

# DISCIPLESHIP NOW!

West Virginia Baptist Convention



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DISCIPLESHIP NOW is a periodic resource provided for local churches from the office of Discipleship Ministries.

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## Sharpening for Service



Several years ago, our daughter took some culinary classes. One of the "extras" she had to buy in addition to a textbook was a set of knives for the knife skills class. The set included various knives for use in doing various kinds of cutting and a sharpening tool.

In my childhood I could only remember my family having a butcher knife and a couple of little knives – later I knew them as paring knives! My mom seemed to get along okay with her condensed set of knives in feeding a family of eight. She even found ways to use the knives as tools for repairing things around the house.

I remember the Christmas someone gave her the gift of a bread knife. It was long with little curves on the edges. Yes, it did cut the bread much better than what we had been using, but it was useless in cutting up an apple or peeling potatoes. It did not do very well with meat either. Personally, as a child, I thought the knife was a bit of a waste!

Fast forward to the present. My husband loves to bake, especially bread! The holiday season finds him using upwards of 50 pounds of flour. While we can cut the bread with other knives, his favorite is the bread knife attachment on the electric knife. It provides a great cut and makes the slices look good.



Recently, I did some research – about 10 minutes worth, and found 17 different kinds of knives that can be used in the kitchen. I was amazed how each one was different and had a very specific function. Each one was made for a different job and should work well.

One catch though, each needed to be kept sharp in order to have maximum effectiveness. In my daughter's knife set there was a sharpening tool. A VERY important part of the set. The form and function of each knife was different but all of them needed to be kept sharp to work their best. Part of knife skills class was learning to sharpen the knives too.

In the church, God has provided persons with different spiritual gifts and skills. Each gift and skill has its place in the community of faith. Just like knives need sharpened, gifts and skills need to be developed, enhanced and improved. This is a part of the discipleship journey. What is your church doing to sharpen the gifts and skills of volunteer leaders and teachers?

Is your church intentionally planning for regular "sharpening" opportunities for those who are leading and teaching?

This issue of **Discipleship Now!** is focused on *Sharpening for Service*.

Lisa G. Simmons  
Director of Discipleship Ministries

*Our mission is to empower local churches to be Christ honoring communities of faith, and to help them fulfill their mission by enabling them to do together what they cannot do alone.*

# CHILDREN

## Family Ministry Starts At Home by Jim Wideman (Kidzmatter Magazine March/April 2016)



"What you teach and train your children about God matters to Him!" It's my responsibility, priority, and privilege as a parent to do this. But it's also my responsibility, priority, and privilege to teach them about marriage and family by setting an example and modeling God's Word. You've also heard me say, "What happens at home is more important than what happens at church." God's original plan for work evangelism and the mission of the family is laid out in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your heart. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up." How do we do this? In my book, Connect With Your Kids, I give you 12 things you can do as a parent to connect your kids to God. Here's just a few to get you started.

### #1 Family ministry starts at home.

Decide that you and the inhabitants of your household will serve the Lord. You've heard Joshua 24:15 a thousand times, "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." What does this mean? It's simple; make Jesus an everyday part of your lives. Live out what you're asking the families at your church to do at their house.

As a parent be careful what and who you allow in your home. It's easier to start strict when kids are young and relax as they get older and allow them to make good choices based on the Bible. The bottom line is parents must be an example!

### #2 Love spouse the way you want your child's spouse to love them.

I don't know why we think we can have a strong family and not have a strong marriage. Great marriages are a work in progress and happen when you make it a priority. If you aim at nothing you hit it every time. You need a plan to make your marriage strong. Whatever you did to win your spouse's affection is the same action you need to choose to keep their affection. Spend as much time together as you can. Also spend quality time; have a plan for your time together. Communicate well. Learn to be a listener. Be intentional when it comes to dates, trips, and make special times together a regular part of your life. Set a night to be date night and make it a priority.

Just like we want our children to see we love the Lord first and foremost, let your spouse see firsthand that other than Jesus, there is no person on this earth we love more than them, including our kids.

### #3 Spend lots of time with your kids.

My kids are my third priority, so when it comes to controlling my schedule and not letting it control me, I have to make time for my kids a lifestyle choice. Julie and I chose from the beginning of us becoming parents that it was our desire to be a close family. Even though our kids are grown, this is still a priority. Because of the time we invested when our children were young they make time for us now that they are grown. Our children know they are always invited to go on family vacations. Sunday lunch is a special family time for us. Long before my girls ever went on a date, they had dates with Dad. I've tried to make the time I have with my kids all about them, not just including them in things I want to do. I've tried to not miss anything that was important to them. If I worked hard to plan fun times with the kids of my church, why wouldn't I look for ways to make days and evenings special for the kids who live at my house.

### #4 Seek to understand how God made each member of your family differently and allow them to be different.

My wife and I are very different and I believe different is a good thing. I'm a spender and Julie is a saver. I am overly generous and she can be a little tight. We need each other. Our kids are a different mix of both of us. Even though our girls had the same parents, ate the same food, and lived in the same house, they're as different as night and day. I realized when I first started working in the local church that God makes us all different as part of His plan. We are the body of Christ and just like every part of His body has a different purpose and function, so do the members of our family. Different personalities call for differences in how we parent, how we discipline, and how we communicate our love, as well as how we communicate information. Celebrate the differences, strengths, and gifts of each family member, then dare to speak in their language in a way they can receive and understand. Dare to be an encourager. To encourage means to inspire with courage, spirit, or hope, to spur on, to give help to. Be a helper, and encourager, and a cheerleader for every member of your family, especially your mate.

### #5 Be open and honest at all times.

Admit your mistakes and demonstrate repentance. Why do we try to hide our mistakes from the people who see them the most? My mom taught me, "Things are not as bad as I think they are." She also told me "I'm not as wonderful as I think I am; it's always somewhere in between." Our families know firsthand our struggles and inconsistencies. What makes the difference is when we don't try to hide them or pretend they're not there, but admit them and let our family members see we're doing something about them. Your family needs to learn from your example of godly repentance. You see there's a big difference between "I'm sorry" and true repentance. Repentance calls for different behavior. When your family sees you modeling repentance, it's easier for them to apply it in their own lives.

Establishing a family ministry starts with your family. Others will follow by example! It's never too late to make right choices. I am so thankful we serve a God who is the God of a second chance for me, my family and families I get to minister to at church.

# PARCHMENT VALLEY - BROTHERS' KEEPER



In a recent, popular Christian movie, two close friends adopted as their motto “God is good all the time. And all the time, God is good.” They quoted this phrase to one another over and over again throughout the movie. Their constant reminder is as essential for us lest we forget during turbulent times, “God is good - all the time!”



As we prepare for the challenging, yet fulfilling time of year when Brothers' Keeper kicks into action, we are excited about what God is doing. We have had productive meetings with the participating agency representatives and are way ahead of schedule on 53 project applications and site visits. We have applied for and secured two grants to help offset the cost of the building materials needed and have volunteers helping in areas who will streamline the organizational process. Skilled individuals are coming to serve as crew chiefs on the work projects and people are praying for the mission work as well as spiritual education the young people involved will receive during their week at Parchment Valley Conference Center.

Brothers' Keeper, a program established in 2000, reaches out every year to those in the Jackson County community needing residential assistance. The program is scheduled for June 26 - July 1, 2016. Parchment Valley Conference Center both spearheads and sponsors the program, which involves approximately 190 youth from churches all over the state. The youth are housed at Parchment Valley Conference Center and pay their own room and board expenses in order to serve others. These youth, their adult leaders and skilled team leaders dispatch each day to various locations within Jackson County to make home modifications to those in need. It is a multi-faceted operation in which the youth learn valuable skills, a good work ethic and the joy of knowing how it enriches their lives to help others. This is discipleship in action!

The most significant spiritual aspect of the Brothers Keeper program is the Christian adult leaders who mentor these young volunteers. Through this wonderful process the youth experience the gift of serving others while growing in their own faith.

Last year, one of the youth teams shared the gospel while working on their project. Two home owners accepted Christ as Lord and Savior.

Please pray about this wonderful opportunity to make a difference in people's lives. Many of those young teens who attended Brothers' Keeper 16 years ago are now faithfully serving in churches around the world. The mission of Brothers' Keeper has changed hearts for all eternity. Your support continues to teach, train and mentor our youth into amazing servants for the Kingdom. Amen.

“God is good – all the time; all the time – God is good” and for this we are very thankful.

*Be Blessed,  
Frank R. Miller*

# Thinking About . . . Proverbs 23:17

(Thinking About . . . is for use in Bible study, small group meetings, Sunday School class and individual study)

Iron sharpens iron and one person sharpens the wits of another.  
Proverbs 23:17 NRSV

1. Verse 17 appears in the midst of a list of life lessons which are realistic and to the point. The instructions use minimal religious language and seek to be practical in nature.
2. For the wise teachers of this time, face to face discussion and interaction were very important. A person's choice of company was significant. In order to reach your potential you needed to surround yourself with those persons who could "sharpen" your mind and personhood. Dullness comes from being with those who do not inspire, encourage, motivate and stir you towards being a better person. This is done for a positive outcome!
3. Our intellectual and spiritual natures need stimulated in God-honoring ways.  
*We receive stimulation of our intellect and spirit from many sources. What are these sources pointing us toward? How can the church help believers to be pointed in the "God Direction?" Be specific.*
4. Verse 17 indicates the atmosphere in this passage is one of mutual consent. Iron one is willing to sharpen Iron two. Iron two is willing to be sharpened by Iron one.  
*What does this teach us about the mentor/mentee relationship?*
5. The sharpening iron is NOT there to strike, hit or destroy. The sharpening iron is there to improve and refresh towards its original use.  
*How can this understanding change or improve the way the church disciplines believers?*
6. The act of sharpening increases the power of the iron, however it is up to the one who is sharpened, how this "power" will be used.  
*How does this impact the way the church involves believers in mission and ministry?*

# Lessons About Iron

To understand the sharpening process of the Christian, we must understand the sharpening process of the iron. How does iron sharpen iron? Let us cover a little “Iron History.”

Bronze, the material primarily used for weapons prior to 1300 BC, was running short because of all the wars going on in the world at the time. The Aegean people, perhaps the Philistines, developed a skill for making weapons out of the much stronger iron. Iron weapons were so revolutionary the Philistines kept the technology to themselves similar to our approach on nuclear technology today. Their “Iron” advantage helped them hang on to the early monopoly on iron weapons as indicated in 1 Samuel 13:19-21:

<sup>19</sup> “Now no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears.” <sup>20</sup> So all Israel went down to the Philistines, each to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe. <sup>21</sup> And the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to fix the hoes.”

Over the next couple decades, the technology leaked out and Israel came into possession of this newly found skill. Some time near the age of King David, Israel began making iron weapons for themselves. By the time of Solomon and the writing of Proverbs 27:17, the making and sharpening of iron swords was a huge national endeavor that allowed for military independence for the relatively young nation.

The “Iron Sharpening Iron” process was carried out in a few steps.

- First was the pounding out of the sword with the iron hammer. They would flatten it around the edges like sheet metal.
- Second, they would use an iron file or and iron ore stone to create a razor edge.
- Thirdly, they would use another piece of iron to rub and lift that edge. This would have to be done whenever the edge would become dull. You have heard the saying “He’s lost his edge.” That is referring to a knife that needed to have the edge raised. When Solomon stated “As iron sharpens iron,” this was the cutting edge of technology (pun intended). Anyone that heard this at the time would have had two great and timely images in their heads. When iron was around other iron, great things happened.

Material from Doug Hamilton, pastor of Camp Hill Church of Christ





## STUDENT MINISTRIES

Proverbs 27:17 New International Version (NIV)

**17 As iron sharpens iron,  
so one person sharpens another.**

Proverbs makes a statement that each of us, as disciples of Christ, need to incorporate into our lives. As we teach and grow together, sharpening one another, the reality of the Holy Spirit is made known to each of us. The motto for Baptist Campus Ministries is "Changing lives that change the world". With this slogan in mind, I asked several students what "iron sharpens iron" means to them. Their responses were good. I wish you could have sat at the table with me to hear them as they thought through this question aloud.

The answers from the young women in the group reflected the more emotional nature of women; sharpening one another through encouragement and the building up of one another:

- "It is the opposite of what society says is important. We should lift up one another, not tear each other down!"
- "Simple compliments from another girl can build my confidence."
- "Iron supplies strength and their relationship gives me strength!"

Other answers from the young ladies in the group leaned heavily into the atmosphere of discipleship, where sharpening occurs through teaching and accountability:

- "Two female believers investing in one another"
- "Older women sharing their wisdom with young women and teaching important aspects of life"
- "Our friendship is fruitful and edifying and even pointing out sin, lovingly challenging each other."

- "Community is important."

One young lady even surprised me with this answer, "Our parents can be a part of this in our lives." In reading those, you should be challenged to ensure that mixing of generations is happening in the local church. **What are you doing now to personally invest in and sharpen others?**

The boys who answered the question were more technical.

- "Iron sharpens iron best in struggle, tension."
- "Adversity, helping through the hardships"
- "Tension is okay and can help build a foundation of true friendships."
- "End result is we become a better person...dad, brother, father."

Notice the difference between the male and female answers; building one another up through encouragement vs. tension. Both are necessary to the sharpening process and the uniqueness of these answers reveals the lack of relational limits God has with His creation. He created mankind to be able to respond to Him so as to have a relationship with Him and others. As we communicate with and sharpen one another, we are allowing God to use us for His glory through His self-revelation in mankind. Wisdom, love and time are all important components of "iron sharpening iron." **The community of believers needs to be active in creating space for true friendships, mentoring and sharing life together.** In doing this, the church will be sharpening its own edges.

*In Christ,  
Rob Ely  
Director of Student Ministries*

# DISCIPLESHIP AT THE CROSS

Many churches fall prey to developing “sound bite” Christians instead of true disciples. Too many times we want the answers without being willing to dig deep into the hard questions, study the scriptures in depth or spend hours in prayer. By doing this we are creating believers who can’t defend their faith because they don’t truly understand the Biblical stances they uphold. Also, by a lack of time in prayer their relationship with God tends to suffer.

An example of this is a theological concept I learned in seminary relating to fast food vs. healthy food. Fast food fixes the hunger in the short term and satisfies our craving like a late-night Baconator at Wendy’s, but has negative long-term effects within our bodies. It is a pattern if we were to keep up would cause more damage than good to ourselves. Instead, what would be more sustainable would be to have a healthy balanced diet which requires more work and preparation, but is much more beneficial in the long-term.

Here is the point, “sound bite” Christians get the Biblical word fast but in the long-term lack the depth needed to defend their faith, which damages their witness. “Sound bite” Christians take a “bite here and a bite there” of the Bible. They take a “bite of time here and a bite of time there” for prayer. On the other hand, true disciples are called to be deeply rooted in the Word and are able to defend their faith based on their knowledge, and through the Holy Spirit, which they seek in prayer.

When we talk of discipleship, what begins to come to your mind? Most of us think of the concept of “following”, but the deeper question is, “**Who are we following?**” Some will answer the question with the concept of helping, but the deeper question is, “**Who are we helping?**” Still others might think about memorizing Scripture but **are they living it out?** We would answer these questions by saying we are following Jesus, otherwise we could be guilty of following anything. When it comes to helping we are called to not just help ourselves, our loved ones or those who we like, but rather we should extend a helping hand to anyone in need.

When I think of discipleship, Luke 9:23 comes to my mind, Jesus says “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Unlike Matthew 10:38-39, Luke adds the word “daily” reminding us that taking up the cross is a daily practice, not just a one-time event. The cross throughout the course of history was a place of great pain, humiliation, rejection and sorrow, but also at the cross we find grace, over-flowing love and the hope for all humanity. Both sides of this cross we bear. At times we will face rejection but we will still extend the grace and love shown to us through Christ upon the cross. This is discipleship at its core. At the place of the cross we find our end and our beginning. We are asked the question, “Whom will we serve?” It is either Jesus as our Lord or ourselves in His place.

To be a disciple means we are called to follow, to be like Christ. It is not easy to be like Him. He was perfect, and yet, we are sinners. He was humble, and yet, we are very prideful at times. He didn’t remember the wrongs of those who caused Him to suffer, and yet, we hold grudges. He didn’t seek His own gain or advancement, and yet, we prize position and power. To follow Jesus we must decide to love Him first because there is no other way. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, “To endure the cross is not tragedy; it is the suffering which is the fruit of an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ.”

*Jonathan Turner, pastor  
Shuck Memorial Baptist Church  
(a devotion presented to the Discipleship Commission)*

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## Reading Suggestions

### For Men:

As Iron Sharpens Iron: Building Character in Mentoring Relationships, written by Howard and Willian Hendricks

### For Women:

Woman to Woman: Preparing Yourself to Mentor, written by Edna Ellison An interactive study with a group study guide.

Spiritual Mothering: The Titus 2 Model for Women Mentoring Women, written by Susan Hunt

Transforming Together: Authentic Spiritual Mentoring, written by Ele Parrott

### General:

Disciples are Made Not Born, written by Walter Henrichsen - Includes a 13 week study guide.

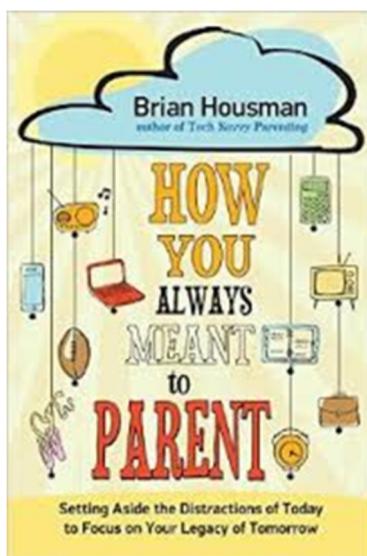
The Mentor's Guide, written by Lois Zachary - This is business oriented but can have use for the church.

lifeGiving Mentors written by Tim Elmore - Most don't have a model for how to experience "life-giving" relationships. This resource is an encyclopedia on the subject. It was first created under the title: Mentoring: How to Invest Your Life in Others 13 years ago. This edition has been updated and expanded with new chapters containing the latest research and creative ideas to make it a revolutionary new resource.

## Book Review:

How You Always Meant to Parent  
written by Brian Housman

Brian Housman provides a practical approach to parenting with great insight into overcoming the distractions life throws at every family. He gives broad principles that incorporate spiritual truths vital to maintaining spiritual engagement even through the difficult teen years. Readers are encouraged to let go of the mistakes of the past and keep moving forward toward building a lasting relationship and launching their child into adulthood with a love for God.



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