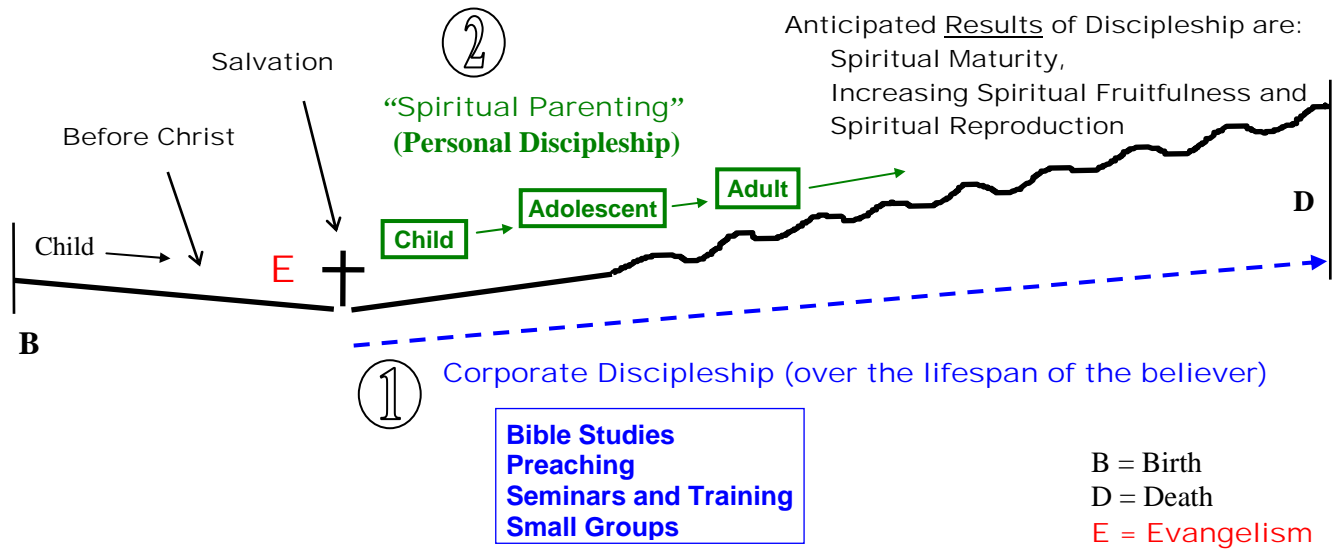




# A Biblical Model for "Discipleship"



③ We use this portion of the apostle Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the believers in the city of Thessalonica as a model for "Spiritual Parenting" (a.k.a. "Personal Discipleship").

THEY WERE SINGLE-MINDED IN PURPOSE - :3-6 ... we speak, ***not as pleasing men, but God*** who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, ***nor with a pretext for greed*** — God is witness — ***nor did we seek glory from men***, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.

1. THEY CARED FOR THE BELIEVERS AS A MOTHER CARES FOR HER CHILDREN  
 :7-8 But we proved to be ***gentle*** among you, as a ***nursing MOTHER tenderly*** cares for her own children. Having so fond an ***affection*** for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our ***own lives***, because you had become ***very dear to us***.
2. THEY BECAME "ROLE MODELS" TO THE NEW BELIEVERS  
 :9-10 you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are ***witnesses***, and so is God, how ***devoutly*** and ***uprightly*** and ***blamelessly*** we behaved toward you believers;
3. THEY GAVE INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION AND INSTRUCTION AS A FATHER  
 :11-12 just as you know how we were ***exhorting*** and ***encouraging*** and ***imploring EACH ONE*** of you as a ***FATHER*** would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
4. THE WORD OF GOD WAS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF DISCIPLESHIP  
 :13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, ***the word of God***, which also ***performs its work in you*** who believe.

(1 Thessalonians 2:3-13)

# A Biblical Model For Discipleship - Description

## Overview

The previous lesson, “Balanced Discipleship” (INTRO-2), is an overview of what should be the normal practice in churches. The diagram, “A Model For Discipleship”, depicts how Balanced Discipleship should look in the typical believer’s spiritual life, including **both** Personal Discipleship (“Spiritual Parenting”) and Corporate Discipleship. The two are contrasted using a time line, and providing biblical support for Personal Discipleship.

### ① Corporate Discipleship

Most churches are well acquainted with and employ Corporate Discipleship (represented by the dotted line over the lifespan of the believer). However, many church leaders would acknowledge that something is still lacking in the spiritual growth of many believers.

### ② Personal Discipleship

We believe that “Personalized Discipleship” (“Spiritual Parenting”) is the missing ingredient for producing healthy spiritual growth. Each new believer has unique spiritual needs that should be addressed. Typically there is a window of opportunity for new believers, during which time they are open to biblical concepts, which can accelerate their growth toward spiritual maturity and fruitfulness. There is a parallel between the spiritual development of a believer and the development of a baby. In both cases, the initial period is a “formative” stage of their lives. We believe this is why God has chosen to use spiritual terminology that is paralleled in the human experience; such as “born again”, “baby”, etc. (see also Lesson 2-2).

Too often believers are left to fend for themselves, with the assumption that simply being in the presence of biblical presentations and other believers will be sufficient. We believe many believers would have experienced much more spiritual growth had someone given them personal attention when they first accepted Christ as their Savior. New believers will often come to correct conclusions if biblical truths are clearly presented in a personal format.

New believers are usually hungry, and long for personal guidance, much like a new baby. The typical new believer is excited about having their sins forgiven and knowing that they're going to heaven. However, that excitement should not be mistaken for spiritual understanding. New believers need to understand how to recognize the Holy Spirit’s involvement in their life, and how to listen to, follow and obey Him. They also need to understand how to cooperate with Him in their own spiritual development.

### ③ Biblical Support for Personalized Discipleship (1 Thess. 2:3-13)

Paul presents a model for Personal Discipleship (see also Lesson 2-2), in which he clearly depicts himself as a “Spiritual Parent” (Spiritual Father and Mother), caring for spiritual children. We believe that Paul lays out a biblical perspective of how a Spiritual Parent should relate to each spiritual child, or disciple. The human parallel is intentional and unmistakable.