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Why Kids Need Systematic Discipleship

**[DiscipleLand Staff](http://www.discipleblog.com/author/admin/" \o "Posts by DiscipleLand Staff)  February 11, 2019**[**Anointed Teaching**](http://www.discipleblog.com/category/anointed-teaching/)**,**[**Discipleship**](http://www.discipleblog.com/category/discipleship/)**,**[**Teaching the Bible**](http://www.discipleblog.com/category/teaching-the-bible/)[**No Comments**](http://www.discipleblog.com/2019/02/why-kids-need-systematic-discipleship/#respond)

**The Shoulders of Giants**

Sir Isaac Newton (English physicist, mathematician, astronomer, natural philosopher, alchemist. and theologian) was one of the most brilliant men who ever lived. He told a fellow scientist who wondered how Newton was able to accomplish so much, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”

Children, at every point in their development, stand on the shoulders of their former selves. Kids cannot write a meaningful essay until they are able to create a coherent paragraph; they cannot write a strong paragraph if they have not learned basic grammar and word meanings. Similarly, children cannot solve differential equations until they have mastered algebra; they do not understand algebra unless they first grasp arithmetic.

This principle is true in music, art, and other academic disciplines as well—but it is also valid in spiritual endeavors. If the foundation is weak, efforts to build will be fraught with problems. Jesus concludes His Sermon on the Mount with a graphic illustration of this same principle (Matthew 7:24-27).

Studies in cognitive psychology and language acquisition conclusively demonstrate that children are much more likely to retain new learning (transferring it from short-term to long-term memory) if a memory framework already exists. Sequential, cumulative, or incremental learning ensures that children will build a foundation that is essential to later growth. It also ensures that they will process new material in the way that their brains are set up to learn—thus adding to existing memory.

**Giant Discipleship**

In a nutshell, that is why discipleship training must be sequential. Lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ are built incrementally. Effective discipleship interweaves three dimensions—knowledge + character + conduct. The Bible illumines a finite number of “must know” topics to understand, “must be” traits to exhibit, and “must do” activities to experience. When a child’s developmental process includes that knowledge, those traits, and those experiences, we can be reasonably assured that we have done our part to build a lifelong disciple of Jesus Christ.

Why do children need “sequenced” discipleship? Knowledge builds on knowledge. Character builds on character. Conduct builds on conduct. Kids who miss out on foundational aspects of their spiritual development spend much of their lives “wandering in the wilderness.” But children who receive a sequential Christian education enjoy the “land of milk and honey.” They withstand harsh winds and tossing waves (Ephesians 4:14-16). They remain firm, standing on the shoulders of spiritual giants who have gone before them (Hebrews 12:1-2).