



# PARENT GUIDE

## LESSON ONE: PLAY

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# LESSON ONE: PLAY

**OBJECTIVE:** To help families see how to use playtime as a discipleship opportunity and to see how having fun together is important for families who follow Jesus.

## FOCUS ON FOLLOWING JESUS

Jesus loved people by spending time with them, and we can love our family and friends by playing well together and following Jesus' example to be kind and forgive.

*([Ephesians 4:32](#) "Be kind and tender to one another. Forgive one another, just as God forgave you because of what Christ has done.")*

## GRIP ON THE GOSPEL

We can use the fun we like to have as a family to share the truth of Jesus with others and see how Jesus came to invite us to join his team – the winning team.

*([Colossians 3:17](#) "Do everything you say or do in the name of the Lord Jesus. Always give thanks to God the Father through Christ.")*

## WHAT DO I DO?

- Read the [For Parents](#) article. Spend a few minutes thinking and praying.
- Read over the [Discipleship Lesson](#) and decide when you will do it with your family.
- Gather your family, a Bible and any supplies listed on the lesson sheet. Use the script provided to teach a [Discipleship Lesson](#) to your family, adapting as needed.
- Use the 5 mini-lessons as [Daily Bible Time](#) prompts through the week.
- Select one or more [Discipleship Activities](#) to incorporate into your week.



# FOR PARENTS

What is discipleship? It is simply helping someone to follow Jesus. Together as a family, when you learn from Jesus to live like Jesus in your world today, you are doing *family discipleship*. This discipleship goes beyond teaching them the ‘what’ but also the ‘why’ and ‘how’. To become like Jesus we must have more than just Bible verses in our heads; we need our character and heart to reflect that of Jesus. Our first thoughts of teaching children might be pictures of Sunday school classes or midweek clubs. But the most effective discipleship we can offer to our children happens in regular everyday life. Your child’s best teacher is you. While the teaching that comes from your children’s pastor or Sunday school teacher is important, you are with your children daily. You can and should be passing on your faith in the ordinary moments of life. It doesn’t have to be complicated. That’s why we’re starting with the topic PLAY.

In helping all our children to choose the path of following Jesus and be equipped for that, Deuteronomy has this to tell us: the words of God should *“be in your hearts. Make sure your children learn them. Talk about them when you are at home. Talk about them when you walk along the road. Speak about them when you go to bed. And speak about them when you get up. Write them down and tie them on your hands as a reminder. Also tie them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses. Also write them on your gates.”* (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

All the ordinary parts of our day are useful for transferring our values and a Christian worldview to our kids. That includes the times of the day when you’re playing street hockey or dolls or a videogame with them. But how can we turn the everyday ordinary playful moments of just spending time with our kids into fruitful discipleship opportunities?

## 1. **WITH IS BETTER THAN WATCH**

It can’t happen all the time, but jumping on the trampoline with our kids or building a sandcastle with them on the beach is going to be far more memorable for both of you than just watching them do these activities. Some of us might be a bit more ‘childlike’ or playful than others, and this sort of thing comes naturally. But play is good for everyone! The first step to using play to disciple is to help our kids know that they are valuable, that we love them as people, and that they are worth our time. This week, challenge yourself to do something with your kids when you normally would just watch them. If you do this already – look for ways to show your kids how much you enjoy being with them.

## 2. **PRACTICE, PRAISE AND PREPARE FOR THE BEHAVIOURS WE WANT TO TEACH**

Play can be a great vehicle for transferring attitudes and worldviews. Whether we are playing soccer, a board game or just telling silly stories, play is vital for learning. We can go beyond just



teaching good sportsmanship, how to lose gracefully, how to be encouraging to the other team – through play we can teach real values of hard work, patience, positive attitudes, goal setting, thinking through the consequences of behaviours, making good decisions, controlling our selfish ambition, and so much more! But in order for kids to learn these things, they need to see us practice it first. Decide on one or two things at a time you want to transmit to your kids – and work on modelling them yourself. Next, praise your kids when they make good choices or do something that is difficult for them in the context of play! This is not handing out a purple participation ribbon for everyone who showed up – this is recognizing effort and character in our kids when we see it. Kids will pay attention to what grabs your attention. Lastly, prepare for the behaviours you want to teach. Set your kids up to have successful tries at doing difficult things! Families are like a laboratory where we can experiment with following God, and we can help our kids to be able to figure it out before they go out into the world. When you know that losing is hard for your kids, play a game with a winner and a loser and talk about ways we can handle losing before the game even begins. Tell them what helps you! Give them practical solutions or the words to say. Help them identify what can go wrong sometimes and how they can think about the situation differently. Pray for them and with them. Help them rely on God to change their heart.



## Consider these Questions:

- What character traits do my children see in me when we play together?
- What is something I actually enjoy doing with my children and what values does it pass on?
- What am I already doing well in discipling my children? What next step can I take?
- Where can I go for other ideas, accountability and inspiration when discipling my children?
- How can you encourage or connect with another family this week?



# DISCIPLESHIP LESSON

## Instructions:

- Read or teach the text using your own words
- *Text in italics is a note to the adult leading*
- This icon  indicates a question you should ask
- This icon  tells you there is a Bible verse to read
- **Text inside a grey box is a tip or idea for you!**
- **Text inside this box is a short activity or task**

The lesson should take about **45 minutes** to complete.

## Supplies Needed:

- **Bible**
- For each family member:
  - A sheet of paper
  - Something to draw with

## What is a Disciple?

*Explain to your family that this is a new thing your family is going to do – Family Discipleship at home. You will look into the Bible and at Jesus together to learn what it means to be a disciple. You can explain that it will be fun and you are excited about the time together!*



**What is a Disciple?** *(Allow children to answer.)*

A disciple is someone who follows Jesus. In Bible times, Jesus had disciples and they followed Jesus around wherever he went, watching what he did and listening to the words he said so that they could say and do those things too. They were students! Jesus gave special instructions to his disciples and showed them how to do these things. So to demonstrate this, we're going to start with a game. Ready?

*Play a quick game of "Simon Says". In this game, one person is going to be 'Simon'. They give an instruction to everyone in the group such as "touch your nose." If they say "Simon says touch your nose" you must do it. If they don't say "Simon says" then don't do it! If someone messes up, they should sit down. Give a few people a chance to be 'Simon' and play as long as children are engaged and having fun. Alternatively, with very young children, you could play follow the leader around your house – over and under obstacles changing how you walk, and who acts as 'leader'.*



## About Questions

*Most of the questions in these lessons are for the purpose of beginning conversations and learning what your child already knows. It is not important for them to have a 'right' answer or any prior ideas on this topic!*

*Parents can praise and encourage every honest attempt to answer a question and then add to that knowledge with the answers provided here.*



In that game we had to follow the person who was ‘Simon’, and listen carefully to their words, right? Well, the same is true when we are following Jesus. A Christian is a disciple of Jesus, and our goal is to do the things Jesus said to do, and NOT do the things that Jesus said not to do – and especially to love people the way Jesus did. This is not as easy as it sounds and it takes lots of practice.

Let’s look at what the Bible tells us about this:



**Read:** [1 Peter 2:21](#)

Jesus left us an example to follow, but it is sometimes a hard example to follow! We need help from others to follow Jesus – from our family, from our church and from our friends. Everyone who is part of a church is asked to love others, work together and live the way Jesus asks us to – everyone from little kids all the way up to grandmas and grandpas can learn to do this! God made us to do hard work together – but he also made us to be people who have fun together and who play together. We can follow Jesus in the way we work and do hard things, but also in the way we play! Families are how and where we learn to do these things.



**Who is better at having fun and playing – kids or grownups?**

Parents might be experts at many things, but kids have parents beat in how to have fun! So for those who might have forgotten how to play with others because they are so grown up, we should make ourselves a little reminder.

*Pass out pencils or markers and a piece of paper to everyone. Each person should think of something NOT to do when playing together as a family. Draw it out. Be silly if you want to! Look at everyone’s drawings and discuss them. Take only a few minutes for this task.*



*Your oldest child or good readers can read these verses.*



*Take a few answers from your kids and ask for examples. They will usually respond that kids are better at fun and playing! Grownups sometimes forget.*



*Use examples that are most relatable to your children and family situation!*

Sometimes parents need a reminder to put down their cellphones and pay attention to the game. Sometimes kids need to remember to have patience with a little brother or sister. Sometimes we get mad when we don't win. Sometimes we don't want to play something if its not our favourite game. If these things happen, no one is happy and having fun! Did you know that Jesus set an example for us of how we should play with others?

His disciples taught each other important lessons like this one:



*The NlrV uses the word 'tender' instead of compassionate. But most other translations use the word compassionate. You may want to use NIV here.*



**Read:** [Ephesians 4:32](#)



**What do you think this verse means?**

We know what kindness is – it's doing something nice and wanting what's best for someone else. Compassion means to try and feel what another person must be feeling in order to help them. Forgiving means choosing not to be mad or sad anymore about what someone has done. All these things can be really hard! This verse says that Jesus did all these things for us and set an example of how to behave that way. So let's draw another picture as a family:



*Older children can give you the definitions for these words:*

*Kindness  
Compassion  
Forgiving*

*Have them explain these words and provide examples!*

*On the back of your paper, draw what it would look like for your family to play together in the way that Jesus would - as if Jesus was playing with you. It doesn't matter what you are playing; it could be a sport, board game, video game, whatever! Look at and discuss everyone's pictures together.*

While we don't have any Bible stories of Jesus playing videogames with his friends, or soccer with his dad, we do know that while he was on earth Jesus was a person just like us, and was a kid just like you. What we see in the Bible is that Jesus absolutely loved spending time with other people.



**What activities did Jesus do with his friends?**

The Bible tells us just some of the things he did.





John 21:9-12 (Jesus cooked breakfast on the beach for his friends.)

Luke 19:1-6 (Jesus invited himself over to people's houses.)

Matthew 9:9-10 (Jesus went to big dinner parties and many came.)

John 2:2 (Jesus and his friends were invited to a wedding.)

Mark 2:2 (People filled houses to come see Jesus talk.)

Luke 8:22 (Jesus went on boat rides with his friends.)

Matthew 13:34 (Jesus told stories everywhere he went.)

As a grownup, Jesus had lots of people who wanted to be with him! Not because he was powerful or important, but because he was a nice person and he treated people well! People could tell that he loved them by his actions. We all like to be around people who love us! He knew people liked to hear stories and liked to eat dinner together. He helped them. He was available for people and wanted them to be his friend.

**Jesus – more than anything – wanted us to be his friend. He wants us to join his team, to be someone who loves people like he does, helps them, and who changes the world.**

**When we join Jesus' team, we become Christians. If you have never told Jesus you want to join his team, if you have never prayed to ask Jesus to forgive your sins and make you a member of God's family - Jesus' team - you can do that today!**

This week we're talking about how we can be families who follow Jesus – who do what Jesus did, and love people like he does. We have just seen that to play with others like Jesus means to be kind, compassionate and forgiving. It also means making time to be with other people and loving them. So each day we're going to get together for a few minutes and do that.



*Choose one or two of these verses to read if your children are short on attention. You can also summarize this list.*



*Older children can look some of these verses up and discover what activity Jesus did. You may choose to give a few verses to each child.*

***Close by praying together. Pray that God would help your family to be disciples in the way they play.***







4	<p><b><u>Philippians 2:3</u></b></p>	<p><b>When you choose a birthday present for someone, do you think of what THEY want and need, or what you would want for yourself?</b> (Think as a family of the perfect gift for a family member such as a grandparent. Would Grandma want a videogame?)</p> <p><b>Do you think people usually think about themselves first or others first?</b></p> <p>Sometimes when we play sports or games we think about ourselves first and not whether everyone is having a good time or what everyone else needs. Jesus taught us a better way to live.</p> <p><b>Why did Jesus tell us to live this way? Did Jesus do this? How do we know?</b></p> <p><b>What would change in our family if we did this? What would change in our world if everybody did this?</b></p>
5	<p><b><u>John 5:24</u></b> <b><u>John 10:27-28</u></b></p>	<p>Talk about your family name – it is like your team name! <b>What does it mean to be on your family team? What are some ‘qualities’ or good things your family wants to be known for?</b></p> <p><b>What other teams do you belong to? What does it mean to belong to a team?</b> (If your children don’t play sports, you may need to explain that teams wear uniforms, teams help each other and don’t let each other down, teams have the same goal, etc.)</p> <p><b>What does it mean that we are like Jesus’ sheep? How is being a sheep of Jesus like being part of a team that has a great coach/leader? How long do we get to be on Jesus’ team? What is awesome about being on Jesus’ team?</b></p> <p><b>Have you joined Jesus’ team? How do you know?</b></p> <p>(You might want to share with your child how you became a Christian, and how they can be on God’s team, in God’s forever family and be a Christian too!)</p>



# DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Use any of the following activities to extend the learning and disciple your child through play.

- **Pray Together:** Pray for opportunities to play with our friends like Jesus would, to show kindness, forgiveness and compassion to others. Then praise God when Jesus helps us with these things!
- **Memorize:** [Ephesians 4:32](#) together as a family.
- **Missions:** Talk about what the goal of 'Team Jesus' is! How can we share the message of the gospel with others? How can we pray for others around the world who are doing this work? What is a missionary and what do they do? What can we do in our own neighbourhood to share this message and invite people to be disciples of Jesus too?
- **Daily Life:**
  - Take turns teaching each other a game. Practice patience, putting others first, compassion and kindness.
  - Play a game or sport with winners and losers. Talk about good sportsmanship, but also how to celebrate when someone else wins, and be happy for them. This is putting others before ourselves.
  - Play a game like Pictionary, 'guess what animal I'm thinking of', 20 questions, etc. (Any game that requires guessing.) Talk about having compassion for someone else and how we try to understand what they feel and why. What clues can we look for? What helps us to know how they are feeling? Talk about how Jesus had compassion for people. Remind children that we want people to have compassion for us and we are following Jesus when we show compassion.