

## The Spiritual Potential of a Child

**Introduction:** As a church, we care a lot about the children that God has entrusted to us. We believe that we have a responsibility to come along side of parents to help train up their children to know and experience God in all of life. This value is expressed through the fact that we have a full-time children's ministry pastor; we involve dozens and dozens of people in serving children; and, we commit a significant amount of our budget towards children's ministries. Children have great spiritual potential to know and serve God in powerful ways. They are not just the church of tomorrow; they are the church today. May this study remind us of this truth and motivate us to prayer and action for the well-being of our children.

**Opening Discussion:** Who was one influential personal in your spiritual life as a child? Why were they influential?

Chris said:

Conservative estimates say that 75% of young people leave the church by the end of their freshman year of college, some research suggests that this number could be as high as 88%. I hear those stories and I think of those statistics and then I walk down the hall to the children's end of the building where I work with all the children that God has blessed us with and I wonder, will nine out the ten children I work with walk away? "Will that be their story too?"

1. Why do you think this is the "story" for so many kids who grow up in the church?
2. Was this your experience? If so, why?

### Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9

3. What is the context of this passage?
4. How do you see God's heart for the younger generations in this passage?
5. What pattern is given here for how children are to be trained spiritually?
6. What does it mean in verse 6 when it says that God's commandments "shall be on your heart" as you teach them to your children?

7. What does it mean to teach the commandments "diligently" (v. 7)?

Chris said:

For the rest of us, who don't yet have children or have grown children, we see several examples in Scripture of non-parent adult figures playing significant roles in the lives of young people. You have Paul pouring deeply into the Timothy, Eli invests deeply in Samuel, and some scholars even think the disciples were teenagers when Jesus called them to follow. As I think about the church's responsibility to train up disciples I can't point to any one demographic within the church and say, "It's your responsibility." We must look at ourselves as a collective family and say, "It is our responsibility!" Children need to be exposed to a broad section of the body of Christ fulfilling the roles we were created to fill.

8. What does it look like for the church body to teach God's commandments and God's ways diligently to the children He has entrusted to us?

Chris said:

How can we as a church help develop a child's potential into maturity? Two things come to mind. Specifically, formal and informal ministry to children.

9. Have you ever sensed a desire/calling/passion to serve in the formal children's ministries of the church?

Chris said:

Outside of the formal ministries of Faith is the informal ministry that happens "on the way and day by day". I get this gut feeling that most of a child's potential is drawn out informally. We should always be extremely intentional in our interactions with children. It can be easy for us to be intentional in a Sunday school class and totally miss a child's spiritual needs during the rest of their lives. Anytime a child crosses your path, in an appropriate context, you have the potential to make a significant impact.

10. How can you be more intentional in your interaction with children so that you might help draw out their spiritual potential?