Discipling our children well includes much, much more than taking them to church, even teaching them about knowing and following Jesus. 

Jesus taught, but He also trained His disciples. Further, He tested them, partly by asking them questions. Parents can teach, but must also train well, and then test their children’s biblical knowledge, their commitments, their faith, their love, and their obedience through listening and asking these questions Jesus asked His disciples.

Following are five questions Jesus asked which I use, not only in my prayer time alone with Jesus, but also in discipling my family. The primary goal is NOT to get through all 5 questions but to actually experience Jesus’ real presence by His Holy Spirit, helping me better know or see or hear or love (and obey) or believe Jesus.

1. “Who do you say that I am?” identifying and explaining who Jesus is (one of Jesus’ many names), first to parents but ultimately to Jesus, helps children know Jesus – His NATURE. We stare into Jesus’ eyes, answering His question, “Who do YOU say that I am?” Result: growing praise, worship, faith, and love for Jesus.

2. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” Answering this helps children see and account for Jesus’ ACTIVITY. Since every good and perfect gift comes down from our Father, children can be trained to hunt for the good in others, in themselves, and through themselves and then identify and report Jesus’ actual part in making good possible Normally, Jesus’ part is speaking to us by His Spirit. We hear His voice (John 10:4, 27), teaching, reminding, testifying, convicting, guiding (John 14-16), enabling us to know His truth and will, which we can respond by believing and obeying. Further, by His presence He gives us holy desires to do His will (Romans 5:5). For example, if my son David did the dishes for his sister Dana so she could study for a test, and she told our family about it, I (Dad) could ask, “Was that good?” Family agrees. Then I ask: “God must have had something to do with it, right?” Family agrees (James 1:17). So I ask, “Exactly what was God’s part?” Dana might say, “The Holy Spirit prompted David with the idea.” I might say, “How do we know?” Dana might say, “Because every good and perfect idea comes down from our Father.” I might say, “So we all believe that Jesus, by His Spirit, communicated with David?” All agree. “Did the Holy Spirit make David do it?” All agree that the Holy Spirit spoke (threw the ball to David), but David had to catch it and run with it for God’s work to be done. At that point, we all celebrate both the work of the Holy Spirit in David, and David’s working out what has been worked in. Then we ask Dana to give God thanks for what He did for her through David.

3. “Are you listening to Me?” We listen to Jesus – His VOICE. We open our Bibles, go slowly through one book at a time, learning to listen to Jesus speak to us directly through His Word by analyzing, categorizing, and personalizing each paragraph. Children are trained to dialogue with Jesus about His Word to them.

1 All four are in professional ministry today. Our book, If Jesus Were A Parent, powerfully identifies many grace-based discipling tools, both formal and informal, which are required for effective, intentional family discipling that this short article cannot do.

2 2 chapters on each of the five questions are explained and illustrated in our book, Discipled by Jesus.

3 Matthew 16:15
4 Philippians 3:10
5 John 13:12
6 James 1:17
7 Matthew 17:5
4. “Do you truly love Me more than these? If so, care for and feed My lambs and sheep.”

Next, children are trained for ministry by staring into Jesus’ eyes, honestly answering this question, and then discerning Jesus’ CALL to better care for their own relationship with Jesus (prayer life), their families, some church friends, and one or more specific school or neighbor friends (lost sheep) Jesus cares for and died to save.

5. “Do you believe?” (John 11:27) We always conclude by again staring into Jesus’ eyes, answering question five by declaring our assurance of His PROMISE to help do what He is calling us to do.

Highly reward each child’s positive participation with affirmation, applause, dimes or dollars, or candy – depending on age and interest. Our family answered questions 2 and 1 (in that order) during dinner most nights. After dinner, we did question 3. Most mornings we worked through questions 4 and 5. We kept it as short and fun as possible to make the experience as positive as possible.

To best facilitate this “meeting with Jesus” with children, parents need to regularly work through these five questions on their own with Jesus. The better we do these five questions on our own, the better we can facilitate it with our children.

Parents may need to secure a discipleship partner to help them be trained to be “discipled by Jesus.” You can use these five questions (or a better model). These questions plus a good partner will test you for progress in relating to, trusting, and obeying Jesus, including loving your neighbors (family, church, pre-disciples) all day, every day.

Above all, to disciple our children well requires that children perpetually observe parents relating to and following Jesus, including identifying when we “fumble.” Children follow most what they see. We are to “walk as Jesus walked” (1 John 2:6), to be holy as He was holy in all we do (1 Peter 1:14-15), etc. Therefore, we parents must consistently “sit well at Jesus’ feet” (abiding in Him by sharing these five questions – or something better - with Him). As a result we will follow Jesus and bear good fruit every day (John 15:5). Through our example, our children see Jesus in us … as His Word becomes flesh through us.

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