

FULL SERVICE



CHURCH



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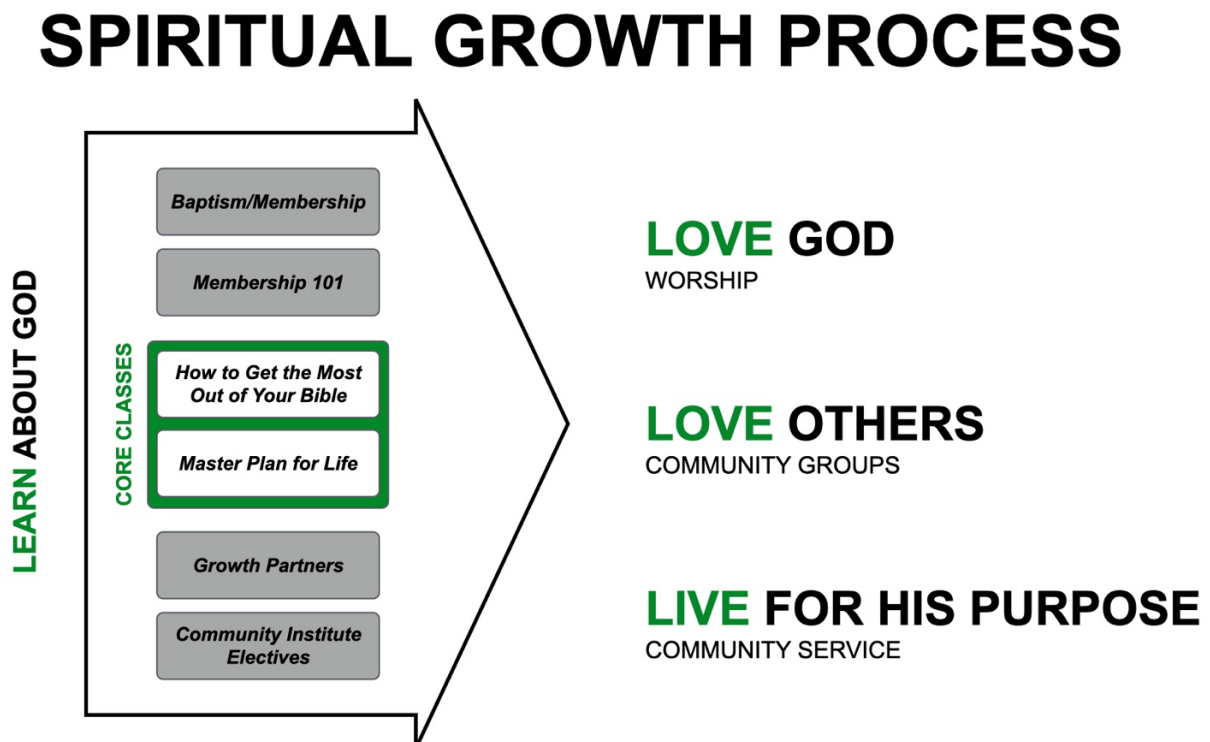
Proactive Discipleship

Recap

The Bible contains directives for Christians to obey, and every command to obey is a requirement for the church to provide. That is, what God tells Christians to do, His church must help them accomplish. This means the marching orders for a disciple-making church are informed by those things each believer is to carry out. For example, if Christians are to know the Word, then the church must teach how to study it. If Christians are to be in relationship with one another, then the church must offer venues in which those relationships can be fostered. If Christians are to be servants, then the church must offer pathways to ministry. If Christians are to be evangelists, then the church must preach the Gospel and teach how to present it.

Common Roles and Individual Vocations

Note the examples above – study, relationships, service, evangelism – are requirements that are *common* to all disciples. This is why CBC is structured around those elements as expressed in our mission statement: *CBC exists to help people learn about God, love Him and others, and live for His purpose.* The objectives of learn (teaching), love (worship and community), and live (service and evangelism) are core to our church’s task, and specific ministries are designated to carry out each:



Failure to identify what elements, and therefore ministries, are common to all disciples results in a smorgasbord of offerings that are deemed of equal importance where one just chooses those they like and/or can engage. But obviously things like Men’s and Women’s ministries are not intended for the opposite sex, and Family Life offerings such as marriage and parenting are for those in particular demographics.

Therefore, such ministries, as important and beneficial as they are, are by their nature targeted to subgroups within the local body and are offered and used to the extent that they are helpful. We must take care to ensure that all are clear on what is foundational and universal versus superstructure and particular. That is, the church's ministry must distinguish between common roles for all disciples and individual vocations (callings) for some.

Roles, Vocations, Phases

Our church's theme verse is Colossians 1:28:

He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

The common roles and individual vocations for each disciple are carried out over time, progressively and often, predictably. We each go through phases of life during which our advance in godliness is to be enhanced but which, if not negotiated well can retard our growth. For example, a teen transitioning to adulthood is entering a phase with known challenges that have the potential to temporarily (at least) derail her progress. Or an engaged couple transitions to marriage with all of the joys and hazards that attend it. Or that same couple has their first child, more or less prepared for what they will face in that first year or so. Similar observations can be made about all of life's normal phases. To present one "fully mature" means the church will seek to help with those transitions *before* they occur as she (the church) shares her collective wisdom for the spiritual benefit of those entering a new stage.

Proactive and Reactive Discipleship

Advance training for life's transitions is *proactive* discipleship. But the average church offers only one ministry in this category, pre-marital, if even that. Yet the disciple and her children (if she has them) will experience many more changes, at crucial junctures, that require the same level of care that preparation for marriage does. A church that provides instruction, support, and resources for life's transitions gives her members every opportunity to not only survive but thrive in our mutual quest to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).

But no life in a fallen world is ever traveled on an even trajectory. Sin and its consequences affect us all. While the general growth in godliness that results from the foundational learn, love, and live offerings of the church mercifully spare us many heartaches, we nevertheless sin (e.g., anxiety), and are harmed by others' sin (e.g., divorce or drunkenness), or simply fall victim to the effects of the world's fallenness (e.g., a cancer diagnosis). Any of these can slow or stop our progress resulting in the need for *reactive* discipleship, a.k.a., personal counseling. The counsel may be provided informally, from one brother or sister to another, since any mature Christian is capable of sharing and applying God's truth to the issues at hand:

I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct [counsel] one another. (Romans 15:14)

But at times we face issues that can benefit from more formal training from a biblical counselor in the church's counseling ministry. In either case, one might need to pull over to a 'Restoration Area' to be nurtured and restored for reentry to the Road to Maturity:



Proactive Discipleship in the Phases of Life

In the normal course of life individuals progress or regress through the following phases (at least):

- Infant
- Toddler
- Kindergarten
- Jr. High
- High School
- Adulthood (college/career)
- Marriage
- Midlife
- Empty Nest
- Retirement

Up to marriage the phases will involve the individual and his/her parent(s) and therefore preparation involves both.

There are MANY issues to address at each phase, as detailed below, some of which may be unusual or even unique and therefore cannot be anticipated. But most are common and, if in addition to addressing those that occur in the normal course, we also provide support from those who have passed a particular stage, as well as those currently in it, we can apply the collective wisdom of the Body of Christ.

At each stage we aim to provide three things:

- 1) Instruction targeted to the opportunities and challenges ahead
- 2) Support from those in and past this phase
- 3) Resources for ongoing development

For example, the earliest stages of life, infant/toddler, present both distinct and overlapping issues. One matter that begins in infancy and broadens in the first few years is authority / submission, the instruction for which would include the following.

Authority / Submission in the Earliest Phases

The objective in the first few years of life is to model and teach that: *Our good God has given you good authorities to accomplish His good purpose in your life.* An infant need to see and hear the love of God from his parents and caregivers. The wise Christian parent partners with the local church so that what is taught at home and church are mutually reinforcing. At home the child experiences a safe, secure, peaceful environment filled with regular words of affirmation and Gospel love. He is treated as the treasure that He is and is told why:

- You are special because you are made by God, “in His image.” (Genesis 1:27)
- You are special because you are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:13-14)
- You are special because you are a gift from the Lord. (Psalm 127:3 NASB)
- You are special because you are given to a Christian home and so are set apart by God. (1 Corinthians 7:15)
- You are special because you are given the Word of God to guide all your life. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

Everything in a child’s first years is to reinforce these truths. If this is done well by at home and church the foundation is laid for loving corrective discipline as the needful infant becomes a willful toddler. *Formative* discipline creates the environment for *corrective* discipline.

One major obstacle to proper training through corrective discipline is indecision borne of uncertainty – uncertainty regarding whether I have the right, and whether I’m doing it right. The first issue, whether I have the right, is addressed by understanding the difference between *power* and *authority*:

- Power is the *ability* to command.
- Authority is the *right* to command, or counsel.

God is the Author of life, and He authorizes subordinates to do His bidding, giving some the power to *command* within the realm He has assigned:

- Government is empowered by God to enforce in the civic realm. (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17)
- Employers are empowered by God to enforce in the workplace. (Ephesians 6:5; 1 Peter 2:18-21)
- Congregations are empowered by God to enforce in the church. (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5)
- Parents are empowered by God to enforce in the home. (Ephesians 6:4)

Each of the authorities above has the right of *command*, while some legitimate authority is limited to the right of *counsel*. Husbands have authority in the home (Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:1) but are not empowered with an enforcement mechanism. Pastors/Elders are given authority in the church (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17) but are likewise not empowered with an enforcement mechanism. Both husbands and pastors exercise their authority primarily through servant leadership and persuasion, but it is still authority that should be followed because God says so and, although they cannot enforce, He will judge at the Bema Seat. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Authority to Command and Authority to Counsel¹

	<i>Authority of Command</i>	<i>Authority of Counsel</i>
<i>How they're the same</i>	Right to issue directives that bind the conscience	Right to issue directives that bind the conscience
<i>How they're different</i>	Right to enforce through discipline	No right to enforce through discipline
<i>Examples and mechanism of enforcement or discipline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents of young children - the rod • The state—the sword • The church—the keys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Husbands—none • Elders—none
<i>Theological emphasis</i>	God's transcendence	God's immanence

Similar content would be discussed and applied in groups meeting on Wednesdays and Sundays. All of it would be supplemented by recommended resources available online and in the CBC Resource Center.

Infant/Toddler Children / Parenting Resources

Videos

What should I do with my persistent guilt that I'm not doing enough as a parent? - Julie Lowe

How do I deal with the constant anxiety that my children will reject Christ? - Julie Lowe

Five Truths That Shape How You Parent - Ed Welch

How Can the Way You Share Jesus with Your Children Shape Your Parenting? - Ed Welch

Blog Posts

I'm So Tired - Laura Andrews

Playing Favorites - Ed Welch

What kind of parent are you? - Julie Lowe

The God who sees when we cannot - Julie Lowe

¹ Jonathan Leeman, *Authority: How Godly Rule Protects the Vulnerable, Strengthens Communities, and Promotes Human Flourishing*, 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), 156.

Parenting a difficult child - Julie Lowe
Successful parenting - Ed Welch
Rebuilding Parental Authority - Julie Lowe
For Those Who Fail Every Day - Julie Lowe
Practice Makes Permanent - Julie Lowe
For the Moms Stuck Inside - Alasdair Groves
A Few More Thoughts for Moms at Home This Winter - Alasdair Groves
An Alternative to Micromanaging Your Children - Julie Lowe
Mom Guilt and the God Who Sees - Lauren Whitman
Why We Must Teach Kids Safety Skills - Julie Lowe
Winning Your Child's Heart with Winsome Words - Darby Strickland
Is Every Occasion and Occasion for Mom Guilt - Lauren Whitman

Podcasts

Grace and Law in Parenting - Mike Emlet and Tim Lane
Is It OK to be a Stay at Home Dad? - Winston Smith and Tim Lane
Trusting God with our Children - David Powlison and Tim Lane
Help and Hope - Does God Really Love My Children (A Second Thought) - David Powlison and Julie Lowe
Parenting in Weakness - Alasdair Groves and Mike Emlet

Conference Audio

The Fearful Parent - Winston Smith
Shame on You: Overcoming Shame-based Parenting - Julie Lowe
Building Bridges with Your Children - Julie Lowe
Parenting from Proverbs: Principles of Wisdom and Applications of Love - Todd Stryd

JBC Articles

Parenting by Faith—Not Formula (JBC 32:2 - a shorter version of the book below) - Julie Lowe
Kids and the Gospel (JBC 1:1) - D. Clair Davis
Practical Helps for Building Character in Children (JBC 2:1) - Jim Campbell
Child Rearing: Second Thoughts About Secular Theories (JBC 7:4) - Tim Crater
The Family Covenant Model, Part 1: A Biblical Model of the Family (JBC 15:2) - Paul Randolph
Building the Family Covenant Model, Part 2 (JBC 15:3) - Paul David Tripp
Applying the Family Covenant Model, Part 3 (JBC 16:1) - Paul Randolph
Yelling at My Kids (JBC 23:3) - Nina Campagna
Helping the Parents of an Angry Child (JBC 25:1) - Mike Emlet and David Powlison
Parenting for God's Kingdom, Not My Own (JBC 26:3) - Rebecca Eaton
Reflections on Parenting a Difficult Child (JBC 31:3) - Julie Lowe
The Wall of Weariness: Loving the Wayward (JBC 33:2) - David Harvey and Paul Gilbert
How to Help Kids with Shame (JBC 33:3) - Ed Welch
Mom Guilt: Escaping Its Stronghold (JBC 36:1) - Lauren Whitman

Books

Child Proof: Parenting by Faith, Not Formula - Julie Lowe