at school.

Can quote and explain Psalm 27:1.

Can quote 1 Timothy 2:9; can explain modest dress and will choose to dress modestly.

(Appendix 6)

Will share in family service to help others.

Will spend time in personal spiritual activities such as prayer and meditation. (Appendix 6)

Will be regular in worship attendance and will participate fully.

Will regularly study the Bible on her own. (Appendix 6)

Will celebrate spiritual successes

Can quote and explain 1 John 3:14.

Will bring school friends to youth and church activities. (Appendix 6)

Can discuss with the family the family motto and vision statement.

**SIXTEEN THROUGH EIGHTEEN**

**TRUTHS TO BELIEVE**

**God and Creation**

Can explain that “changes *within* a kind” does not support evolving from one kind to another.

Can explain the best reasons to support creation and reject evolution. (Appendix 4)

Can explain how God plays a continuing role in our lives.

Can explain how believing in God as creator affects our relationship to Him.

Can explain how there can be pain and suffering in a world which a good God created. (Appendix 9)

**Choice, Obedience, Sin**

Can describe the decision Jesus made in the Garden of Gethsemane and how He came to His conclusion.

Can explain the consequences of sin both in this life and the next. (Appendix 3 and 5)

Can discuss the pressures around him that could but should not affect his decisions.

Can discuss with parents decisions facing her currently and how to please Christ in those decisions. (Appendix 6)

Can discuss the right balance between tolerance and disapproval.

Can discuss the appropriate expressions of affection prior to marriage.

Can discuss whether truth is absolute or relevant.

Can discuss the question of a Christian’s participation in warfare for his government.

Can compare Christianity with other religions to show why Christianity is superior to others.

Can discuss with parents decisions to be made at this point in life which will affect his future and how the Scriptures bear on these decisions.

**Revelation**

Can make the case from its accuracy, its scientific foreknowledge, and its prophecies about coming events that the Bible writers had help from beyond human wisdom. (Appendix 4, Numbers 5 and 6 and Appendix 6)

Can explain why the Bible should be used as the authority for Christian faith and practice. (Appendix 4, Number 5)

Can state the basic principles of the Christian worldview. (Appendix 7)

Can explain how to use “command, example, and necessary inference” in learning from Scripture. (Appendix 4 and 7)

Can discuss the difference between areas of faith and areas of opinion based on Paul’s comments in Romans 14.

**Law and Prophets**

Can tell the stories and the message of Hosea, Jonah, Haggai, and Malachi.

Can tell the story of Daniel and his prophecies.

Can explain 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 in its relationship to the question of whether the Law of Moses remains binding today.

**Christ and Holy Spirit**

Can explain how using Jesus as an example is affecting various relationships and activities in her life.

Can quote and explain 2 Peter 1:20-21.

Can explain the three ways the Holy Spirit worked in New Testament times and which of those is still at work today. (Appendix 4, Number 14)

Can explain the function of prayer in the life of the Christian and how we can ask for what is on our hearts and that God will always answer although sometimes the answer is “no.” (Matthew 26:36-46.) (Appendix 6)

**Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection**

Can quote Romans 6:4 and explain the connection between baptism and Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection.

Can give reasons to believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead. (Appendix 8)

Can use 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 to explain about the resurrection of the dead when Jesus comes.

**Plan of Salvation and Grace**

Can use passages such as Acts 8:12-18, 2 Peter 2:22, Galatians 5:4, and Revelation 3:5 to explain what the Bible teaches about the possibility of a saved person being lost.

Can quote James 2:24 and explain how this passage and the verses preceding it teach that God has always required a demonstrated faith. (Appendix 4.)

Can use the ten steps of the Story of the Bible with pictures learned earlier to explain how to be saved. (Appendix 3)

Can explain justice and judgment now and eternally by using these passages: Isaiah 1:17; Luke 6:37; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 12:19; 13:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 20:12-13.

**Church and Spread**

Can discuss the factors which often lead young people away from the church and how he is seeking to keep such factors from affecting him and his friends.

Can trace the departure of the church from the teaching of the apostles and the efforts to restore the church to its apostolic origins. (Appendix 4)

Can discuss the proper way to handle disputes among Christians.

Can explain that a church should use the teaching and practice of the first century church as a guide and the importance of being associated with such a church.

Can explain the difference between the church and a denomination.

**Second Coming, Heaven, and Hell**

Will discuss with the family their motto and vision and how she will participate in that the rest of her life.

Can explain the premillennial doctrine about Christ’s return and use such passages as John 6:40, Matthew 24:4-14, 1 John 2:24-28, and 1 Corinthians 15:22-26 to refute it. (Appendix 4, Numbers 16 and 17)

**CHARACTER TRAITS TO DEVELOP**

Will demonstrate a loving attitude among family and friends.

Can explain the patience of Jesus shown in John 27:13 and make applications to our lives.

Can quote Philippians 2:6-8 and explain the humility of Jesus. (Appendix 6)

Can explain the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4 and how each response to Satan was unselfish.

Can explain Matthew 15:19-20 about the things that defile a person and how we can stay away from them. (Appendix 6)

Will be honest in all dealings with family and friends.

Can quote Luke 23:24, explain Jesus’ forgiving spirit, and tell how we need to follow His example in forgiveness.

Will often express appreciation to others.

Will show responsibility about homework and chores.

Will be helpful to some younger people at church to encourage them.

Will stand for what she believes is the teaching of Scripture at school and elsewhere.

Can quote 1 Timothy 6:6 and show the peace that comes with faithful service to God.

(Appendix 6)

Can demonstrate good character in driving a car.

Will pray regularly.

Can describe the relationship between all of life’s activities and his spiritual life. (Appendix 6)

Can bring parties together who have been disputing with each other.

Will especially seek to be with other Christian youth.

Will spend time in such activities as meditation, journaling, and private prayer. (Appendix 6)

Will choose to spend time in service activities.

Will participate fully in both private and public worship.

As adulthood approaches with job or college, will share with family about ultimate goals.

Will bring friends to youth and church events.

Will conduct a Bible study with a friend.

Can read and explain the “overcome” statements at the end of each of the seven letters in Revelation 2 and 3.

**LEARNING PATHS FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE**

The statement of each objective tells what we seek for the child to be able to do, but with each, there also needs to be a description of what the child will do to learn how to reach the objective. Such activities are called “learning paths” because they describe the path along which the child shall walk in order to be able to do the objective. Sometimes one learning path may be enough. Sometimes a variety of learning paths is necessary because a variety of learning paths is more likely to be effective than a single learning path. So, as you develop your plan of objectives for each year of your child’s life, you should think through the methods you will use to bring your child to the point of having achieved the objective. As shown below, there is a wide variety of things to do from singing songs and reading Bible passages to going with you on a service project or seeing a movie or talking about a situation in which he has been involved.

So as you choose your objectives for each year, put with each objective a statement of the activity or set of activities you will use to give your child the opportunity to reach the objective. Below is a list of learning paths for you to use and adapt to your particular child and particular objectives. Don’t overdo the learning paths, but remember that repetition is a key part of learning, especially if a person is to have long-term recall of the objective.

Daily family devotionals are a very good time to do learning paths for reaching objectives. Parents can explain, older siblings can explain, children can memorize, parents can conduct Bible drills, children can act out Bible stories, families can sing together and share experiences together. And family trips are also a great time for spiritual learning.

A very good plan to add to your daily devotionals is Saturday Morning Special in which you devote one Saturday morning a month to working on objectives and evaluations and even rewards, and you do it in a way that is fun for the kids. You could do it with one child, but it is better to do it with several children, your own and a few friends. Having a few friends, usually the same ones, will add an element of fellowship and building relationships with the kind of friends you want your children to have. If you can, also involve grandparents in these sessions.

Each Saturday Morning Special should have four elements: study of a Bible story or passage, a time for working on memory verses, a study of nature, and a time for service. These together should take three or four hours.

To study the Bible story, read the passage from which it comes or, for younger children, maybe read it from a Bible story book. Ask questions about the story to be sure they are getting not only the details of the story but also the good message it has for them. Then let the children act out the story using their own initiative. If you can have some costumes like simple robes, a staff or two, a male and female crown, a Bible style lamp, some Bible style headdresses, a few coins, and similar things to use along the way. These will add authenticity for the children as they act out the story. As you plan for stories, you can see what you need and can have things ready.

Since memory verses should be part of your plan each quarter, use a few minutes each Saturday Morning Special to work on new ones and to let the children repeat some of the verses they have learned from earlier times.

Since God made the trees and flowers, and since taking a nature walk is a lot of fun, combine these into a good walk through nature. You could do this in your own yard by showing different trees and flowers, or through the neighborhood to broaden the range of things to study. You could even go to nature trails that may be available in your community or to a park, a zoo, or even out into the country. And when you have a chance, look for birds and animals as well as trees and flowers. As you walk, share information about the types of things you are seeing and always keep emphasizing that all of these things are part of God’s work and that it took an all-knowing God to be able to design what we find in nature.

Then let the children do some kind of service. That may be visiting a sick friend or helping prepare materials for a Bible class or Vacation Bible School. It could be going to a home for the elderly or to the home of a shut-in to visit people who are lonely. These could be members of the church or people in your neighborhood on whom you want to make a good impression for Jesus and His church. Such people don’t get to see children very often and so are delighted for them to come and maybe even sing a song or two for them. Maybe some church activity is coming which you could help advertise in your neighborhood—go door to door with handouts about an upcoming VBS. You could go to the church building and help with clean-up or making repairs or polishing the pews or planting flowers or other things that need to be done.

So what does your Saturday Morning Special achieve? It provides a “fun” way to learn Bible stories and verses. It helps children to know more about nature and who made everything. And it instills in them a sense of serving and how much joy helping others can bring. By doing such an activity once a month, you add a great opportunity for learning which your children will really anticipate and which they will enjoy. And it will become an element to which in adulthood, they will look back with a lot of enjoyment.

Once a child is of school age, the summers are a great time to focus on spiritual development. The child is free from the tasks that go with school and needs something to do. So use this time for the child to read books, spend time talking with parents and grandparents, going with them to local places and on long trips. Many of the activities mentioned below are excellent things to do while the child is more available in the summer. So take full advantage of summers for spiritual development of your child.

1. The child will speak aloud key words you want them to learn.
2. The child will use repetition to memorize Bible verses.
3. The child will view pictures.
4. The child will listen to parents read Bible stories each night. (When reading Bible stories, connect the decisions and actions of the Bible character with things that happen to him.
5. At the zoo the child can explain God made animals and suited them to meet their needs.
6. The child will attend Vacation Bible School.
7. The child will attend Bible class at church.
8. On a visit to a park or other good place to see nature, the child can explain how God worked in nature to make it beautiful and to make all of nature work together.
9. The child will use repetition to learn Bible facts and verses in the family devotional.
10. The child will use repetition to learn Bible facts and verses while traveling in the car.
11. The child will learn from parent’s comments when a learning situation arises.
12. The child will learn from parent’s explanation of reasons why to act in certain ways.
13. The child will learn from discussion with the parents about how to show character traits in realistic situations. (Appendix 6)
14. The child will learn through Bible drill.
15. The child will learn while on a family vacation.
16. The child will learn proper behaviors in various situations through role playing with her parents and siblings including what to do, what to refuse to do, and how to handle difficult circumstances.
17. The child, either by himself or in a group, will act out Bible stories.
18. The child will read portions of a children’s Bible story book.
19. The child will discuss a topic with his parents.
20. The child will read a book on a biblical topic. (See some recommended books in the Appendix 4 and 6)
21. The child will consult a commentary.
22. The child will journal his thoughts, prayer life, achievements. (Appendix 6)
23. The child will consult a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia.
24. The child will demonstrate repentance. (Appendix 6)
25. The child will engage in prayer with her parents. (Appendix 6)
26. The child will become involved with others at the church.
27. The child will fellowship with those of other Christian families invited to the home.
28. The child will answer questions on Bible topics.
29. The child will discuss a topic with her preacher or youth minister.
30. The child will learn from a heart to heart talk with his parents about a topic.
31. The child will explain the concept to someone else.
32. The child will go on a mission trip.
33. The child will go with someone as they engage in some act of service such as visiting or teaching a Bible study.
34. The child will participate in something at church such as helping teach a Bible class, assisting with communion, leading a prayer, assisting with greeting at the door, or helping prepare and serve a meal.
35. The child will participate in some act of service.
36. The child will learn by seeing others in the family demonstrate the trait the child is to learn.
37. As someone is demonstrating the trait you want the child to learn, the child will have someone point out how the person is showing the trait.
38. The child will be asked to see the trait in others and be able to point it out.
39. The book called *Spiritual Growth of Children* put out by Focus on the Family and written by Trent, Osborne, and Bruner, has sections on how parents can use various occasions within the family for spiritual learning. Many of these are mentioned in one way or another in previous items, but their list gives some good ideas about when and how to use a learning path. One thing they emphasize is to “make it fun” so children do not see the spiritual path as a burden and a chore. Here is their list of places and occasions for spiritual learning possibilities: church, mealtime, drive time, bedtime, fun time, teachable moments, family nights, family devotionals, meaningful memories, blessing ceremonies, holidays, quiet time, and exploration time. Many learning paths could be done at such occasions.

**EVALUATIONS FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE:**

Each objective should not only have learning paths through which the person can achieve the objective but also needs a method of evaluation by which the person can show that she has achieved the objective. Below are some ideas about how to demonstrate that one has achieved a specific objective. Each objective should have with it a carefully designed plan for evaluation.

1. Can demonstrate at a family devotional at home.
2. Can demonstrate while on a family vacation.
3. Can demonstrate to a larger family gathering.
4. Can demonstrate to a Bible class at church.
5. Can demonstrate by performing a service.
6. Can demonstrate by quoting and/or explaining a text.
7. Can demonstrate through discussions at home.
8. Can demonstrate through relationships at home.
9. Can demonstrate through relationships at church.
10. Can demonstrate through relationships at school.
11. Can demonstrate by serving the family.
12. Can demonstrate by serving those in need.
13. Can demonstrate by doing things at school in class or in activities.
14. Can demonstrate while driving a car.
15. Can demonstrate when out with friends.
16. Can demonstrate while on a date.

**REWARDS FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE:**

The third element to accompany each objective is a reward for achieving it. While a given reward may be attached to two or more objectives, a child should sense that a tangible or intangible reward is part of the motivation for achieving an objective. Below are some possible rewards.

1. By oral congratulations to the child and sometimes in the presence of those she respects.
2. By a hug.
3. By a letter or note.
4. By a gift.
5. By a treat.
6. By a party.
7. By a family trip.
8. By giving an additional responsibility.
9. By giving an additional freedom.
10. By allowing participation in a desired event.
11. By being allowed to show what has been learned to others.
12. By bragging on them in front of others.
13. By putting a note in their treasured memories.
14. By noting what they have done with a picture on a Facebook or Twitter post.
15. By increasing their allowance.

**Conclusion**

Developing a plan to lead your child’s spiritual development from birth to eighteen, or whatever age fits your child, is not a simple task. Most parents do not even make the attempt. They just assume that if they take their kids to church and maybe get them in the youth group that everything will turn out OK. That is often proving, however, not to be the case. For a higher likelihood of success, parents need to take a much stronger role in the spiritual life of their children. They need to have a carefully-designed, intentional plan. They need to carry out the plan with regularity. They need to involve the child in designing and working the plan. They need to utilize what the church and youth programs offer. They need to be regular in advancing the plan. And they need to pray.

As a parting word, we encourage you to build a strong relationship with your child. Pay attention to him, talk with him, spend time with him, be interested in what interests him. No doubt your child will bring home many additional challenging issues from school or college, from the sports arena, from the movie theater, and even from church that we have not addressed in the objectives from which you are to choose to build your program.  We encourage you to listen openly to these faith-challenges and to be prepared to discuss them with your child in a biblical way. One of the most important things you can do is to keep your relationship with her strong and positive even when she may have done something wrong.

While this handbook has included in the age-appropriate objectives a number of these difficult questions and paradoxes that will arise to challenge the faith of your child, we encourage you to be prepared to deal with whatever your child may face in a biblical way to prevent potential damage from unanswered or inadequately answered questions.  Thus, as parents, always being “prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have… with gentleness and respect.” I Peter 3:15. If you don’t know the answer, seek help soon from someone who can deal well with your child’s need.

Also you will want to recognize the potential benefit and the potential harm from friends. Try to be sure that your child has friends to work with you and for you and not against you in helping your child to achieve the spiritual plan.

We offer this handbook as a way to help you develop a strategy about your child’s spiritual life and believe that a carefully developed plan carried to completion will greatly increase the likelihood a child will turn out to be faithful to the Lord. May God bless you on this journey!

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Appendix 12—A Sample Yearly Plan for a Five-year Old Page 88

Appendix 13—Bible Drill Questions Page 91

**Appendix 1**

**Information Available on the Website for This Class**

**Go to** [**www.mrcc.org/spfc**](http://www.mrcc.org/spfc)

1. A Spiritual Plan for Children: Parenting Handbook. May download as desired. Best to put the pages in a loose-leaf notebook so other material collected during the class can be added to the notebook.
2. A Spiritual Plan for Children: Lesson Plans for the Class on A Spiritual Plan for Children. These lesson plans will guide the teacher through a 12 or 13-week class period or a weekend seminar using the Handbook as the guide. Lesson plans provide material for study and have good advice for teachers.
3. List of objectives from pre-school and elementary Bible classes at the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. Parents may review this list for additional objectives from which to choose in developing their own plan.
4. Expanded List of “Truths to Believe.” This list provides for parents additional truths to teach their children beyond those listed in Section 5B.
5. Expanded List of “Character Traits.” This list provides additional Christ-like character traits which parents can develop within their children beyond those listed in Section 5C.
6. Comprehensive List of “Eternity Affecting Scriptures.” This list gives parents additional passages for children to study or memorize which have can have major impact in a person’s life.
7. List of Questions for Parents to Use in Assessing a Child’s Spiritual Progress. Provides additional questions for Parents to use as they periodically assess a child’s progress over time.
8. Scriptures and Comments on Truths to Believe. See Appendix 6.
9. Scriptures and Comments on Character Traits. See Appendix 6.
10. Applying Spiritual Principles to Real-life Situations. See Appendix 6.

**Appendix 2**



**Appendix 3**

**Bible Chronology**

**Compiled by Stafford North**

The following chronology is compiled primarily as a tool for learning in broad outline the major events of the Old and New Testaments. Many of the dates given are uncertain and perhaps will never be definitely known, especially those before 1000 B.C. Many of these early dates have been rounded off to make them easier to remember.

While this list of events cannot always be definitive in dates, it does give the sequence of events and general time periods. Learning the twelve periods of Bible history with their beginning and ending event is especially helpful in understanding Scripture.

The most important thing now is for students to get established in their own minds the general order of biblical events. This will be of great help to them in understanding the Bible. The dates underlined are the most important and should be learned first.

**Date Scriptures Biblical events historical events DATE**

B.C. Period I - Before the Flood B.C.

Genesis 1-8; 4000? B.C. to 2300 B.C.

4000? Gen 1-2 End of creation of the world

4000? Gen 1-4 Adam and Eve

3000 Gen 5 Enoch

2900 Gen 5 Birth of Noah

2300 Gen 7-9 The Flood

Period II – National Beginning of Israelites

Genesis 9-50; 2300 B.C. to 1700 B.C.

 Hammurabi In Babylon 1950

1900 Gen 12 Call of Abraham

1875 Gen 21 Isaac born

1815 Gen 25 Jacob born

 Hyksos Kings in Egypt 1800

1730 Gen 30 Joseph born

1700 Gen 47 Israelites enter Egypt

Period III – Egyptian Bondage of Israelites

Exodus 1-12; 1700 B.C. to 1450 B.C.

1580 Ex 1 Israelites gradually oppressed 18th Dynasty in Egypt 1580

1530 Ex 2 Moses born

1450 Ex 12 The Exodus

**Date Scriptures Biblical events historical events DATE**

Period IV – Wilderness Wanderings of Israelites

Exodus 13-40, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; 1450 B.C. to 1410 B.C.

1450 Ex 20-Lev Law of Moses given

1449 Num 1 1st numbering

1449 Num 13 Spies sent out

1449 Num 14 Wandering begins

1410 Deut 34 Moses dies

Period V – Conquest and Settlement of Canaan

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel 1-10; 1410 B.C. to 1050 B.C.

1410 Josh 3 Crossing of the Jordan

1375 Judges 1 Beginning of the Judges

1300 Judges 6-8 Gideon defeats Midianites

1150 Judges 15 Samson fights Philistines

1100 I Sam 1 Samuel born

Period VI – United Kingdom

I Samuel 11-31, 2 Samuel, I Kings 1-12, I Chronicles, 2 Chronicles 1-9; 1050 B.C. to 930 B.C.

1050 I Sam 11 Saul becomes King

1010 2 Sam 2 David becomes King

990 I Chr 11 Nathan accuses David

970 I Ki 1 Solomon becomes King

 2 Chr 1

930 I Ki 11 Solomon dies

 2 Chr 9

Period VII – Divided Kingdom

I Kings 12-22, 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles 10-36; 930 B.C. to 586 B.C.

(Prophets in all capitals, Kings in lower case)

Judah Israel

930 I Ki 12 Rehoboam (930-913) Jereboam (930-908)

 2 Chr 10 Benhadad King in Syria 900

875 I Ki 16 Ahab (875-853) Syrians repeatedly invade 900

850 2 Ki 2 Elijah (875-850) Kingdom of Israel 800

835 JOEL (835-796) Elisha (850-790)

785 JONAH (785-771)

765 AMOS (765-755)

 Tiglath-Pileser becomes

760 HOSEA (760-715) Assyrian King 747

748 Menahem (743-738)

745 2 Ki 18-20 ISAIAH (736-701)

741 2 Ki 16 Ahaz (741-726

2 Chr 28

**Date Scriptures Biblical events historical events DATE**

 Judah Israel

740 MICAH (740-700) Damascus falls to the 732

730 2 Ki 17 Hoshea (730-722) Assyrians

 Shalmaneser IV 727

726 2 Ki 18-20 Hezekiah (726-697)

 2 Chr 29-32 Hezekiah (726-697)

725 2 Ki 17 Assyrian Invasion

722 2 Ki 17 Israel Falls Sargon II 722

 Sennacherib 705

697 2 Ki 21 Manassseh (697-642)

 2 Chr 33

639 2 Ki 22-23 Josiah (639-608)

 2 Chr 33-35

639 ZEPHANIAH (640-622)

630 NAHUM (630-610)

 Nineveh Destroyed 612

626 JEREMIAH (626-586)

 Nebopolassar (Babylon) 625

620 HABAKKUK (620-586)

 Assyria Falls 609

608 2 Ki 23-24 Johoikim (698-597)

 2 Chr 36

606 2 Ki 24 Nebuchadnezzar’s first conquest Babylonian Kingdom 606

 2 Chr 36 of Jerusalem – 1st captives taken

 Nebuchadnezzar king 605

597 2 Ki 24 2nd Invasion of Judah – captives taken

 2 Chr 36

597 2 Ki 24 Zedekiah (597-586)

586 OBADIAH (586)

586 2 Ki 25 Final fall of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar

 2 Chr 36 takes more captives to Babylon

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Period VIII – Babylonian Captivity

No historical books; 586 B.C. to 536 B.C.

(70 years of captivity dates from 606 B.C. when first captives were taken)

606 DANIEL (604-536) – in Babylon

597 EZEKIEL (593-560) – in Babylon

 Belshazzar 550

Cyrus takes Babylon 536

**Date Scriptures Biblical events historical events DATE**

Period IX – Return from Captivity

Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther; 536 B.C. to 332 B.C.

536 Ezra 2 Cyrus allows 1st return of captives

 under Zerubabbel Darius I 521

HAGGAI (520-516)

ZACHARIAH (520-516)

 Xerxes (Ahasuerus) 521

515 Ezra 6 Temple Completed

473 Esther Esther’s deliverance of the Jews – in Babylon

458 Ezra 7 Ezra’s visit to Jerusalem

444 Neh 2 Nehemiah rebuilds walls of Jerusalem

440 Ezra 9-10 Separation of Jews and Samaritans

434 Neh 13 Nehemiah returns to Babylon

432 Neh 13 Nehemiah comes to Jerusalem

MALACHI (450-400)

400 End of the Old Testament writing

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Period X – Greek Domination

332 B.C. to 166 B.C.

332 Alexander takes Judah Alexander conquers

 Babylon 330

 Alexander dies 323

305 Ptolemy takes Jerusalem

 Alexander’s 4 generals finalize 301 their kingdoms

275 Septuagint Translation begun

 Rome’s 1st Punic war 264

197 Palestine Annexed by Antiochus III of Syria

168 Persecution by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)

168 Beginning of revolt of Jews under Mattathias

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Period XI – Maccabean Age

166 B.C. to 63 B.C.

166 Judas Maccabeus leads Jews to religious freedom

142 Simon Maccabeus wins political independence

135 John Hyrcanus I (135-105), expansion, development of sects.

 Gracchi in Rome 128

69 Civil war between John Hyrcanus II and Aristabulus II

**Date Scriptures Biblical events historical events DATE**

Period XII – Roman Domination

63 B.C. to 100 A.D.

63 Jerusalem taken for Rome by Pompey

 Julius Caesar assassinated 44

43 Herod the Great rules Palestine

 Augustus made emperor 27

4 Mt. 1-2 Jesus is born

 Lk 1-2

4 Mt.2:19 Herod dies Tiberius made emperor 14 AD

26 Mt 3; John the Baptist begins ministry

 Mk 1;

 Lk 3;

 Jn 1

26 Mt 4; Jesus begins ministry

Mk 1;

Lk 4;

Jn 2

30 Mt 26; Death of Jesus

 Mk 14;

Lk 22;

Jn 18

30 Acts 2 Beginning of the Church

34 Acts 6-7 Death of Stephen

37 Acts 9 Conversion of Paul Caligula made emperor 37

40 Acts 10 Conversion of Cornelius Claudius made emperor 41

45-48 Acts 13-14 Paul’s 1st Missionary Tour

48 James writes Epistle of James

50 Acts 15 Jerusalem Conference

50-53 Acts 16-18 Paul’s 2nd Missionary Tour

50 Matthew’s Gospel written

51 Paul writes I Thessalonians

51 Paul writes II Thessalonians

54-57 Acts 19-20 Paul’s 3rd Missionary Tour Nero made emperor 54

55 Paul writes I Corinthians

55-56 Paul writes Romans, Galatians, and II Corinthians

58 Acts 21-23 Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem

58-60 Acts 24-26 Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea

58 Luke’s Gospel written

60 Acts 27-28 Paul’s Voyage to Rome

60-1 Paul writes the prison epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon 61 Luke writes Acts of Apostles

**Date Scriptures Biblical events historical events DATE**

 Rome burns 64

 Persecution of Christians

64 Paul writes I Timothy under Nero begins 64

65 I Peter written

65 Paul writes Titus

66 Jews revolt against Rome

67 II Peter written

67 Paul writes II Timothy

68 Hebrews is written, perhaps by Paul

68 Paul is killed

68 John Mark writes Gospel of Mark

70 Jerusalem is destroyed by Titus and the Jewish State ends

75 Jude is written

90 I, II, and III John are written

 Domitian made emperor 81

90 John writes Revelation (approx.),

 completing New Testament writing

 Nerva made emperor 96

 Trajan made emperor 98

**Appendix 4**

**How to Explain**

To reach the following articles, go to [www.oc.edu/faculty/stafford.north/pe](http://www.oc.edu/faculty/stafford.north/pe) and select the article you wish to review. Stafford North wrote these articles for his course in Personal Evangelism at Oklahoma Christian University and provide basic information you can share with your child. o

1. God’s Eternal Plan
2. Total Congregational Evangelism
3. Getting Ready to Teach Someone About Jesus
4. The Existence of God
5. The Bible is a Revelation from God
6. How the Bible Came to Us
7. Saved by Grace through Faith
8. Scriptural Baptism
9. The Origin, the Departure, and the Return
10. The Church and Denominations
11. God’s Second Law of Pardon
12. God’s Two Covenants
13. Using Instruments of Music in Worship
14. The Holy Spirit in the Early Church
15. Explaining About Miracles
16. Matthew 24 and the End of the World
17. The Thousand Year Reign
18. The Truth about Evolution

Article on Command, Example, and Necessary Inference—

 Go to [www.oc.edu/faculty/stafford.north](http://www.oc.edu/faculty/stafford.north)

 Look under Articles on Biblical Subjects

Articles on Evolution

 Go to [www.oc.edu/faculty/stafford.north](http://www.oc.edu/faculty/stafford.north) and look under Articles on Bible Topics.

 Go to the website of the Institution for Creation Research. Many good things there.

In particular go to the following address to see a tract called “The Scientific Case Against Evolution” by Dr. Henry Morris which has a very good summary of reasons not to believe in evolution. <http://www.icr.org/home/resources/resources_tracts_scientificcaseagainstevolution/>.

**Appendix 5**

**Useful Articles and Books on Bible Topics**

Below are listed topics on which Stafford North has written an article which can be helpful in teaching your children. These articles may be reached at [www.oc.edu/faculty/stafford.north](http://www.oc.edu/faculty/stafford.north), clicking on “Articles on Bible Topics” and then finding the article listed.

Articles for reference on Truths to Believe:

1. Grace and Works
2. Indwelling Power of the Holy Spirit
3. God’s Role for Women in the Church
4. Worshipping the Holy God
5. Command, Example, and Inference
6. Silence of Scripture
7. Last Things 1, 2, and 3
8. The Use of Instruments in Worship
9. Evolution

Books for reference on Truths to Believe:

1. Ferguson, Everett. *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman’s Publishing Company. 1996. (An excellent review of all the basic truths from the Bible about the doctrines and practices of the early church.)
2. Lightfoot, Neil R. *How We Got the Bible*. 3rd Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003. (An excellent treatment of the process through which we have our English Bibles today.)
3. McDowell, Josh. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. San Bernadino, California: Campus Crusade for Christ: 1979. (Chapters on such topics as how the Bible came to us, its reliability, Jesus’ believability, and the fulfillment of prophecies.)
4. Morrison, Frank. *Who Moved the Stone?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
5. Stafford North. *God’s Mystery*. Nashville: 21st Century Christian, 2014. (A good overview of how the entire story of the Bible fits together.)
6. Strobel, Lee. *The Case for a Creator*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004. (A good explanation of why to believe in God.)
7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *The Case for Christ.* Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1998. (Why should one believe in Jesus and in His resurrection.)

**Appendix 6**

**Resources to Fortify a Child’s Spiritual Development**

**Truths, Traits, and Real-life Situations**

There is much to teach a child to equip her for eternity. Throughout the text of this Handbook, we have provided thoughts on a number of truths, traits and spiritual principles which we believe essential to a child’s spiritual development.  A more thorough treatment of several of these, as well as a number of others, can be found at [www.mrcc.org/spfc](http://www.mrcc.org/spfc).

I. Under the heading of *Scriptures and Comments on Truths to Believe*, you will find articles on the following:

* Love, Honor and Obey God
* Christ
* Holy Spirit
* God’s Covenant
* Obedience and Conformance to God’s Blueprint
* Faith
* Reconciliation
* His Body, the Church
* The Lord’s Supper
* Repentance
* Prayer
* Meditation
* Justice, Mercy and Faith
* God’s Providence
* Honor and Obey Parents

II. Under the heading of *Scriptures and Comments on Character Traits* you will find articles on the following:

* Holy and righteous
* Spiritual
* Hates evil and loves good
* Pure and self-disciplined
* Fruitful and evangelistic
* Compassionate, benevolent and generous
* Selfless
* Merciful and forgiving
* Humble
* Wise

III. Under the heading of *Applying Spiritual Principles to Real-life Situations* you will find discussion of some types of real life situations and decisions which your children will face. How they respond can influence where they spend eternity. Wisely applying spiritual principles is the key to safeguarding their relationship with both God and their parents. We refer to situations such as the following:

* modesty and purity in attire and behavior
* secular activities in which to engage, e.g., choice of entertainment, music, hobbies, etc.
* experimenting with or engaging in the “recreational or social use” of potentially addictive substances
* abusing the body via a variety of socially/culturally acceptable methods
* management/stewardship of God’s blessings
* choice of language to express oneself
* mistreatment by others
* behavior motivated by selfishness
* disappointment in self and in others
* serious illness, personally or a loved one
* death of a loved one
* behavior which could compromise one’s integrity
* permitting non-spiritual interests to displace assembling with God’s family to worship Him
* choice of a lifetime mate, especially choosing someone with whom the child does not share a “common faith”
* yielding to anything which encumbers one’s relationship with God and willingness to submit to His will (Reference the wealthy young man in Luke 18:18-23.)

**Appendix 7**

**Christian Worldview**

A worldview is the underlying set of beliefs through which we look at the world and answer questions which arise about life. While there are many different ways of describing the Christian worldview, the following items will be of help as parents seek to develop within their children a biblical view of the world.

1. There is a God who created and sustains the universe.
2. The Bible is the Word of God which He revealed and which is inerrant.
3. There is absolute truth and Bible truth is absolute.
4. God gave humans choice so they make decisions which affect their ultimate destiny.
5. Decisions have consequences and one of the consequences of a choice to violate God’s law, called sin, is separation from Him.
6. Jesus Christ, a member of the Godhead, came to earth, lived a sinless life, and died for sins He did not commit, thus making it possible for us to be forgiven and reconciled to God.
7. Jesus was raised from the dead as the first and all others who have lived will be raised at His coming.
8. While we can do nothing to earn our salvation from God, we must respond to His offer of salvation by grace through a demonstrated faith.
9. There are absolute moral truths which should guide our lives and which, if violated, will bring bad consequences.
10. God originated the family with a male and female serving as father and mother and we should respect this arrangement as the basic plan for society.
11. We should live a life of love, humility, and unselfish service to others.
12. We should share with others the message of salvation through Christ.

The Barna Group often publishes useful information about the Christian worldview. You can go to their website to find the results of surveys they have done which relate to worldviews.

**Appendix 8**

**Jesus’ Resurrection**

The importance of Jesus’ Resurrection—1 Corinthians 15:14-18

It was prophesied—1 Corinthians 15:4. Psalm 16:8; Isaiah 53:10; Matthew 16:21.

Four Stories of Believers today

1. Dr. Simon Greenleaf. Founder of Harvard’s School of Law and author of a famous book on legal evidence. One of his students challenged him about the resurrection of Jesus. After study of the evidence, he wrote in *The Testimony of the Evangelists*: “It is impossible that the Apostles could have persisted in affirming the truths they had narrated, had not Jesus Christ actually risen from the dead.”
2. Dr. Frank Morrison. British lawyer and journalist decided to write a book to disprove Jesus/ resurrection. He spent three years in research and writing. In his, *Who Moved the Stone?,* he wrote that it was unreasonable to think that the disciples did it or the Jews did it or the Romans did it. Therefore, God must have moved the stone.
3. C. S. Lewis began his adult life as an atheist. At 17 he wrote “I believe in no religion. There is absolutely no proof for any of them.” Fifteen years later, Lewis wrote, “Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call ‘real things’ . . . namely the actual incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.”
4. Lee Strobel, a journalist, set out to discredit the Christian faith but wrote *The Case for Christ.* In it he presents evidence for faith in Jesus as resurrected.

Evidence for the Resurrection of Christ includes:

1. Eye Witnesses. 1 Corinthians 15:5-8. Peter, the Twelve, more than 500, James, Paul, Mary Magdaline, the two on the road to Emmaus.
2. The Empty Tomb. The disciples would not have stolen the body. They were distraught about Jesus’ death and uncertain about what to do. The Jews would not have taken it because they asked the Romans to seal the tomb. And if they had taken the body they would have produced it in order to show the apostles’ were lying. The Romans would not have taken it because they had agreed that the tomb should be sealed. If none of these took the body, then only God could have moved the stone and given the body life.
3. The changed apostles. On Pentecost and thereafter they were so bold to stand against the Jewish officials. What gave these unlearned fishermen such courage to stand against the Jewish rulers? Only the certainty that Jesus had been raised from the dead and was, therefore, the expected Jewish messiah.
4. The rapid spread of the church. No military force. Not led by people in power. Little money to work with. A hard-to-believe story. And those who spread the story had nothing personal to gain and much to lose—even risking their lives. If they knew the story was false, they would not have taken such risks. The existence and growth of the church demonstrated the truthfulness of the claim.

**Appendix 9**

**Why is There Pain and Suffering in the World?**

This question is often raised by critics of God and the Bible. As they look around and see people with cancer and people dying from accidents and nations having wars, they ask the question like this: “If there is a good God why does he allow so much pain and suffering in the world?” and “Even people who live good lives often suffer as much as anyone else.”

Here are a few thoughts on this question.

1. Pain and suffering were not part of the world as God originally created it. He made a perfect world with no problems, no death, no suffering. God could have kept the world this way had he wanted to inhabit it with robots programmed always to do the right thing.
2. God, however, chose to create human beings who had the power of choice. Adam and Eve, for example, were given the choice of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or of not eating that fruit. God told them that if they ate of it there would be bad consequences—they would become subject to death. Thus, He gave them a choice. When Satan spoke with Eve, she told him correctly that God had told them not to eat the fruit and that if they did, they would surely die (Genesis 3). When Eve first and then Adam made the choice to eat of the forbidden fruit, God brought on them the consequences he promised. They did become mortal and, thus, they passed mortality to all of those who came after them (1 Corinthians 15:22). With death passed to all there obviously came pain and suffering. Many different means of death by disease and by force became prevalent in the world.
3. In addition to the pain and suffering brought by the sin of Adam and Eve which included death, pain in childbearing, and difficulty in agriculture, there is also the pain and suffering brought into the world by other people. Wars are begun by people who want to control others and they plunge the world into many hardships. Think of Hitler and World War II. Think of the drinking people choose to do and each year kill over 10,000. Their choice to get drunk creates pain and suffering for others. And people commit sins about lying, stealing, sexual sins, and much more. All of these not only bring harm to those who do it but also others against whom they sin.
4. Each of us brings some pain and suffering into our lives by our own bad choices. A choice is bad because it brings harmful consequences to the one making the choice and to others involved. So, if I lie about something, I will eventually suffer bad consequences for it and so will those about whom I have lied.
5. With so many bad choices loose in the world, there is bound to be a lot of pain and suffering going on. The bad choice of someone can bring hardships to the good people against whom he/she sins.
6. The world today has a great amount of pain and suffering because so many bad choices over the years have built up such a huge stockpile of sin.
7. Many good people who suffer find ways to grow from it—perseverance, support from others, and even joy because it helps them to put things into perspective. And their example in the midst of pain, suffering, and hardships shows how much better it is to live a life of commitment to God than it is to live a life without Him and His people.
8. Those who want to live without pain and suffering need to be reminded that Jesus has gone to prepare such a place (John 14:1-4) and that we should be using this life to prepare for that one. There will be a perfect place someday. It is called heaven. There will also be a place which is the opposite which is called hell. Our focus here should not be on wondering why there is pain and suffering in this life but on living a life that will prepare us for attaining the life in heaven that is without pain and suffering.

**Appendix 10**

**Books and Periodicals That Are Helpful in Parenting**

**Books**

Following is a list of books that we believe can further assist you in the intentional spiritual development of your children. The books vary in their message: practical advice for discipling children – from infancy to adolescence – and the vital role of parents in the process; a challenge from teens to teens to resist cultural influences; clinical insights into nurturing children’s spirituality; revealing conclusions drawn from the findings of religious surveys; a real life story about a remarkable young boy and his enduring and inspirational influence. The books typically contain minimal doctrinal viewpoints. They are not listed by priority. Generally, accompanying descriptions are drawn from each book’s representation of its content.

* *Disciple Like Jesus for Parents: Following Jesus’ Methods and Enjoying the Blessings of Children*, Alan Melton & Paul Dean, Calvary Press, 2009: A practical application of Biblical principles of discipleship to parenting. Offers practical, creative ways to make disciples of your children. If we are to see young men and women who look like Christ, then we must disciple as Christ did.
* *Let Us Highly Resolve: Families Living for Christ in the 21st Century*, David & Shirley Quine, Cornerstone Curriculum, 1996: A handbook for raising children to the Biblical world view. Clarifies vital cultural issues faced by Christian families. This resource is critical and strategic in raising families that will stand for Christ and that’s what every dad and every mom wants. Offers help in fighting the battle in our culture.
* *Raising Kids to Extraordinary Faith: Helping Parents and Teachers Disciple the Next Generation*, Debbie Salter Goodwin, Beacon Hill Press, 2008: Provides practical guidance for cultivating Christian virtue in the lives of children. Filled with spiritual growth ideas and suggestions for developing faith-enriched homes. Offers advice and spiritual insight to help those who influence children to make discipleship the key component of their guidance by helping children love Jesus and learn to grow His fruit in their lives.
* *It Starts At Home: A Practical Guide to Nurturing Lifelong Faith*, Kurt Bruner & Steve Stroope, Moody Publishers, 2010: A wakeup call to recognize a dramatic generational shift and to respond with workable, realistic and biblical strategies for spiritual formation. Encourages leaders, parents and grandparents with unique clarity on how to achieve success where it matters most.
* *Do Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations,* Alex & Brett Harris, Multnomah, 2008: Authored by two teenager brothers, the book encourages young people to rebel against the low expectations of today’s culture by choosing to “do hard things” for the glory of God. Offers a glimpse of what is possible for teens who actively resist cultural lies that limit their potential. Combats the idea of adolescence as a vacation from responsibility and redefines the teen years as the launching pad of life.
* *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do To Stop It,* Ken Ham & Britt Beemer, Master Books, 2010: Using the results of an extensive study, the book addresses why America’s churches have lost an entire generation of believers. The authors argue that there is a high correlation between contemporary church programs with their corresponding approaches to Christian education and the high drop-out rate being experienced by today’s youth. Solutions are offered to respond to the “crisis.”
* *Nurturing Children’s Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices*, edited by Holly Catterton Allen, Cascade Books, 2008: Although fundamentally clinical in content, relevant chapters are easily understood and provide an excellent resource for parents. The first half of the book addresses concerns related to the spiritual development of children. The second half explores best practices for fostering spiritual growth among children – in homes, families, churches, Christian schools.
* *Graduation to Glory,* Fern Hill, Star Publications, 2000: Written by the mother of Timothy Hill, who was killed at the age of 13 while riding his bicycle to school in Riverhead, N.Y., the book is an emotionally stirring and remarkable story about a young boy and the role of his parents in guiding his spiritual development. Contains  practical suggestions about life, the way children should be trained, the way families should love and live together, and the way both children and adults should overcome self and live for the highest values.
* *Parents’ Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children: Helping Your Child Develop a Personal Faith*, John Trent, Kurt Bruner and Rick Osborne, Tyndale, 2000: Simple, practical ways to not only *tell* your children what you believe, but to *show* them how to make faith in God part of everyday life. Takes every Christian parent’s desire to pass their faith along to their children―and helps put that desire into action. Offers guidance in developing children’s Christian values from birth to adolescence, in leading children to personal, loving relationships with God – using fun, faith-filled activities for each stage of children’s development.
* *The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting*, Brian Haynes, Randall House Publications, 2011: A formula for helping parents become the spiritual leaders in their families by creating a culture of intentional parenting. Provides parents the tools, the path and the confidence to take their rightful place in leading their children in a lifelong relationship with Christ. Joins together the “hows” and the “whys” of godly parenting in a fresh and exciting way.
* *Shepherding A Child's Heart*, Tedd Tripp, Shepherd Press, 1995: Provides perspectives and procedures for shepherding your child’s heart into the paths of life. Teaches parents what their goals should be and how to pursue them practically. Teaches parents how to engage children about what really matters, how to address a child’s heart by words and actions. Instructs parents on how objectives shift as infants grow into children and as children grow into teenagers.”
* *Faith Begins At Home: The Family Makeover with Christ at the Center*, Mark Holmen, Regal Books, 2005: Stresses the importance of parents teaching children a Biblical world view. Speaks to the importance of parents walk with the Lord and of using the experiences of grandparents and mentors in the family. Gives families a language and the needed practical tools to communicate faith in Jesus to children. Contains a blend of Biblical insight, personal experience, research revelations and doable applications for those who love Christ and want their home to reflect His presence and His principles.
* *A Practical Guide to Culture,* Eric Metaxas and Dave Carlson. Helping the Next Generation Navigate Today’s World. Has suggestions on how to help teens deal with issues which today’s culture makes them face. Check [www.breakpoint.org](http://www.breakpoint.org) for more information.
* *In His Steps.* Charles Sheldon. Published in 1896, this book has sold more than 30,000,000 copies. It is the story of how people decided to ask, “What Would Jesus Do?” and tells the story of several who made that commitment. A good read for anyone.

**Periodicals:**

Below are three periodicals that can assist you in strengthening your resolve to guide your children toward maturity in Christ:

* *Reason & Revelation: A Monthly Journal of Christian Evidences*, Apologetics Press ([www.apologeticspress.org](http://www.apologeticspress.org) )
According to their website, “In the late 1970s, there was a need to make available more scripturally sound and scientifically accurate materials in the field of Christian apologetics.” Adhering to Scripture, *R & R* has met that need by providing insightful and thoughtful responses to contemporary issues. Topics range from doctrine to societal/cultural issues to scriptural analysis of creation/archeological issues. A monthly publication. Affiliated w/churches of Christ.
* *Think: Current Issues From A Distinctly Christian View*, Focus Press ( [www.focuspress.org](http://www.focuspress.org) )
“*Think* deals with difficult topics such as, stem cell research, intelligent design, cloning, abortion, homosexuality and other social issues that affect us as we live in an increasingly perplexed society. . . [also] practical ways to pass our faith to the next generation, how to incorporate our faith into daily living, issues that are unique to women, how to be good stewards of our blessings, and a host of other regular columns designed to strengthen those who are already committed to living for Christ.”  A monthly publication. Affiliated w/churches of Christ.
* *AFA Journal*, American Family Association ( [www.afajournal.org](http://www.afajournal.org) ;  [www.afa.net](http://www.afa.net) )
Published by an “activist” organization focusing on contemporary culture and its impact on Christians, America and the world. Founded in 1977 by a Methodist minister, the monthly publication typically does not focus on doctrine, per se. Its stated mission is “to inform, equip, and activate individuals to strengthen the moral foundations of American culture, and give aid to the church here and abroad in its task of fulfilling the Great Commission.”
* *World* Magazine, [www.wng.org](http://www.wng.org), 800-951-6397, PO Box 20002, Asheville, NC 28802-9998. As Christian parents, we are concerned that news about our world often comes from sources with a secular worldview because scripture is clear that it is what we take into our hearts and minds shapes us as people. In contrast to what most people read, *World* is a highly reliable source of accurate news that is fair, objective, and truthful. Its mission statement reads “To report, interpret, and illustrate the news in a timely, accurate, enjoyable, and arresting fashion from a perspective committed to the Bible as the inerrant Word of God.” World News Group also has other publications tailored to our children’s ages at [www.wng.org/children](http://www.wng.org/children).

**Appendix 11**

**Sample Objectives at Various Age Levels**

**Sample 1**

**Birth through Age 2**

**Truths to Believe**

**Objective:** When asked “Who made the world?” can answer “God.”

Learning Path: Parents will practice asking the question and helping the child to give the answer as prompted until the prompting is no longer needed.

Evaluation: When the child can answer “God” without help, the parents should recognize that the child can give the right answer.

Reward: Say, “Good job” and give hugs to show that you approve of what the child can do. Have him to give the answer in front of family and friends and express your approval when he can give the right answer.

**Character Traits**

**Objective:** Will say “Thank you” when given something.

Learning Path: Parents will demonstrate to the child how to say “Thank you” and will help her to practice.

Evaluation: The parents will recognize when the child can say an unprompted “Thank you.”

Reward: When the child says “Thank you” on his own, the parents will say “Good job” and give a hug.

**Sample 2**

**Ages Three through Five**

**Truths to Believe**

**Objective:** The child can quote Romans 15:13a.

Learning Paths: The parent will read and explain the verse so that the child understands what the first part of the verse teaches.

 The child will read the verse if she has learned to read some.

 The parent will rehearse the verse with the child on several occasions, letting the child repeat after the parent until she can say the verse by herself.

Evaluation: The child can say the verse at the family devotional.

Reward: The child will be praised and have a note posted saying “Good Job.”

**Character Traits**

**Objective:** Can say a prayer at the family table before a meal.

 Learning Path: Parents will teach the child three things to say in the prayer.

 Parents will let the child practice what to say.

 Evaluation: The family will listen to the prayer.

 Reward: Family will complement the child

**Objective:** Will invite a friend to VBS

Learning Path: Parents will explain how important it is to invite friends to church events.

 Parents will invite a friend to a church event.

Evaluation: The friend came to VBS.

Reward: The parents showed their approval by congratulations.

 The parents take the child and the friend together to a special event.

**Objective**: The child will enjoy putting money in the collection plate at church.

Learning Paths: Parent will explain to the child some of the good things done with the money people put in the collection plate.

 Parent will exemplify the joy of putting money in the collection plate.

 Parent will provide money to the child to put in the collection plate.

Evaluation: Parent will observe the child to see if putting the money in brings joy.

 Parent will ask child later what he thought about putting money in the offering.

Reward: Parent will continue to provide money for the child to put in. At an appropriate point, the parent will help the child earn the money to put in. The parent will brag on the child at the family devotional.

**Sample 3**

**Ages Six through Eight**

**Truths to Believe**

**Objective:** The child can list five attributes of God: a spirit being, who has always been, and is all-knowing, all-powerful, and who is everywhere.

Learning Paths: The parent will explain to the child what each of the attributes means.

The parent will illustrate each attribute by pointing in a way to help the child remember the attributes. Spirit being—point at the heart (inside). Always been—point far to the right. All-knowing—point at the brain. All-powerful—point at the biceps. Everywhere—point all around.

Evaluation: The child can say at a devotional the five attributes and point properly.

Reward: Clap for the child and say “Good job” when he has successfully repeated and pointed properly.

**Objective**: Can quote Acts 20:7 and explain what the verse means about “the first day of the week” and “breaking bread”

Learning Paths: The child will read the verse from his Bible.

Parents will explain the meaning of the verse.

Parents will ask the child questions about the meaning of the verse.

Parents will practice saying the verse with the child.

Parents will help the child to connect the verse with what happens in the worship service.

Evaluation: The parents will find the appropriate time and with the appropriate people present to ask the child to repeat the verse and to answer questions about it.

Reward: The parents will hug the child and say well done when she successfully performs the objective.

**Character Traits**

**Objective**: Can tell the story of Jesus when he came to be kind to Mary and Martha when Lazarus died.

Learning Paths: With help, will read the story for herself from John 11:1-44.

 Parents will help him to tell a shortened version of the story.

 Parents will ask her how Jesus showed kindness to Mary and Martha.

Parents will discuss with him situations in which he can be kind to his friends and family.

Evaluation: When situations arise in which kindness can be shown, the parents will ask her to tell what is the kind thing to do.

When the child has an opportunity to show kindness, he will do so.

Reward: Will congratulate the child when she shows kindness.

 Will give him a special treat from his favorite store.

**Objective:** Will carry out responsibilities.

Learning Paths: The parent will give the child a continuing responsibility around the house such as making her bed each morning or putting the silverware on the table for the meal or putting her clothes away each day.

 The parent will explain that this is not only an important job to do but that it is important to learn how to be responsible in other ways as well.

Evaluation: The parent will check each day for a week to see that the responsibility is carried out.

Reward: The parent will do something with the child that he likes to do.

**Sample 4**

**Ages Nine through Twelve**

**Truths to Believe**

**Objective**: Can quote 1 John 2:16 and explain the meaning of lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life using the story of Adam and Eve as an example.

Learning Paths: Have the child read the passage with the parents and others in the family.

Read it again from a different translation. (The ASV or NASV has the wording above.)

Discuss the meaning of the three expressions and then read the story of Eve and the fruit. Ask how the three expressions can be applied to her actions.

Now discuss how the three expressions apply to a temptation he might have today.

Evaluation: Take her out to a favorite ice cream place and ask her to explain the three terms and how they apply to the story of Eve. Ask her to apply the three terms to eating too much ice cream.

Reward: Give her ice cream to eat but not too much.

**Character Traits**

**Objective**: Will visit with those who need encouragement.

Learning Paths: When a personal friend or a family friend is in the hospital or nursing home, family members will visit and have a prayer with the person.

Evaluation: Will ask the child to tell how she felt about the experience.

Reward: The person visited with thanks her for coming. Parents will tell her that it was good that she went.

**Sample 5**

**Ages Thirteen through Fifteen**

**Truths to Believe**

**Objective**: The child can explain salvation by a demonstrated faith.

Learning Paths: The child and parent will read and discuss the article on “Salvation by Grace through Faith” from Appendix 5.

Evaluation: The child can correctly draw and explain the chart with four arrows as presented in the article.

Reward: The parent will congratulation the child and will brag on her at the family devotional and elsewhere.

**Character Traits**

**Objective**: When told the story of a situation in which the natural response would be to show anger or hatred, the child can tell what would be the loving thing to do.

Learning Path: Can quote 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Parent will tell of two or three situations when a person might respond with anger or with love. The child will tell what the loving response would be.

Parent will give a situation in which the child can roleplay to do the loving thing.

Evaluation: Tell a new situation and then ask for the loving response.

Reward: The child will be praised for his proper response in the roleplaying and the parents will note and praise the child’s proper response when it occurs.

**Sample 6**

**Ages Sixteen through Eighteen**

**Truths to Believe**

**Objective:**  Can explain the best reasons to support creation and reject evolution.

Learning Paths: Will read the statement about evolution at [www.oc.edu/faculty/stafford.north/pe](http://www.oc.edu/faculty/stafford.north/pe).

Evaluation: When the parents (who have also read the statement about evolution) ash the child to present arguments against evolution, the child will mention and explain several of them.

Reward: The parents will explain to the child why it is important to know these reasons and show their appreciation for his learning this information.

**Character Traits**

**Objective:** Can quote Luke 23:24 and explain Jesus’ forgiving spirit, and will tell how we need to follow His example in forgiveness.

Learning Paths: The child will read to himself Luke 23:24 several times, each time looking less at the text until he can say it without looking. Then he will say it several more time. He will also understand the context in which this passage appears.

Evaluation: At a family devotional or other similar occasion, the child will be asked to quote and explain the verse. Then the parents will describe a situation for him in which forgiveness would be difficult and ask him what would be best to do.

Reward: Parents will show appreciation for the child’s good work.

**Appendix 12**

**A Sample Plan for a Five-year Old**

Following is a sample plan for a year in the life of a five-year old showing objectives for each quarter along with the learning paths, evaluation, and reward. Each quarter shows two to three objectives. This would be the minimum amount for some five-year olds who would be able to achieve more than this. The number of objectives should be adjusted according to the capacity and interest of the child—enough to challenge and provide good rewards, but not too many or too difficult so that the child does not want to participate. So the sample is just a basic plan to suggest how a year’s objectives might look. In most cases, most five-year olds would be able to achieve more than this minimum number of objectives in a year.

**January through March.**

**Truth Objective:** Can promptly answer Bible drill questions from both the Old and New Testaments. (Drill questions are listed in Appendix 13.)

Learning Paths: Using some time in the daily family devotional, a parent will ask about twenty questions on the Old Testament and about ten on the New Testament.

Evaluation: With the family assembled (including grandparents if possible), the child can properly answer all the questions.

Reward: Complement the child. Hug her. Take the child to her favorite ice cream place for her choice of a treat.

**Character Objective:** Will keep toys put up after playing with them.

Learning Paths: Parent will have a place for toys and will demonstrate where to put them up.

Parent will demonstrate how to put toys up.

Parent will work with the child in putting toys up.

Parent will oversee the child in putting up the toys.

Evaluation: When the child is told to put up his toys, he will do so and will put them in the right place.

Reward: For putting up the toys properly, the parent will brag on the child in front of the child and others.

**April through June**

**Truth Objective:** When shown pictures of some of the main characters in the Bible doing what the Bible says about them, the child can identify the character and briefly tell the story.

Learning Paths: At the family devotional, and perhaps in connection with something the child is studying in Bible class at church, the child will be shown the pictures and someone will tell the story to the child. (Could be an older sibling, the parent, or a Bible school teacher.) Can use a Bible story book for the pictures.

 The story will be repeated letting the child fill in aspects of the story.

 The child will be asked to tell the story by herself.

Evaluation: At the family devotional, the child, on successive nights, will be shown a picture and be asked to tell the story with some good details.

Reward: When the child has finished telling all of the stories (perhaps six to eight), he will receive praise from the family.

 The child will be given a toy or a book that has some Bible significance.

**Truth Objective:** The child can tell that God made the world from nothing because He is all-knowing and all-powerful.

Learning Paths: The parent will spend some time with the child observing the sun, moon, and stars as well as plant life.

 The parent will help the child to have a plant by planting the seed and then watching the plant grow.

 The parent will explain how God made the marvelous world and all that is in it including Adam and Eve.

 The child will color pictures about nature.

 The child will be taught how to write the word “God.”

Evaluation: When asked questions about who made the world and what God is like, the child can properly answer the questions.

When asked to do so, the child will write the word “God” on a sheet of paper.

Reward: The parent will display the plant for others to see. The parent will ask questions at the family devotional.

**Character Objective:** Will invite a friend to VBS.

Learning Paths: Will be given a flier about VBS and be asked what friends she would like to have to go with her.

The parents will discuss the best way to invite whether by asking the children over to play and during that time to ask, whether by a phone call, whether at kindergarten, whether by a call to the parents.

Evaluation: Did the children attend.

Reward: After the last day of VBS, take all the children involved for ice cream or other treat.

**July through September**

**Character Objective:** Can say a prayer at the table before a meal.

Learning Paths: The parents will tell the child of the objective and explain what to include in the prayer. Then they will let the child practice a few times.

Evaluation: The child will say the prayer at the table.

Reward: All will tell the child he did well.

**Truth Objective:** Can explain that God had a plan from before the world so that if people sinned He could forgive them.

Learning Paths: Parents will read to the child Ephesians 1:9 and 3:8-9. Then the parents will explain that God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit existed before they made anything and then decided to make the world and everything in it including people. If people sinned, they would be separated from God and, to bring people back to God, the Son would come to earth and die as a sinner so He could take the punishment which people deserved and then they could be brought back to God. God took several thousand years to unfold this mystery but it was fulfilled when Jesus was born and lived and died and was raised. Then the apostles began to preach the message.

The child will be able to quote John 3:16.

Evaluation: The child can explain that God had a plan and when people sinned, He sent His son so they could come back to Him. The child can then quote John 3:16.

Reward: The family will say good things about the child’s accomplishment in front of her and will tell others also about this in front of her. They will post a poster of John 3:16 in the child’s room.

**October through December**

**Truth Objective:** Can quote Hebrews 12:2a.

Learning Paths: Parents will repeat the verse to the child and, if she reads, she can look at her Bible and read the verse. Repetition will lock the verse in her mind. The parents will also share what the verse means.

Evaluation: At the family devotional, let the child repeat the verse and explain what it means.

Reward: Give the child an appropriate picture of Jesus to post in her room so she can be reminded to look to Jesus.

**Character Objective:** Can quote the family vision and motto

Learning Paths: When riding in the car and on other appropriate occasions, the parents will slowly repeat the vision a few words at a time and let the child say that portion after them. The motto should be short enough to teach all in one statement.

Evaluation: At some appropriate time when the family is gathered, the child will be asked to repeat aloud both the vision and the motto.

Reward: Congratulations and hugs by various members of the family.

**Appendix 13**

**Bible Drill Questions**

Bible drill for individuals or groups is an excellent way to help children memorize facts about the Bible.  The key is repetition so the same questions should be asked in the same way each time until they are fixed in the children’s minds.  The questions must be asked in short, crisp fashion, with enthusiasm so they can be answered with the same one or two words each time.  It is also important that a rhythm be established so that if more than one child is involved, they will answer in unison.  If they do not give a good, solid response, ask the same question again in the same words so they can attempt it again.  Keep asking it until you get a strong response from all.

You can begin with a shortened version of these questions and then as children master these, add more details.  Of course, you must adapt the questions to the length of time you have, to the previous knowledge of the child or children, and to other circumstances of the situation.  You may wish to pick questions that tie to the theme of lessons in VBS or Bible school lessons, and you should be sure each time to get in some of the most significant items.  If working with a group of children, use gestures to indicate the timing of the answer to help all answer in unison and to add vigor to the exercise.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST BOOK IN THE WORLD?  Bible

WHO GAVE US THE BIBLE?  God

HOW MANY MAIN PARTS IN THE BIBLE?  2

WHAT ARE THEY?  Old Testament -- New Testament

HOW MANY BOOKS IN THE WHOLE BIBLE?  66

HOW MANY BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?  39

HOW MANY BOOKS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?  27

LET'S SAY THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT --

LET'S SAY THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT --

WHO MADE THE WORLD?  God

IN HOW MANY DAYS DID GOD MAKE THE WORLD?  6

WHAT DID GOD MAKE ON THE FIRST DAY?  Light

WHAT DID GOD MAKE ON THE SECOND DAY?  Sky

WHAT DID GOD MAKE ON THE THIRD DAY?  Land, sea, and vegetation

WHAT DID GOD MAKE ON THE FOURTH DAY?  Sun, moon, stars

WHAT DID GOD MAKE ON THE FIFTH DAY?  Fish and fowl

WHAT DID GOD MAKE ON THE SIXTH DAY?  Animals and man

WHAT DID GOD DO ON THE SEVENTH DAY?  He rested

WHO WAS THE FIRST MAN?  Adam

WHO WAS THE FIRST WOMAN?  Eve

WHERE DID THEY LIVE?  Garden of Eden

WHO WHERE THEIR TWO MOST FAMOUS SONS?  Cain and Abel

WHICH ONE KILLED THE OTHER ONE?  Cain killed Abel

WHO BUILT THE ARK?  Noah

HOW MANY STORIES HIGH WAS THE ARK?  3

HOW MANY DOORS IN THE ARK?  1

HOW MANY WINDOWS IN THE ARK?  1

HOW MANY PEOPLE SAVED IN THE ARK?  8

WHO WERE THEY?  Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives

WHO WERE NOAH'S THREE SONS?  Shem, Ham, and Japheth

WHO IS CALLED THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL?  Abraham

WHO WAS ABRAHAM'S WIFE?  Sarah

ABRAHAM AND SARAH HAD A CHILD, THE CHILD OF PROMISE.  WHAT WAS HIS NAME? Isaac

WHO WAS ISAAC'S WIFE?  Rebecca

ISAAC AND REBECCA HAD TWO SONS; TWINS; WHAT WERE THEIR NAMES? Jacob and Esau

JACOB HAD TWO WIVES.  WHAT WERE THEIR NAMES?  Rachael and Leah

WHICH WIFE DID HE LOVE THE MOST?  Rachael

HOW MANY SONS DID JACOB HAVE?  12

WHAT WERE THEIR NAMES?  Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, Dan, Napthali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, Benjamin

HOW MANY DAUGHTERS DID JACOB HAVE?  1

WHAT WAS HER NAME?  Dinah

WHAT WAS JACOB'S OTHER NAME?  Israel

WHICH ONE OF HIS SONS DID JACOB LOVE THE MOST?  Joseph

WHAT HAPPENED TO JOSEPH?  Sold as a slave

WHERE WAS HE TAKEN?  Egypt

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL STAYED IN EGYPT FOR 400 YEARS AND THEN GOD DECIDED TO LEAD THEM OUT.

WHO LED THE CHILREN OF ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT?  Moses

WHAT SEA DID THEY CROSS ON THE WAY OUT?  Red Sea

WHAT MOUNTAIN DID THEY COME TO?  Mt. Sinai

WHERE WAS THE LAW OF MOSES GIVEN?  Mt. Sinai

THEY WERE READY TO ENTER THE LAND AND THEY SENT OUT SPIES.  HOW MANY SPIES DID THEY SEND OUT?  12

HOW MANY CAME BACK AND SAID THE LAND IS GOOD?  all 12

HOW MANY SAID WE CANNOT TAKE THE LAND?  10

HOW MANY SAID WITH GOD'S HELP WE CAN TAKE IT?  2

WHO WERE THEY?  Joshua and Caleb

DID THE PEOPLE LISTEN TO THE 10 or the 2?  10

AS A RESULT, GOD PUNISHED THEM BY MAKING THEM WANDER IN THE WILDERNESS FOR HOW MANY YEARS?  40

AFTER 40 YEARS, DID MOSES GET TO ENTER THE PROMISED LAND?  No

WHY?  He sinned

AFTER MOSES DIED, WHO TOOK HIS PLACE AS LEADER?  Joshua

WHEN THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE READY TO ENTER THE PROMISED LAND, WHAT RIVER DID THEY CROSS?  Jordan

WHAT WAS THE FIRST CITY THEY CAME TO?  Jericho

HOW MANY TIMES IN ALL DID THEY MARCH AROUND THE CITY?  13

THEN WHAT DID THEY DO?  Shouted and blew trumpets

THEN WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WALLS?  They fell down

AFTER THEY CONQUERED THE LAND, WHAT KIND OF RULERS DID THEY HAVE?  Judges

WHO WAS THE FIRST JUDGE?  Othneil

HOW MANY JUDGES WERE THERE?  15

LET'S SAY THE 15 JUDGES?  Othneil, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, Samuel

WHO WAS THE ONLY WOMAN JUDGE?  Deborah

WHO WAS THE STRONG MAN WHO WAS A JUDGE?  Samson

WHO WAS THE JUDGE THAT LED THE ISRAELITES OVER THE MIDIANITES?  Gideon

WITH HOW MANY MEN?  300

WHO WAS THE JUDGE THAT FELL OVER BACKWARDS IN A CHAIR AND BROKE HIS NECK?  Eli

WHO WAS THE LAST JUDGE?  Samuel

AFTER THE JUDGES, WHAT KIND OF RULERS DID THE ISRAELITES HAVE?  Kings

WHO WAS THE FIRST KING?  Saul

WHO WAS THE SECOND KING?  David

WHO WAS THE THIRD KING?  Solomon

AFTER SOLOMON, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE KINGDOM?  It divided

INTO HOW MANY PARTS?  2

HOW MANY TRIBES WERE IN THE NORTHERN KINGDOM?  10

HOW MANY TRIBES WERE IN THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM?  2

WHAT WERE THEY?  Benjamin and Judah

WHO WAS THE FIRST KING OF THE SOUTH?  Rehoboam

WHO WAS THE FIRST KING OF THE NORTH?  Jereboam

HOW MANY KINGS ON THE NORTH?  18

HOW MANY OF THEM WERE BAD KINGS?  All of them

WHO WAS THE WORST?  Ahab

WHO WAS AHAB'S WIFE?  Jezebel

WHAT NATION CAPTURED THE NORTHERN KINGDOM?  Assyria

IN WHAT YEAR?  721 B.C.

WHO CAPTURED THE KINGDOM OF THE SOUTH?  Babylon

IN WHAT YEAR?  606 B.C.

IN WHAT YEAR DID THE BABYLONIANS DESTROY JERUSALEM?  586 B.C.

WHO IS CALLED "THE WEEPING PROPHET?"  Jeremiah

WHAT WAS HE WEEPING ABOUT?  The destruction of Jerusalem

WHO IS CALLED "THE MESSIANIC PROPHET?"  Isaiah

WHAT DOES A MESSIANIC PROPHET PROPHESY ABOUT?  The Messiah

WHO WAS THE MESSIAH?  Jesus

WHO WAS THE PROPHET WHO WAS THROWN IN A LION'S DEN?  Daniel

WHO SAVED DANIEL FROM THE MOUTH OF THE  LIONS?  God

WHO WERE THE THREE HEBREWS WHO WERE THROWN IN A FIERY FURNACE?

                 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

WHO WAS THE KING WHO LET THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL RETURN FROM BABYLON?  Cyrus

WHO LED THE FIRST GROUP BACK TO THE LAND OF PALESTINE?  Zerrubabel

WHO LED IN REBUILDING THE TEMPLE?  Zerrubabel

WHO HELPED REESTABLISH KEEPING THE LAW?  Ezra

WHO WAS THE LAST PROPHET IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?  Malachi

WHO IS THE MAIN PERSON IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?  Jesus

WHO WAS JESUS' MOTHER?  Mary

WHO WAS JESUS' EARTHLY FATHER?  Joseph

WHO WAS JESUS' REAL FATHER?  God

WHERE WAS JESUS BORN?  Bethlehem

TO WHOM DID THE ANGELS ANNOUNCE THIS BIRTH?  Shepherds

WHO BROUGHT JESUS GIFTS?  The wise men

HOW OLD WAS JESUS WHEN HE BEGAIN HIS WORK?  30

WHO BAPTIZED JESUS?  John the Baptist

IN WHAT RIVER DID HE BAPTIZE HIM?  Jordan

WHO TEMPTED JESUS?  Satan

IN WHAT DID JESUS OFTEN TEACH?  Parables

COULD JESUS WORK MIRACLES?  Yes

COULD HE MAKE THE BLIND TO SEE?  Yes

THE DEAF TO HEAR?  Yes

THE LAME TO WALK?  Yes

COULD HE RAISE THE DEAD?  Yes

COULD HE MAKE THE WIND TO STOP BLOWING?  Yes

COULD JESUS WALK ON WATER?  Yes

JESUS HAD TWELVE APOSTLES.  NAME THEM.  Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, the Son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon, Judas

THE JEWS WANTED TO KILL JESUS, SO THEY GOT THE ROMANS TO HELP THEM. HOW DID THEY KILL HIM?  Crucified him.

BETWEEN TWO WHAT?  Thieves

WHO BETRAYED JESUS?  Judas

WHO DENIED JESUS?  Peter

HOW MANY TIMES?  3

DID JESUS STAY DEAD?  No

WHO RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD?  God

AFTER HOW MANY DAYS?  3

DID PEOPLE ACTUALLY SEE HIM AFTER HE WAS DEAD AND IN THE TOMB?  YES

WHO BUILT THE CHURCH?  Jesus

HOW MANY CHURCHES DID HE BUILD?  One

ON WHAT DAY DID THAT CHURCH BEGIN?  Pentecost

WHO'S SERMON DO WE HAVE RECORDED FROM THAT DAY?  Peter's

IN WHAT BOOK OF THE BIBLE DOES THE STORY OF PENTECOST APPEAR?  Acts

IN WHAT CHAPTER?  2

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST, THE WAY TO BE SAVED FIRST BEGAN TO BE PREACHED.  WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN BEING SAVED?  Hear, Believe, Repent, Confess, Be Baptized (use five fingers to demonstrate this one)

WHERE IN THE BIBLE DO WE READ THAT WE MUST HEAR?  Romans 10:17

LET'S QUOTE THAT TOGETHER-- "For faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

WHERE IN THE BIBLE DO WE READ THAT WE MUST BELIEVE?  Mark 16:16

LET'S QUOTE THAT TOGETHER--"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

WHERE IN THE BIBLE DO WE READ THAT WE MUST REPENT?  Acts 17:30

LET'S QUOTE THAT TOGETHER--"But now he commands all men everywhere to repent."

WHERE IN THE BIBLE DO WE READ THAT WE MUST CONFESS?  Romans 10:10

LET'S QUOTE THAT TOGETHER--"For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation."

WHERE IN THE BIBLE DO WE READ THAT WE MUST BE BAPTIZED?  Acts 22:16

LET'S QUOTE THAT TOGETHER--"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

NOW LET'S DO SOME RIGHT AND WRONG QUESTIONS.  IF WHAT I SAY IS RIGHT, WHAT DO YOU SAY?  (Right)  AND IF WHAT I SAY IS WRONG, WHAT DO YOU SAY?  (Wrong)

EVE WAS THE FIRST MAN?  Wrong

NOAH WAS THE FIRST MAN?  Wrong

ADAM WAS THE FIRST MAN?  Right

ISAAC BUILT THE ARK?  Wrong

JOSEPH BUILT THE ARK?  Wrong

JESUS BUILT THE ARK?  Wrong

NOAH BUILT THE ARK?  Right

NOAH BUILT THE CHURCH?  Wrong

JOHN THE BAPTIST BUILT THE CHURCH?  Wrong

PETER BUILT THE CHURCH?  Wrong

JESUS BUILT THE CHURCH?  Right