A. A positive concept of guidance involves inner growth toward the ideal of self-discipline. A disciple may be defined as one who learns or voluntarily follows a leader.

B. Children need and depend on guidance.

C. Guidance may be physical, verbal, and/or indirect. Physically touching, soothing, encouraging, or restraining a child may be necessary to reinforce verbal guidance. Indirect guidance may be accomplished through appropriate equipment, materials, and a balanced program.

D. Principles of Discipline

- Be a good listener and observer.
- Speak kindly, quietly, and looking into preschoolers’ eyes.
- Identify what is important and emphasize it.
- Identify what is unimportant and forget it.
- Childproof the environment.
- Identify limits which are appropriate and necessary. Once limits have been established, they should be clearly defined and consistently maintained.
- State suggestions or directions in a positive, specific form.
- Give preschoolers choices only when you are prepared to accept the child’s decision.
- Acknowledge the child’s perception or reaction.
- Acknowledge your own feelings.
- Unconditionally accept the child, although his behavior cannot be condoned or may have to be redirected. Try to empathize with the child.
- Try to understand and deal with the cause of children’s behavior.
- On occasions, grant the child in fantasy what you cannot give him in reality.
- Avoid motivating a child by making comparisons between one child and another or encouraging competition. Emphasize progress toward self-improvement.
- Help children to recognize and accept logical or “natural consequences” of their behavior. Avoid creating a dependency on artificial rewards or bribes. Empty threats or promises become meaningless.
- Recognize that children begin to identify (think, feel, and behave as though the characteristics of the model belong to them) with significant people in their lives.
- Attack the problem rather than the preschooler with a problem.
- “I messages” are more appropriate than “You messages.”
- Know your own limitations.

Made possible by the generous Cooperative Missions gifts of Virginia Baptist churches affiliated with the Baptist General Association of Virginia.