

DEVELOPING FAMILY MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH



WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
Dr. Scott Turansky, Steven M. Johnson and Ed Miller

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CHAPTER 1



How to Use This Document

Excitement is growing among churches today around a new vision for family ministry. However, current strategies are not producing the results that we long for. As people long to see the church function more as a family and less like a corporation, we are all eager to see the family unit strengthened, and a greater partnership between church and home. This working paper is designed to provide a practical, flexible tool to guide your church as you seek to develop or enhance your family ministry.

Scott and Carrie Turansky, along with Ed and Joanne Miller, are involved in a church plant where the vision for family ministry is one of the core values. We are committed to passing the faith on to the next generation, so that means we value children and young people. We also recognize the importance of adults in the lives of children and youth. Faith is cultivated most effectively through seeing it lived out in the lives of parents, teachers, mentors, coaches, pastors, and friends. We also long to see a greater partnership between the church and the home.

Steve Johnson is involved in a missional church that is incorporating family ministry ideas. The church has existed for over a decade, but mostly as the typical 20-something church that never anticipated the needs of children and families. Of course, many of those 20-somethings have married, and now many of them are raising children. The church, as is typical among young communities, is facing a dilemma- try to stay structure

free as the missional church likes to do, or develop children, youth, and family ministries that look like their parents' churches. Working in this environment has provided great insight for developing a different kind of organic family ministry.

Where do we begin?

There are many different models and definitions of family ministry now being developed around the world. We've been studying them and learning from the best minds in seminaries, churches, and specialized ministries. We've looked at much of the current research, and we're using an approach that we think will be helpful to many churches. There are a number of complete family ministry packages out there that you can choose. That works for many churches. Our approach starts with a vision, and then guides you and your leaders through a process. This process must then be bathed in prayer and a dependence upon the Holy Spirit to lead you to the best strategy for your context.

The process must start with vision, and that is where we start this book. In the next two chapters, we'll share a vision for family ministry that will energize and excite you. You'll learn why family ministry is less about a program and more about a mindset. It involves a culture shift, or a change in our way of thinking about the ministry of the church. In Chapter 4, we will talk about what leadership looks like in developing or enhancing family ministry. Leadership is crucial in any initiative, but especially when we envision a culture change. The 5th chapter will take you on a tour of the various family ministry models that have been developed over the past number of years. Each of these puts an emphasis on one or more family ministry components. You may decide to completely embrace one of these models, and that's great. We want you to find what the Lord has for you in your context.

We've developed a tool that we call the **4 Components of Family Ministry**. It's another way of looking at the process of developing a family ministry. We'll explain why we've taken this approach in Chapter 6, and then look more closely at each of the components in later chapters. Chapter 7 will guide you through the process of evaluating your current situation with the use of a **Family Ministry Assessment Tool**.

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In chapters 8-11, we will go into detail about each of the components of family ministry. We'll present a number of tools and resources that may be helpful as you work on these components. Chapter 12 will be a charge that will inspire you to move forward in developing your ministry as the Lord leads you.

CHAPTER 2



A Vision for Family Ministry

People inside and outside of the church are talking about the most basic social relationship- that is the family. Currently, Amazon has over 600-thousand books that deal with family in some way. Many research dollars have been spent studying the family and how human life is benefited or hurt by this institution.

Many research projects on the family have worked to correlate the effect family has on a child's academic success. Dating back to the 1980s, research has shown that the more involved a family is in helping a child academically, the more success the child will realize. Potential positive influence on a child's quality of life is shown in many scholarly works, including the work by Rutgers's sociologist David Popenoe, who demonstrates that children who grow up with their biological fathers fair much better than children who do not, when considering several important life development areas.

Sadly, researchers are not generally granted money to do their work because things are going well. Rather, these studies demonstrate that the family as an institution is struggling. Fatherlessness, especially in the city, is commonplace. Substance abuse, economic pressures, and even career choices all add pressure on the American family. While divorce rates are falling from their peaks in the early 1980s,¹ they are still high, and divorce

¹ <http://www.stateofourunions.org/2009/si-divorce.php>

has, in many ways, become more socially acceptable. Additionally, this drop reflects, in part, a lower marriage rate. That means more children are living in homes where the parents were never married.²

Children suffer when the family struggles. The church is not immune to these problems. While sociologists disagree about the rate of persistence of divorce in Christian families when compared to the general population, it is still high.³ So, as the family struggles, the church struggles, too.

Another alarming issue receiving press over the last few years is the issue of disappearing faith. The church seems to be struggling to retain a significant number of those raised within its structures. Studies show that somewhere between 50 and 80% of high school graduates walk away from their faith. While the exact number is difficult to discern, anyone who has worked with youth can tell stories of students who seemed to be thriving in their faith while in high school, only to leave it on the shelf in their post-high school years. Tim Clydesdale, a sociologist at the College of New Jersey, talks about a spiritual lockbox. This lockbox is a safe place to store their spiritual upbringing during their young adult years since it doesn't seem consistent with the rest of their lives.⁴ If young people are not exactly denying their faith in Christ, in large numbers, they are confused by their faith, and how to live according to religious principles after they leave their childhood homes.

Partly to blame for the drop off in faith is that today's parents don't seem particularly concerned with the spiritual state of their children. Christian parents typically desire their children to be faithful, but at the same time they often rate their child's personal happiness and professional success among the most important goals to attain. Building on that mistaken value, church programs are often treated as separate from the parents all together. Contributing to this is that many Christian parents are themselves under-disciplined. They want their children to be saved and to grow in their faith, but they feel that they are limited in their ability to

² <http://www.publicagenda.org/charts/birth-rate-unmarried-women-levels>

³ http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2011-03-14-divorce-christians_N.htm

⁴ Clydesdale, Tim, *The First Year Out: Understanding American Teens after High School*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007) 174-175 pp.

aid that growth beyond dropping their kids off at the door of the church. So, parents desiring the best for their children focus on the things they know, happiness and seeking success, and hope that the professionals at the church can address spiritual matters.

The young people of the church grow up in a world where their families are not always stable and focused on living godly lives. In the same way, their church context is often dysfunctional. Many times in the New Testament the church is called the family of God, but too many churches do not seem to work that way. Given current data, 25% of those currently attending any particular church will leave within the next five years.⁵ Can you imagine a family that lost 25% of its members in 5 years? Some leave churches because of major life changes, but many will leave because of restlessness or consumerism that says they should always be shopping for the best value for them and their family. Church becomes a service provider in a quid-pro-quo system. While this sounds right to a generation raised with the expectation of looking after one's own needs, the consumerism that rises from church to church competition creates an environment that falls far short of the family home anticipated in the scriptures.

This consumeristic system leads away from a family paradigm for the church towards a corporate business system. Rather than a church led by elders who care for the body in a benevolent manner, churches are led by CEOs and boards of directors. The issue here is that children often experience the loss of their beloved spiritual leaders when those leaders quit one church to take a more upwardly mobile position, or are forced from their positions because they are not serving the organization in a manner that satisfies the board, or seems organizationally efficient. Likewise, volunteer leaders often leave their discipling roles due to other interests inside, or outside, the church. Certainly, no one can be expected to stay in one place forever, but the relationship required for mentoring young believers has been drained as people frequently move into and out of these roles. The younger generation is left abandoned in their spiritual

⁵ Source <http://www.georgebarna.com/>

relationships too often. The business model church is no longer resembles a healthy familial relationship.⁶

So, as the church needs attention to improve the familial relationship, the family at home needs attention that much more. The health of the family needs to be addressed, but just as importantly, the goal of parenting needs to be reevaluated. From that appraisal, the role of the parent is sure to change, thus eliminating the dualism of regular life and spiritual life.

Theology of the changing family

Because of our perspective, it seems that the nuclear family has been the norm for the American household. We tend to assume it has always been normal that when people get married they would move out of their parents' homes and start their own family. Of course, there are exceptions, but the typical middle-class, American households consists of 2 generations with a mother, father, and a few children. In the last few generations, we can see that the nuclear family has been important in the spiritual development of children.

It seems that the predominance of this model is ending. We can complain about it, but there seems to be a trend away from a single normal family structure toward a variety of family structures. Some are raised by a single parent, or in mixed families with stepparents and stepsiblings. Many children grow up in more than one family, often represented by mom's family and dad's family. More parents raising children are unmarried, and there have become all kinds of alternative family structures. The nuclear family is fading.

In history, the nuclear family has not been the norm. The Old Testament talks about family structures of parents and children, but the normal reference to family seems to be that of the clan or the tribe (e.g.

⁶ Up to 23-percent of current pastors have been forced out of a previous ministry.

Genesis 49).⁷ The New Testament family addresses different structures for the family, looking more at the household as the main structure. Households were often headed by patriarchs, and included members by birth, by marriage, and by ownership. Slaves were included in their own way within the household.

As Christianity budded in the New Testament, many converts to the faith were rejected by their families of origin, which created a need for a new concept of family. Jesus introduced a new paradigm of family when he stated that his brothers and mother are those who do the Father's will (Matthew 12:46-50). This idea grows in Acts, and in the epistles as we see that the church is a family. At that time, spiritual relationships seemed to be just as important as biological relationships.⁸

The changing American family creates challenges, and opportunity to recover this idea of spiritual family. We need to recover familiarity within our local churches where the members choose to welcome other believers as family members. Family ministry should include a strong element of helping churches develop these sorts of relationships. The church needs to be the household of God, and the members live as brothers and sisters in ways much deeper than the American church has realized in recent years.

At the same time, the home family is important. In fact, it continues to be primary in its influence. People who raise children have the priority in time and proximity to preserve that influence. If our homes are not involved in the work of discipleship, the work of the church will wane. Whatever a church does in family ministry, it must involve the parents, somehow. Parents are still the primary spiritual influencers of their children, and this needs to be the major focus of any family ministry.

⁷ For more complete discussion refer to Lawson, Michael S. "The Old Testament Teaching on Family," In *A Theology of Family Ministry*. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2011).

⁸ For more complete discussion, refer to Melick, Rick Jr. "New Testament Teaching on Family," In *A Theology of Family Ministry*. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2011).

Why family ministry?

For better or for worse, families are the most influential and smallest units of culture. Children first experience the world through their relationships with their family,⁹ and, as they grow, they will continue to spend the most time within the cultural context of family. Because children spend the most time in their homes, parents have more influence over their children than any other people. This means that they have the greatest opportunity to help them learn to be spiritually strong.¹⁰ They also have the greatest opportunity to teach them bad spiritual habits. Worse yet, parents can create spiritual confusion by demonstrating inconsistencies between what they teach and how they live. Many young adults identify these inconsistencies as the reason they walk away from the faith, saying that religion is full of hypocrites.

The core issue is the discipleship of children. For decades now, discipleship has been relegated to programs within the church. Church-based discipleship is important, but it is incomplete. The problem is that when parents have the most time and influence in the lives of their children, and give up their role in discipling children, children perceive a discontinuity between faith and life. Parents giving up the spiritual side of their responsibility create children with a false dichotomy. They learn that the spiritual and the rest of life are separate.

This dichotomous outlook is not a forgone conclusion. Many parents and churches are working together to correct the discontinuity by joining the family ministry movement. Churches that develop family ministry will make a difference by bringing positive change in both home and body life. This is not a new program added to churches. It is a renewed mindset within churches and homes. It is renewed because this is not a new philosophy, but a return and rediscovery of methods tested over centuries.

⁹ Andy Crouch in the book *Culture Making* (Downer Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008) makes the point that the family is basics and primary in the development of a child's perspective on the world.

¹⁰ <http://blogs.psychcentral.com/yfactor/2010/04/modeling-behavior/>

CHAPTER 3



What is Family Ministry

Family ministry is a culture. It is a fundamentally different way of interacting as the church. In its core, it is holistic discipleship of the next generation of believers.

There is no single definition of family ministry, and a person comparing two churches might be surprised at how different family ministry can look. Family ministry is a movement, and it is growing quickly in momentum. It is missional. It is classically connected strongly to the past. In many ways it draws strength from both the Old and New Testaments. As such, many more traditional-model churches have begun to talk about family ministry. At the same time, many contemporary minded churches have seen a need for family ministry and are adopting the movement and the language. Certainly, the manifestation of the movement looks quite different between these two kinds of churches.

It is not a formula, program, or series of programs, but a paradigm. Its principles are developed in both biblical testaments. Family ministry is a way of relating to one another in the church, in the home, and in the world. In the Old Testament, many refer to the model of discipleship outlined in Deuteronomy 6, where the older generation is admonished to pass the Law to the children in both formal and informal ways. Many leaders refer to the New Testament in developing their family ministry models, as it talks about family relationship, and even the church as family relationship.

The charge in Deuteronomy 6 is not given specifically to what we would call the nuclear family. This passage was used by Israel as their creed of a sort. A daily recital reminded them of the priority of God, and the necessity of passing the story of faith on to the next generation. Today, we might expect that this passage is meant for parents because it talks about “your children;” however, that would assume a Western way of looking at the community. Deuteronomy 6 is important for parents as they are the ones present in a child’s life, in the normal activities that are mentioned as prime discipleship opportunities. On the other hand, this passage is spoken to Israel as a whole, and demands that all of God’s people be involved in the passing of the faith from one generation to the next. The normal process for sharing faith is relationship. When all God’s people join in the passing of faith from one generation to the next, the church becomes the family that we see in the New Testament. This is consistent with many teachings of the New Testament that blur the lines between the family and the church. For example, Matthew 12:46-50 says that Jesus’ mother and brothers are those who do his will. The practice of referring to one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord confirms this attitude along with a preference for leadership being given to those who lead their family well (1 Timothy 3), since the church is more like the family than a business.

Family ministry empowers the people of the church (the church family) to do the ministry of the gospel through familial relationship (Ephesians 4:11). It creates ongoing discipleship within the home and in the church. While the trend over the past few decades had been to develop churches that attract unbelievers into their midst with the hope of seeing them come to salvation and then join discipleship opportunities within the church, the family ministry model puts discipleship first. The idea, although not formalized, is that the church is the bed of discipleship. From the discipleship of those in the church, the young are disciplined, in home and in church. The work of the disciple is to reach out to those who are not yet disciples.

Discipleship within the home is a key part of family ministry. It would seem that any ministry would be incomplete if it did not include at least a challenge for sharing the faith at home. At the same time, family ministry

is most effective when it understands that the church is an extension of the family.

Family ministry and men

The family ministry movement is in all corners of the church. While churches will need to contemplate ministering to many without fathers, there is an important place for fathers in the family. We highly recommend that all churches work to strengthen men spiritually. Men, and particularly fathers, play an important role in the spiritual development of children.

While it is important that spiritual gifts and roles be clear as they are a part of the discipleship of the next generation, it is also important for the next generation of men and women to see healthy men as part of their families and as part of their churches.

Here are some ways that churches can encourage men to take a strong role in the discipleship of their children:

- Offer strong role models from within the church. Let men see other men who lead.
- Provide Bible studies for men. Men often respond better to studies that focus on action, or that include elements of deeper learning. They want to know more about the text and to feel accomplished in what they know.
- Provide opportunities for men to be with other men. Many churches find morning is a good time for this. Men often like to share a cup of coffee before the workday begins. Form from these meetings natural accountability relationships to challenge one another to continue in spiritual growth and leadership in their homes.
- Control the church calendar. Avoid offering things throughout the week. Men who work all day sometimes feel rushed when they get home at the end of the day. Evening church programs added to an already busy schedule could become a reason for resenting the church.. Contemplate a church calendar that restricts church

events to one weekend day (usually Sunday), and no more than one other night of the week.

- Men are often active learners and receive discipleship more readily through projects. Develop short time frame projects for men to be involved in, and encourage teen boys to share a role in those as well.
- Encourage older men to mentor younger men.
- Remember, not all men fit the stereotype of the typical man, so allow men to learn and grow in different environments without feeling like they are less manly.

Family ministry and women

While men continue to lag women in church attendance and other matters of faith, much of the decline in spirituality includes a decline in women's interest in faith. A 2011 report shows that women's church attendance dropped by 11-percentage points from 1991 to 2011. Men's attendance also dropped in this period, however, with the increased number of women who do not practice their faith weekly, their numbers are now approaching the numbers of the men. The data also shows that women are now as unlikely as men to read their Bible regularly.¹¹

Just as men need encouragement to be strong in their families, women need to be encouraged as well. Consider implementing these ideas to empower the mothers and women of your church.

- Show women that women can lead. Even if your church believes that there are restrictions on formal roles women can take in the church, there are many ways that women lead both at church and at home. Offer women who lead in your church a platform to reach other women.

¹¹ <http://www.barna.org/faith-spirituality/508-20-years-of-surveys-show-key-differences-in-the-faith-of-americas-men-and-women>

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- Mothers tend to stay home with young children more than fathers. They need breaks. Provide a ministry that allows mothers of preschoolers a way to get adult time.
- Develop Bible studies that encourage interaction on a personal and emotional level. Women often learn better when connected heart to heart.
- Avoid sermons that overuse sports analogies and masculine language.
- Ensure that women's voices can be heard so women do not feel belittled. Chances are that you have women who are leading aspects of your church. Recognize that fact publically.
- Help women feel safe. Institute child safety and abuse protocol.
- Choose parent-training programs that validate women who tend to be more sensitive in their implementation of rules and expectation.
- Watch the calendar. Mothers are often going many different directions throughout the week. Adding more expectations to their calendar may drive them to a point of resignation. Even when the church offers programs with the hope that many women will appreciate them, give permission for overburdened women to feel OK with not participating.
- Encourage older women to reach out to younger mothers. Younger women often want mentors, but feel they will burden others if they ask for help.
- Remember, not all women fit the stereotype of the typical woman, so allow them to learn and grow in different environments without feeling like they are less feminine.

Family ministry and the single

Too often, people presume that family ministry excludes singles. This is not true. A strong family ministry will carefully plan to include singles. There are two kinds of singles that need to be considered. The first are the singles with children. This seems intuitive as they certainly represent

a family, but often they are overlooked as churches design programs that, while not intentional in their exclusion, can look very welcoming to a two-parent nuclear family and, thereby, seem exclusionary to the single parent.

Do not lose sight of the second type of single adults when designing your family ministry. That is, adults who are single and have no children. While it is obvious that this group exists, too often they are lost in a family ministry plan. The result is that many churches with strong ministry to families have very few ministries for singles, and therefore few singles in their body. This is a shame as it presents a false view of the whole of the body of Christ. God is just as interested in the discipleship of single adults as any other demographic group. In many ways, this group needs the family connection they get through the church more than the other groups.

Here are some practical considerations for including single parents in the family ministry of your church:

- Offer support, including counseling and support groups for single parents. Few parents are single because they wished it that way. Most have had significant burdens in their lives: a death of a spouse or a broken relationship. Consider programs like Divorce Care and Grief Share.
- Avoid applying any statements of guilt on divorced single parents. While divorce is not preferable, and many have a theology against it, applying guilt after it has happened does not serve either the parent or the child well. Consider how you could disciple the parent in a loving way. While sin may have led a divorced parent to this place, do not imply that being a single parent is a sin.
- Offer support to the children of single parents. Many children also feel the burden of loss that leads to single parenthood. Divorce Care for Kids is a great program for children of divorce. Check local groups for grief groups in your area.
- When designing family events, pay attention to the structure so that you do not require both parents for participation. If you do have an activity or event that requires two parents, plan to inform single parents ahead of time and prepare an alternative plan for them. However, this type of event should be done infrequently,

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and in a manner that does not lead these parents to feeling like they stick out.

- Prepare mentors in your church. Single parents often need to teach their children things they would otherwise have learned from a spouse. Mentors can meet with children regularly and should fill the gap left by the missing spouse. Pursue people who are interested in long-term relationships and are willing to spend the time bonding. These relationships can start with very practical matters like a man teaching a boy how to tie a Windsor knot, or a woman teaching a girl how to braid hair. Teach all parties that these are mentors for the child, not substitute spouses for the parent.
- Minister to the grandparents who frequently assist in raising children.

There are many practical ways that a church can include unmarried individuals in a family ministry church. Here are a few considerations:

- Lift up single leaders in the church so that those joining your church do not feel marriage is a requirement for full membership.
- Create a group where these individuals can meet. This should be a discipleship based group without pressure for members to feel like they must find a date through the group.
- Encourage families to invite singles into their home regularly. Single adults need to feel welcome, and do not always have the resources to invite families to their homes.
- Provide care and a positive disposition for single adults who return to live with their parents. This is becoming more common, and does not have to be seen as a shortcoming of the adult child. There are many good reasons for an adult to live with parents, but there are also different kinds of relational concerns that must be addressed for both the adult child and the parent.

Finally, too often people in churches assume that it is God's plan for everyone to be married. There is no reason to assume this to be true. In fact, the Scriptures demonstrate that, in many cases, God's plan for singles is for them to remain single so they can serve him without the burden of a family. Make this known to your adult singles. Let them feel comfortable

with where they are in life. Some of them are single because they want to be that way and never hope to marry. Others are single and hope to marry but have not found that opportunity. Either way, your responsibility is to love them where they are, and to help them to find God's calling in that place. Singles are valuable in the Kingdom of God.

Family ministry, the empty nest, and senior

The church family includes another group who is often overlooked when considering family ministry. That is the people who have passed the child rearing days, empty-nest adults and seniors. Family ministry needs these people, and these people need the youth and children of the church. Sadly, worship and discipleship styles have segregated our age groups such that the older people of the church often have little contact with the younger people. This is a problem for the church. Let us consider some ways that family ministry plans can include the older generations.

- Encourage natural grandparents to be involved in the discipleship of their grandchildren. Grandparents can enhance the work that busy parents are doing, and often make excellent, safe role models.
- Teach new empty nesters how they can continue to support and train their now adult children, whether they live in their home or on their own. This will likely look different from when their children were still dependent on their parents.
- Support empty nesters in their transitions. Pray for them and find coaches to help them move through these stages.
- Encourage elders to demonstrate their wisdom gained over years as they guide children within the church. This will keep them young in their relationships while it gives the children opportunities to learn from senior members of the church.

Family ministry and adoption

Adoption is a consistent theme of the Bible most clearly seen in God's adoption of those who believe as his children and the heirs of his Kingdom. As this is true, churches should demonstrate it to their body through their family ministry plan. Consider the following ways to demonstrate God's adoptions.

Create an adoption ministry that encourages strong families to be foster homes or to adopt children legally. Develop support structures for those families

Teach families to spiritually adopt children into their family as they take in those whose parents are unwilling or unable to lead their children in discipleship.

CHAPTER 4



Leadership in Family Ministry

God does not call leaders to have great vision. He calls people to follow his vision. Yes, he gives gifts with the purpose of leading others. The New Testament talks about offices that are positioned for strategically guiding the church. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are charged with preparing the people for the work of the church (Ephesians 4:11-12). The Old Testament talks about ways that God called people like Moses, Jacob, Gideon, David, and Solomon into places where they would be leaders of Israel. But, he did not call these people to develop their own visions. He called them to be followers of the vision that God himself would provide.

When Israel needed someone to guide them out of slavery in Egypt, God called Moses. However, Moses did not lead the nation. He was a spokesperson for God who was leading them. Moses did not know the path out of town. He, like the rest of the nation, followed a pillar of fire and smoke. God provided manna in the desert and water from rocks. He used Moses for these things, but Moses did not lead in discovering these things. He followed God one step at a time.

If you read the accounts of most of the Bible's human heroes, you will find a common theme. When the subjects of Bible stories led on their own power, they led people away from God's plans. For example, Rehoboam, in exercising his own vision, caused the people of Israel to rebel as he enacted

his plan for heavy-handed leadership. However, when a hero follows God's command, things usually go well for them. Gideon's story demonstrates this as he followed God into what seemed to be a crazy military tactic of shrinking his army, but proved to bring victory.

In Romans, Paul provides a list of gifts paired with a challenge for those with the gifts. The gift of leading is included in this list.

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; **if it is to lead, do it diligently**; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.* Romans 12:6-8 (NIV, emphasis added)

Too often, Christian leadership is misunderstood. People think of leaders as the "head rat in the barn", or the person with the ideas for change. The Greek word that is translated "to lead" in the Romans passage gives a different connotation. Another translation for *proistemi* is "to care for." It does not seem appropriate to substitute the modern idea of visionary leadership in this passage. Rather, we should look at leadership as a matter of caring for those one leads.

The leader's job, then, is to care for the people. Leaders do care for people by following God in the change that he creates. They are the mouthpiece behind the change, but, more clearly, the leader is the caretaker of the family of God much in the same way that the father or mother cares for a family in their home.¹² The Apostle Paul seemed to value this kind of leadership as he reminded the Thessalonians what his work with them looked like- "Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you" (1 Thessalonians 2:7b-8a).

An essential in the development of family ministry is to model the principles. Effective leaders will model this in their own homes by being

¹² Gene Wilkes in *Jesus on Leadership* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1998) makes the point that church leaders may want to adopt other models of leadership but the parent or shepherd are accurate, viable, and scriptural.

spiritual leaders first to their own families. Second, they model the principles by recognizing their leadership in the family of God. While many would have the leaders- especially a leader in a time of change- maintain a CEO kind of role, this does not favor the kinds of change that a family ministry leader will want to encourage.

The role of the leader is as a parent to the church family; seeking the best for those who follow and caring for those who are unable to care for themselves. As a parent, leaders play a role of nurturing.

One practical way that leaders nurture the people of their church is to develop tight relationships with those in their care. To be effective they need to be hospitable. Through welcoming others into their homes and into their lives they will achieve three objectives. First, they can spread the word of their passion for, and the importance of, the family in the spiritual development of the next generation.

Second, as the leaders welcome others into their home, they demonstrate how healthy homes work. Presuming that the leaders are leading their own family well, their family becomes a testimony to the people of the church. This is a heavy pressure to put on a leader, but it is a biblical expectation (1 Timothy 3:4) and it makes sense. Some may object, saying that this creates pressure for children to perform, but the expectation is not in the good behavior of the children- rather it is on the leader as the one who teaches the children. Children shouldn't be measured in the consideration of this principle. Only the attentiveness and activity of the one who would be a leader should be evaluated.

A benefit of a hospitable leader is that by welcoming people into the leader's home, the family of the leader will grow closer with the members of God's family. Many recent studies have shown that young people benefit from multiple mentors beyond their parents. Sharing experiences as a family with other people of the church creates a context for the leader's children to find mentors and to develop those relationships. Further, it helps to develop a common style between mentors and parents. This will help the leader's children to grow in their faith and the expression of their faith. Welcoming others like this will have cyclical returns as the stronger family is a model to others who can then become stronger as families.

Of course, there is an endless list of people who leaders may want into their home, but people are busy. Therefore, leaders should focus on organic relationships that strategically lead to stronger families and Christian fellowship.

First, leaders look at developing relationships with people who are already interested in family and inter-relational discipleship. These people can help develop and spread the concepts. Second, welcome other families. Leaders can start with existing friendships, but work to develop the friendships of other families, paying specific attention to single parent families.

Next, leaders can develop relationships with the older generations. Create in those relationships a feeling of extended family. Widows and widowers can be excellent extended family for the leader and the leaders' children. Getting them on board with the ideas of family ministry will be important. Those without children in the home can easily see family ministry as a draw away from their needs, rather than a benefit to the church.

As leaders follow God into leadership, it is important that they lead their families and the family of God well. Leadership, therefore, is consistent obedience to God in following his laws and following him into the call of nurturing the family and the congregation.

Gaining support

Change doesn't happen because one person wants it. Organizations change when people receive a vision (hopefully God's vision), and that vision spreads from person to person. Similarly, change seldom comes because a board of directors is sold on a vision. Boards can be a part of change or a hindrance to change, but leaders don't expect that they can move into a boardroom, give a sales speech, and walk out with a whole new church. Even if the board votes "yes" on their idea, there is much work beyond their approval before a church will be moved in a new direction. This change of direction will result in a change of culture. When church

leaders become sales people, they undoubtedly lead out of selfishness, not godliness. A godly leader allows the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of others. Sometimes this happens quickly. Sometimes it happens slowly.

People change at different speeds. Early adapters jump on an idea often before it is fully articulated. Most early adapters just want something new. They always want something new, so they hear a breeze of change starting, quickly run out, and begin blowing with the wind to see if they can create a tempest. Risk isn't scary as long as the early adapter feels they are on the front end of something new.

Middle adapters are not afraid of change, but they want to see that it can work before they will join the process. Some are excited to hear about a coming change, but are cautious as they watch to see if the idea has the promise they had desired. They want to see at least one story of success before they go forward. Other middle adapters don't understand what the change on the table is about. It is not that they are against it; they just don't understand the idea. The third group of middle adapters just don't hear what's going on. They are busy in their own lives and activities and cannot track the changes around them.

Next, we have the late adapters. These are people who will join the change, but not until everyone else is on board and they risk being left behind. Sometimes these people work out of fear of the unknown. Other late adapters just really like the way things have been. For good or bad, the late adapter feels that the existing system, or maybe the last system, represents the peak performance. Change won't help to raise the peak; it threatens it. So it takes them time to understand that the movement is here to stay, and once the path is made clear, they are willing to go along.

Then, finally, there are the never adopters. These people don't like the idea and cannot be encouraged to join. Usually, these folks give up. If the church leadership is lucky, they will leave when they give up. If they don't, they will stay but maintain a passive-aggressive mind to the change that comes to the church.

It is important to remember that there is nothing wrong with late or never adapters. They aren't bad people, or stupid, or stuck in the mud. In some cases, in fact, errors by the leadership can be the cause of their

resistance. Accept these folks for who they are, and minister to them with grace and love.

There is a YouTube video that went viral after the 2009 Sasquatch music festival demonstrated the difference in pace of change acceptance. (This video can be seen on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA8z7f7a2Pk> at current publication.) In the video, people sit on a hillside enjoying music from the stage. In the center of a grassy area, one young man is alone, dancing. His dance is not conventional and seems to be something that he is making up as he goes. Most everyone else seems to ignore him in the beginning. Some people point at him with wonder and doubt.

As he continues, a second young man joins him. The second guy is the first follower. Having two dancers doesn't make the dance better. Really, the second guy may even make it worse, falling down and jerking around in a way that draws some additional negative responses. But his participation seems to give courage to a third guy who joins. Once there are three, a hand-full of others join. Then, amazingly, once the group numbers about a dozen "foolish" dancers, they don't look like fools any more. (At least, not to the folks at the festival.) It becomes an exciting draw for many. People start running from all parts of the hillside. They cannot wait to be a part of this movement. Soon the original dancer is lost in the mob. Despite the fact that many are running a great distance to join the dance, some of those closest to the original action still sit, unwilling to be move. People jump right over the top of them. At least one person gets up and runs the other way. Eventually people are dancing all around those still sitting there, and the dance becomes the normal posture for the festival. Those still sitting are now the outcasts.

This might be one of the best visual images of how a culture changes, how a movement starts. In three minutes, you see illustrated what is likely to take years to happen in your church, if you are willing to make it happen, and if you listen to the Lord encouraging you to do the right things along the way.

If you think that you can plan a family ministry and launch it at the beginning of your next ministry cycle, you might be disappointed. Unless

your church culture is already trending toward family ministry, the amount of work that you'll have to do to turn the culture boat will be too much. There are things you can and should be doing now to start the process. We will walk through this with you in the next section. However, real, equipping family ministry must anticipate the long, constant work of culture change. Family ministry grows as people follow. It will grow with the faithful work of the church leadership.

Stating objectives

People often need to know where they are being led before they will feel comfortable joining. As leaders are educated and familiar with the vision, they will be prepared to accept the new direction. In itself, the term “family ministry” means nothing, or it can mean something different to many people. It needs to be clarified, and the vision behind a change to a family ministry model needs to be defined. People will join and share the vision as they understand it better.

As the leader, you need to clarify the terms and talk about the model of ministry that you are developing. Definitions of several models of family ministry are available in the next section. You will need to know which model you are perusing, and help others to see that model. Next, it is important that you are clear with this objective. The first step in being clear to others is to be clear to yourself. The second step is to write that on paper in a brief but complete statement. Because this whole process is a discipleship processes, and by that a learning process, we suggest that you use learning objective language.

In creating objectives, use active verbs. Active Training by Mel Silberman gives great direction on writing learning objectives. Because an element of family ministry discipleship is learning, start with the ideas and terminology that educators might use in creating objectives. Do not stop with cognitive learning in this model. Consider the three kinds of learning Silberman identifies: affective learning, behavioral learning, and cognitive learning. Affective learning deals with the emotions and responses.

Behavioral learning changes performance and action. Cognitive learning is the acquisition of knowledge.¹³ Limit your ministry objectives to 3 or 4 but work to cover the bases of the different types of learning.

Influencing the influential

To many, church is a sanctuary from a crazy world. They often will see change as a boogiemanager coming to take away the things that bring them peace on Sunday morning, or whenever they enter the church. Family ministry is not a big boogiemanager. In many cases, it is not even going to be a big change in the programming of a church. However, be aware, family ministry will seem threatening because it is a change of philosophy and culture. It is a change in what is driving the church.

It is because of this threat that it is crucial for those leading a change from program-driven ministry towards family-discipleship ministry to have a good team behind them. One of the most important steps in developing that team is to get key influencers behind you.

More often than not, the first people to introduce family ministry to a church are youth pastors or a children's director. These people see great benefit in getting parents behind the discipleship of their children. They see value in introducing young people to the generations of the church; there is, of course. However, their senior pastors have a lot on their plates already. Yes, they like that their children's and youth leaders are excited about doing more for the children, but they don't always want that something to interrupt the other plans of the church. Senior pastors, elders, and boards of directors are already burdened by messages that tell them they need to be missional, simple, seek-driven, arts-orientated, contemporary, classic, gen-X, gen-Y, prayerful, or whatever other church model is the trend for the day, or just the trend for a group of people in their body. To many leaders, family ministry is just one more thing. So, in their mind, they will support it as long as it doesn't interfere with their other objectives.

¹³ Silberman, Mel. *Active Learning*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. 1998) p. 38-39.

So, the question becomes- how do you gain the support of the influential people and senior leaders of the church? Here are some considerations.

Identify Advocates

Developing family ministry is changing a culture. Culture changes start with a few and grow naturally until many believe the vision. It is important, then, that leaders find people who are already active in the components of family ministry and help them to become spokespeople. Advocates multiply the influence of the leader by giving a testimony of the trustworthiness of the vision.

Don't assume that because someone nods in agreement with you over coffee that they are on board with the vision. People, especially church folks, are often agreeable when they want to avoid conflict with a passionate leader. They may agree with your passion, but have no idea what you mean and what changes are required. Instead of coffee-shop agreement, look for those who are retelling your vision to others. Encourage them as they share that message. Allow them to introduce alterations.

While advocates can be from part of the church, there is a need to get some leaders on board in a timely manner.

Model Family Ministry

Within the programs that you already have, model this new sort of ministry by creating nonthreatening intergenerational opportunities, and connecting with the home. Teach your advocates to express to others the benefits they are seeing. In reality, family ministry is a bottom up discipleship, so the growth of the vision is best from the when many from all positions in the church are engage in the practice.

In the next section on the types of family ministry, you will find specific examples of how you can build a team and model different elements at each

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step of ministry development. You will need to address each step according to your church context.

CHAPTER 5



Family Ministry Models

Every church needs a clear model of family ministry as members work together to build a better disciple-making plan for the next generation. Before developing a plan, it is important that the family ministry leaders choose a clear model, and work consistently toward developing that model. Switching between models or emphasis will create confusion, and lead to wasted time and energy.

There are many models of family ministry, but there are a handful of basic practices that church leaders need to consider in developing a model. A final model will likely include a combination of key practices. These practices are outlined below.

Relational church-based ministries connected to home

Discipleship is the strongest when it is developed through relationships with other believers. Over the last several decades, churches around the country have grown and relied on age-grade educational ministries for the discipleship of children and youth. Youth ministries began in the post-World War II area. Children's ministries became a focus of the church in the 1970's and 1980's. Both peaked in the late 1990's and 2000's.

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Age-graded education ministries have benefited many. Their strength is the ability to transfer concepts to young people in an age-appropriate manner. Their main tools were developed from educational science known as pedagogy.

The weaknesses of this discipleship model have been the loss of interpersonal relationships, and the disconnection of generations. Too often, children and youth ministries have been developed based on conveying information, but have missed the discipleship goal of building relationships that model following Christ in daily activities. By their very nature, age-graded ministries divide the church. Children wings, a youth building, men's classes, and women's Bible studies have become common place, leaving young people with few opportunities to witness their parent's faith, or even the faith of other adults in action. Therefore, children and youth develop and expect that church is their age group and nothing more. Further, by creating a path where they never see their parents in discipleship, they learn to expect that Sunday-school teachers talk about spiritual things and their parents talk about home things. This dualism needs to be reversed.

Mark DeVries attempted to correct this path when he developed the idea of family-based youth ministries. His model connects parents to the discipleship process of their children, and develops avenues for youth to connect relationally to their parents and other people of the church. He followed in the footsteps of Larry Richards and has been part of a budding new field of study that is continuing to grow.

Relational church-based ministries build on this work. The discipleship priority is to build healthy bonds between children, youth, and adults so that the younger generation experiences mature faith. Rather than developing classroom teachers out of all those interested in working with young people, the relational church-based ministry divides the teaching duty from mentoring duties. Programs consist of a time of large group teaching, but the bulk of the time is spent in smaller discipleship groups. In these groups, mature adults have a goal of sharing life and building relationships. They are not re-teachers of the materials. They are relationship bridge builders.

Second, the relational approach goes beyond the basic communication with parents, as in the age-graded approach. In the age-graded approach, parents would typically see a take-home sheet from the child's class, or be involved in practicing verse memorization. Parents of youth would be informed of important dates and program bulletins, but discipleship would be limited to the work with the church or church agents. In the relational church-based ministry approach, the church leaders (i.e., youth pastors, children's directors, volunteer leaders) work to connect with the parents more consistently, and do so by sharing discipleship information. This might include questions for the parents to help the youth leader, and it includes communications to the home with helpful discipleship information.

Here are a few practical steps to developing a relational church-based ministry connected to the home.

Create and share a vision statement for children and youth ministries that emphasizes the relationship first, and modeling Christian life second.

Develop a parent communication system that includes regularly informing parents of teaching topics, and practical ways that the parents can engage their children at home.

Teach, empower, and encourage children and youth volunteers to be in continued contact with the parents of their small group of children.

Parent educational ministries

Churches need to engage in the training of parents. One of the major barriers to effective discipleship of the next generation is the lack of discipleship in the previous generation. In the past, communities were close, and extended families interacted more readily than they do in this generation. The result is that today's parents struggle to know how to parent. There are thousands of books and resources on parenting, so the availability of help is not out of reach of these folks, but the messages are confusing and impersonal. Few parents have good experiences or advice

to help them apply the parenting principles that they learn through books and other media.

Parents need help. Churches can help through the development of parent education ministries. These ministries vary in structure, but the common element is that parents will receive instruction to help them in their parenting duties; this training can come through large seminars, smaller church-based classes, small groups, or mentoring programs. Parents are most interested in help with the day-to-day issues. This is where the training programs should start, but the core of parent training is to get them to think beyond addressing day-to-day issues with simple solutions. Parent education should help parents to understand and address the spiritual issues that affect daily behavior and attitudes. Teaching a heart approach to parenting demonstrates the solutions parents are looking for by giving them tools that are long-term in effect.

The barrier to an effective training program is the busyness of parents. They may want help, but they struggle to find the time to participate in anything beyond their normal schedule. This issue will require creative solutions applied in specific churches.

Consider these practical steps to begin parent education:

Advertise or deliver email parenting tips. The National Center for Biblical Parenting has these tips and they are free. Register at <http://www.biblicalparenting.org/parentingtips.asp>.

Hold a onetime parenting seminar. This can be held by a nationally known trainer like the National Center for Biblical Parenting. It can also be held by regional trainers or by personnel within the church. There are many resources to help schedule or develop parent training.

Develop small groups that focus on parent support. The National Center for Biblical Parenting has DVD resources or books that can help these groups. There are a number of other ministries who also develop resources.

Family therapeutic ministries

Many families are unhealthy. Churches can be effective tools for returning families to emotional and relational health. As the field of Christian counseling grows, more churches are creating programs to make care available to hurting families. This is a controversial element of family ministry, but a worthwhile part, nonetheless.

Christian counseling, pastoral counseling, and family coaching are all tools available to churches to help strengthen families. These are not the solution, but they offer support for those families that are not able to even contemplate the discipleship plans without extra care.

There are practical steps for churches to develop therapeutic ministries to support families. Here are a few.

Introduce lay ministry programs like Stephen Ministry.

Create a fund for families who need, but cannot afford, professional counseling.

Create office hours for pastoral counseling, and staff those hours with qualified counselors.

Intergenerational ministries

The family calendar is crazy. Church calendars have done little to help this issue. Church programs often take the families to different corners of the building, or schedule different age groups at different times and places. All this too often leads to a generational segregation of the family. Children often cannot name adults in their church beside their parents and program leaders. Youth often feel, and welcome, isolation from the rest of the church. The result is that we are moving to whole churches that specialize in ministry to specific age groups. The result can be a church calendar that tears the family apart.

There are many things churches can do to reverse this trend. Some churches go to the extreme of canceling any ministry that separates the ages. Others are less drastic, including reorganizing the weekly schedule

of church events. Whatever a church does to address the generational segregation issue, it is important that churches at least identify how their programs and calendars are contributing to the issue. Here are a few ideas for how churches can help reunite the generations of the body.

Have one common calendar for the church that all department heads consider on at least a semi-annual basis. Review the busyness of the typical family and where segregated events can be minimized.

- Create service projects that invite participation from all age groups.
- Redesign mission trips that had been planned for specific groups within the church, and develop new trips that include all ages.
- Create several family worship services for the upcoming year.

Family time Bible learning

Bible training does not have to be on the weekends alone. Family home Bible times are a great opportunity for children to learn and to bond with their parents spiritually. In fact, by holding regular family Bible training times, children learn the scriptures while families grow closer. These times are biblical and practical as the children will learn to see their parents as spiritual people.

There are many good resources available to help parents with this task. Kirk Weaver runs an organization focused on developing tools for parents to use in home devotional times (<http://www.famtime.com/>). The National Center for Biblical Parenting distributes several books with family activities that parents can use for object lessons during these times.

You can help your parents to develop family times by following these ideas:

Publish a list of current family time books that parents can easily find and use.

Create family time activities that connect with the children's lessons for each week, or that connect to the sermon.

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Ask parents to commit to family time each week. As part of the commitment, challenge families to create accountability agreements with friends.

CHAPTER 6



The 4 Components of Family Ministry

We believe that developing a family ministry is more about process than program. The process begins with a vision, and requires discerning leadership. It is also important to understand and appreciate the good work and research done by others. Once you've clarified your vision and dealt with leadership issues, you will want to evaluate your current situation and determine how to move forward.

We've developed a tool that we call the **4 Components of Family Ministry**. It serves as the basis for the process of developing a family ministry strategy. These levels, or "components", serve as a window, which enables us to look into the home and observe the key ingredients of family ministry at work. These are not levels in the sense that we build one level at a time; they are all equally important. We'll look at these 4 Components and then we'll introduce our **Family Ministry Assessment Tool**. This tool will help you evaluate your strengths and weaknesses in each level.

Most churches start with church-based programs for children and youth. Other churches have been able to grow in all of the components. Christ Chapel Bible Church in Fort Worth, TX is working extensively on all four components. They've developed an analogy that helps parents and church leaders communicate in a common language. It's based on a baseball statistic called "hitting for the cycle." When a player hits for the cycle, he records a single, double, triple and a home run in the same game.

Family Ministry and Children's Ministry Leaders at Christ Chapel use this terminology when talking about the 4 components of family ministry. They encourage parents to hit lots of singles as well as each of the other types of hits in order to cover all the bases!

What are the 4 components of family ministry? The components are (1) providing engaging children's and youth programs that are relational and connect to the home, (2) offering parent training programs, (3) empowering all generations to worship, serve, and learn together, and (4) equipping parents to be spiritual leaders in their homes. In later chapters we will break down these components in more detail, but let's define them a bit before we move on.

Providing children's and youth ministries is a standard of most churches in North America. We propose that these ministries should be more than separate silos, or departments, within a church's structure. As churches redesign these ministries to support the family, we encourage them to develop the relational aspects of the ministry so that the church members learn to take new roles as spiritual mentors. This will be a big step for some churches, and a small clarification for others. Secondly, children's and youth programs become more family oriented when there are clear connections between the ministry in the church and the homes of the children. These connections can be formed through a variety of avenues, such as offering parents a point of connection to the message being taught to the young people, or through inviting the parents into relationships with those who are leading the children and youth.

Our second component is providing training for parents. Many parents are divisively disconnected from the mentoring types of relationships that once were used for transferring parenting skills from one generation to the next. This component addresses new paths to making this transfer. This is a distinctly different component from the fourth, equipping parents to take spiritual leadership in their homes, although this second component will connect to that goal. The two components are different in that this second component is still predominantly an in-church ministry, and may include training that goes broader than specifically dealing with spiritual training. Parent training can come in a variety of venues and relationships, but it

is important that it is made available to most of the parents within the church. The training may also be an excellent tool for opening the doors of the church to unchurched people in the community.

Our third component is the creation of intergenerational engagements in ministry. Much of spiritual development is learned from observing the more mature practice their faith. It is not necessary that all experiences be intergenerational, but we believe that some must be. In this component, we help churches to develop a plan for connecting the generations in their most meaningful environments.

Our final component is equipping parents to take spiritual leadership in their homes. We will offer some practical ideas on how parents can do this and how churches can help them to take that leadership. In some ways, this is a more abstract component to the other three, as beyond some helpful tools it means turning leadership over to parents. It requires parents to grow in their understanding of both their family's context and in the application of the Gospel.

While all of these components can add to a family ministry, churches should consider the most strategic areas for their focus. We do not recommend that most churches begin developing all four at once without a clear plan to phase in the elements. This would be too much change to handle at once and may bring about instability that can lead some people to reject the idea of family ministry in large measure.

Family: God's Vehicle for Faith Transmission

There's no greater mission field than your own family. Passing the faith on to the next generation is imperative. Kids need to understand how to apply the faith to their lives now. Who better to teach them than their parents? Some parents, however, believe that they have fulfilled their job of spiritual training by taking their children to church or a Christian school. Although these may be helpful, children need to understand their faith in practical daily terms, and that happens at home.

Parents pass their faith on to their kids, no matter what that faith is. If it's an unnoticeable faith, one that isn't demonstrated at home, then that's the faith they're teaching their children. Children in these kinds of households learn to control when they are spiritual and when they are not. When parents integrate their faith into all of their lives, their children become more spiritually healthy. Kids learn at home how to put faith in action. They learn how to deal with conflict, learn ways to experience grace, love, and forgiveness, and how to persevere in the small things of life.

Even in Christian homes today, kids are choosing to leave their faith when they graduate from middle school or high school. Those who choose to carry their faith into adulthood are those who've seen faith practiced in relevant ways. Some people assume that this is a result of the world pulling them out of their beliefs, especially as they are tempted by peer pressure or anti-religious teachers, but this isn't necessarily true. In fact, many studies are beginning to show that they leave their faith more because they are pushed from it by internal forces. While it may seem that peers and professors coax young adults away from their faith, it's more likely that they are walking away because they feel pushed out by ridged religious structures. Drew Dyck makes this point in *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults are Leaving the Faith and How to Win Them Back*.

Kids, just like adults, must grow in their faith, but children experience God differently at each developmental stage. Preschoolers may learn how to pray out loud, but in the elementary years get to know God as friend and Father. In the later elementary years, kids learn more about what grace and forgiveness are, and thus enter into a new dimension of their personal relationship with him. During the teen years, young people develop their own value systems and build convictions about life. As they understand God's plan and how he designed life with rules that govern life, they're able to appreciate God in new ways.

If, however, parents overly rely on an early conversion experience of a child and that faith isn't nurtured, then kids can grow out of their faith, believing that their earlier experience was childish. Each person must experience God as life unfolds in order to fully embrace the beauty and relevance of the Christian life.

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God established parents to be the primary spiritual trainers of their children. Dad and Mom act as the tour guides of life, pointing to God's character lodged in every aspect of life.

CHAPTER 7



The Family Ministry Assessment Tool

How do we go about assessing the strength or weakness of these 4 components of family ministry? This is a challenging endeavor. In the long run each church will want to set measurable goals in each area, and then gauge progress toward these goals. In the absence of such goals, we will assist you in working through a process to evaluate the relative strength of your ministry.

We spend a good bit of our time consulting with church leaders about family ministry. I am always amazed at how easily we usually zero in on the most important component for each time and context. This follows a general discussion of the 4 components. We encourage you to do something similar, but a bit more formal, with your leadership team. You'll want to take the following steps.

Discuss each of the components and what is currently being done in your context to grow in these areas. You may want to require that each member of the team read the chapters in this book that describe the 4 components. If you come up with a substantial list of things you're working on, you will likely score this relatively high on the scale we'll discuss in a moment. If you can't list much of anything, you'll want to record a lower score.

Take each of the 4 components in turn and have every member of your team rank your relative strength in this area on a scale from 1-10. (10 being

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strong and one being weak.) Add the numbers together and divide by the number of members on your team. You will end up with one number for each component.

Now we have a score for your church in each of the 4 components of family ministry. This is certainly not a scientific number to be taken too seriously by itself. It is an evaluation of the relative strength or weakness of your church in each component of family ministry. What do we do now?

As in any process, we need the wisdom and discernment that comes as we seek the Lord through discussion and prayer. Throughout my (Ed) thirty some years in campus ministry with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, I would often be asked by students to speak on discerning God's will for one thing or another. We would also talk about this often as staff while we developed strategies, set goals, and create plans. When asked about discerning God's will or his leading, I would go right to Romans 12:1-2.

In these verses, the Apostle Paul urges his brothers and sisters to dedicate themselves to the Lord. He also exhorts them not to conform to the ways of this world, but to be transformed and have a new mind. He goes on to say this, "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2b) I've often said that God is more concerned about who we are than what we do. If our hearts and minds are right before the Lord and we are seeking him, the discernment will surely come. This is especially true when brothers and sister are seeking the Lord together.

Now, having said that, we do want to give you some practical direction on how you can move forward. First, you are going to want to take time to discuss and pray over the results you received through using the Family Ministry Assessment Tool. You are going to want to think through the following.

Are there any glaring weaknesses that should be addressed as priorities in your planning?

Are there areas of strength that come out of the giftings or passions of your body that should be built upon? We often focus on our weaknesses and forget to maximize the use of our gifts. The Lord gives us gifts so that we can use them!

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What is the greatest need right now in your body, or in your community? Don't try to work on everything at once. Start with one, or at most 2, of the components and set some measurable goals. Then develop a couple of specific plans that will move you forward. The National Center for Biblical Parenting (among others) has family ministry consultants who can assist you as you plan. Growth will require time and is accomplished through a process.

CHAPTER 8



Practical Ways to Transform Current Ministries into Family Oriented Ministries

When people think of churches today, they probably think of these things in a similar order to this list: a building where people meet on Sunday, sermons, music, children's programs, and youth groups. When parents are looking for a church, they will often check out a website or ask around a community to discover the quality of the children's and youth programs. Parents are concerned for the children's well being, and the quality of the programs for their kids may be the single biggest factor in why a family joins or leaves a church.

Children and youth programs are important for churches. These programs were developed for a reason. As the church institutionalized in the post reformation era, the church overlooked the needs of the young. They were not growing in knowledge because there was no structure that addressed their learning abilities. Young people are concrete thinkers. Much of Bible teaching in adult environments is abstract, and can elude the mind of a child or lead to confusion. As people have studied the way children learn, the church wisely has developed tools for teaching children. These tools are typically used in children's and youth programs.

For these reasons, most churches have programs for young people. This fact is independent of the family ministry philosophy of the church. It is important for family minded churches that the programs in place

complement the work of the church and the home. Further, these programs will work to connect the church with the home. Here are some practical things that church leaders can do to improve the family-friendliness of their children's and youth programs.

First, as church leaders, you can be an encouragement for the home. Children's and youth program leaders are not in competition with parents. They are working on the same team for the benefit of the spiritual growth of children. You need to speak positively about the work that parents do at home.

Second, you can develop ways to connect to the home. A church cannot tailor a curriculum to work in every home, but the church can deliver elements of the curriculum to home. Begin with sending monthly emails or handouts home with descriptions of what children are learning. Include in that communication some clear, simple ideas about how parents can share the work in teaching these lesson at home. This is important because it begins the transition of discipleship from church to home. It legitimizes the parents as part of the discipleship process and gives parents, especially those who do not know how to do this work, a tool to connect on a spiritual level.

The third way that children's and youth programs can become more family friendly is by creating a culture to complement the home by making mentors available to the young. Young people need mentors beyond their parents. To make this happen, leaders will need to train people to serve in the ministry, connect with the student on a relationship level, and to keep contact with the student's family.

Equal to training leaders to mentor students, the parents need to be trained in this process as well. The greatest benefit of good church mentors occurs when they are consistent with the message and values taught in the child's home. This becomes the parent's responsibility as they help the church mentor to know and understand their child. This works well when parents invite those who work with their children at church to dinner and to be a regular part of the family. When parents befriend potential mentors, the mentors become more aware of the child's needs and can improve their work with that knowledge.

It Takes A Church

The role of the church is paramount. But a broadening of the understanding of the discipleship mandate is essential. Many churches view their job as disciple makers of individuals. That is definitely true. Adults, youth, and children need spiritual training, and the church has a commission to meet that training need. But to stop there is short sighted.

Churches equip parents. How does one work out their faith at work, school, and at home? As churches teach parents how to work with their children and equip them to pass the faith on to their kids, parent do a much better and more complete job.

Discipleship means people take Jesus home every week, learning to live life in the context of their individual lives. Children and their parents learn what it means to be godly in practical ways. Churches need to look for new and effective ways to help dads and moms fulfill their responsibilities to pass the faith on to their own children.

Today, parents often spend a lot of time, energy, and money getting their kids involved in sports, music, and educational options to enhance potential. Many of those children grow up with talents and abilities that empower them to be successful. But God defines success differently than the world does. Many of those talented, well-educated, and skilled children grow up to be adults that lack the internal character and spiritual development to handle their fame, fortune, and popularity.

Many young people today grow up to be successful in the world's eyes, but are unhappy, unfulfilled, and unsatisfied inside. Instead of drawing on the spiritual resources they could have learned growing up, they rely on substances, wealth, or power to try to meet those inner needs. Their own families then experience tremendous pressure, and a negative intergenerational cycle develops.

God has a better way. When parents pass the faith on to their children, kids learn what living for God looks like in practical ways. They experience God's grace on a daily basis, and understand the peace that God provides. Success has more to do with a right relationship with God instead of accomplishments or the approval of others.

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The 4/14 Family Challenge 90-Day Adventure is a way to encourage people of any age and all life stages to be a part of the great commission. An emphasis is placed on passing the faith on to the next generation and facilitating communication between parents and children. This adventure is a tool used by churches, schools, and families to grow in the area of discipleship by encouraging the passing on of the faith to take place in the home.

CHAPTER 9



Practical Ways to Train Parents

In this day of fragmented family and high pressure for success, parents are often overwhelmed by the monstrous task of raising their children. It's difficult, and parents are not properly prepared. The church can fill this gap by providing ongoing training for parents. The books stores are filled with parenting books. Each author has a different philosophy. Some are more proven than others. Some are more consistent with the ministry of the Gospel. The problem is that parents do not know how to judge good advice from bad, and they do not have the time to do the research. In that case, it is time for the church to lead the way by developing a plan to train parents. Parents want help, and they need help.

It is time to help parents raise up their children in a heart-based approach. The principles of such an approach will help in mundane issues, but it begins with discipleship and the spiritually eternal results.

Training comes in many forms. The National Center for Biblical Parenting offers resources for churches including seminars, books, and small group materials. The effective parent-training plan will consider all of these in the right time. Each has its benefits and difficulties. They are outlined below.

Expert Seminars. Seminars are taught by experts—people who have dedicated themselves to learning the needs of both the child and the parents, and have developed a plan for addressing both. Bringing in a top

trainer will draw the maximum number of parents and they will get useful advice and solutions to their problems. However, in most seminars there is a limited opportunity for questions and answers.

The limitation of these seminars is that they can be costly and the information given is broad. Without follow-up help, some parents will struggle to apply the tools in specific situations. Time limitations will keep some parents from attending. Some of these limitations can be overcome when a church follows up a seminar with a small group, or discussion time, in the weeks after the seminar.

Pastor-led Seminars. Pastor seminars or classes are usually developed in-house, and often by using one or more key resources. Pastors or other educated leaders can use these to pass information on to parents, and to develop a philosophy of parenting. Pastors hear and interact with parents as they present the material. They also know many of the individuals and families so they can address specific needs and specific questions.

The downside to pastor seminars is that many pastors are busy people and have little time to research the issues that parents face. When pastors do invest the time into this study, it is often at the expense of other potential ministries, or highly needed rest. Pastors can draw many, but there can be a problem drawing broad audiences because some will look at the pastor-led seminar as more of the same kinds of teaching. Pastors would be wise to pick a philosophy and source of information to stick with throughout the seminars. Too many influences will serve to create uncertainty, and confusion of material.

Books. Like seminars, parenting books are written by experts who have researched their topics. They are generally inexpensive, often less than \$20 per book, and can be passed from person to person. When groups plan to use books for discussion, members can help one another to understand and apply the information. A book can be a reference for a parent to use in searching out help with specific issues.

However, books also come with limitation. Interaction with a book is all one directional. Seldom does the reader get to ask questions of the author, leaving application and understanding in the hand of the reader. The time and ability to read a book is variable. Some parents struggle

with learning from books. When left to find books on their own, parents can become confused, often failing to search beyond the first listings on Amazon. They also run the risk of confusing their parenting styles by introducing too many competing philosophies. Church leaders should make clear recommendations and work to introduce parents to groups where they can discuss what they learn in parenting books.

DVD Curriculum. DVD curriculum can be used as a hybrid of the expert seminar and the book. An effective DVD curriculum will contain the kinds of information found in a book, but presented in a visual format. These seminars can be led by pastors, church leaders, or small group leaders. This allows for personal interaction about application of the material, if not with the author, at least within the local church. DVD curricula are not as expensive as a seminar.

Some people will struggle to feel they are getting good value by watching TV in training. This is because it is difficult to meet a broad range of learning styles through the curriculum. A DVD curriculum will need to be enhanced by active involvement of the leader. The local presenter should work hard to know the content before the group meets, and to anticipate questions that may arise.

Once a leader or team has understood what kinds of tools are available, the timing of the training is important. It is wise to use multiple tools over a variable timeframe. If it is about seminars, these should be offered throughout a calendar year, but on a variable time schedule. If a church only offers parent seminars on Wednesday evenings, only parents who are available Wednesday evening will be able to participate. Further, it is wise to vary the type of offering to make sure all learning styles have access to the parent training.

CHAPTER 10



Practical Ways to Develop Intergenerational Ministries

Division in the church is dangerous. Many churches have developed relational agreements to protect unity. Sadly, many have also created structures that guarantee division. This isn't division rooted in disagreement but division of ages. The development of children and youth ministries, when those ministries are the only church context for the young people, divide the church structurally.

Social studies are beginning to see that this division is a cause of young people leaving the faith when they have no context of church beyond their peer groups. For this reason, the third level of family ministry is to develop the church across generations. There are many ways that generations can be bridged.

Some churches blend their worship services for all or most ages. There is a movement of churches that have gone to a complete inter-generational model in worship. Children and youth are a part of all worship experiences. This is certainly one option. Other churches have chosen to incorporate children in the musical worship portion of their weekly worship services, with special "all church" services a few times during the year. Some do this only for holidays, while others have family worship to begin or end the school year.

Some churches are developing new ways to blend the ages in their small groups. These groups welcome the children with the adults for sharing,

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prayer, and even Bible study. I (Ed) will be leading a family small group this fall at our church-plant in New Jersey. We'll have 30 minutes all together for a family worship experience. This will include a Scripture passage with a key point for the lesson. The lesson will be brought to life using a creative activity or object lesson. The children will then go to a separate area for some playtime while the adults have a parent support group session. These activities serve as a combination of components 2 and 3!

Churches are successfully restructuring their mission trips so that rather than having a teen trip and a separate adult trip, all ages are invited to go together. Missions trips are effective tools for discipleship because they get us out of our familiar context and routines. We are forced to trust the Lord in new ways in an unfamiliar culture. If you add an inter-generational component, young people and adults will be working and learning together. There will be time to build relationships and serve together in ministry. This can also be accomplished through local service projects, work projects, and other activities designed to bring the generations together.

Part of the culture shift we've been discussing involves thinking differently about children and young people. We often view them as "future" members of the church when in fact they are already members of the body of Christ. One way that we can treat them as full members of the church body is to help them discern and use their talents and spiritual gifts in the body. This can mean being involved in worship, outreach, service, prayer, and other ministries of the church. This takes an intentional plan as well as a change in our way of thinking.

Crossing the generations requires creative solutions and patience. Churches that break down the walls and immediately expect all generations to mix will face pushback, dissatisfaction, confusion, and, even, loss of membership. While many look to the pre-1960s church as a model for cross-generational ministry, leaders need to be mindful of the fact that our culture is different, and it is not likely that churches can, nor should, become the old church of our grandparents. Wise church leaders will consider their culture and context in creating intentional bridges. This will mean training people, young and old, in the importance of the other generations.

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We often think that young people will need the bulk of the training. Research indicates that young people have a desire for the involvement of caring adults in their own lives. They are also on a journey to establish their own unique personal identity, so they may seem foreign to some adults. Adults need to be challenged, trained, and encouraged to bridge the culture gap and develop meaningful relationships with young people. Mentoring relationships will develop as relationships form as opportunities are right.

CHAPTER 11



Practical Ways to Empower Parents for Leading Their Families Spiritually

Many churches have developed a structure resulting in the expectation that paid staff and top leaders will do most or all of the discipleship work. This model grows out of the priestly tradition of the middle ages, and can grow from the consumerist mind-set of Western economy. When the church staff is treated as a priest, there is often an expectation that only the highly-trained, seminary-graduate leader can disciple other people. The consumer church expects that if the people are coming and putting money in the offering plate, they have kept their end of the bargain and owe nothing more. The church then owes them service in a sort of quid-pro-quo arrangement.

The structure grown over generations but does not necessarily represent how God has designed the discipleship process. In Ephesians we see the appropriate roles of the church leadership and the church membership.

Christ, himself, gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith, and in the knowledge of the Son of God, becoming mature, and attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then, we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every

wind of teaching, and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. (Ephesians 4:11-14)

Church leadership has a very important role. That is to develop all the people of the church into ministers. The passage is often used to encourage folks to sign up to work in the ministries of the church on Sunday mornings. This is a fair application of this passage, but it is better seen as an encouragement for the church to develop people who will minister wherever they spend their normal days. Where is that idea more naturally imagined than to think that all parents would be empowered to minister in their own home?

The goal of Component 4 is that every parent would be a minister at home. There are a number of challenges facing parents as they attempt to accomplish this goal. Parents are very busy people in our fast-paced culture. For single parents, or those dealing with children with special needs, this is only magnified. Many parents don't feel like they have the tools or the training to minister at home. Church leaders must provide parents with the training and resources necessary to lead in their homes. Since parents are also disciples, this is an opportunity to lead parents by a measure that includes holding them accountable for their training of their children.

Kirk Weaver, founder of Family Time Training, is often heard saying "activity is the language of children." This is one area that we can train and resource parents. Kirk is the author of six Family Time Activities Books that give parents everything they need for a creative weekly family time. There are other resources available to parents and it is our job as leaders in the church to make these readily available to parents.

The 4/14 Window Movement is a global mission dedicated to reaching the next generation with the gospel. One of the numerous tracks being pursued by the movement is the Family Challenge Track. In many cases, the best way to reach and disciple the next generation is through the family. Much of the passion and zeal in this movement is coming out of Asia, but it is spreading around the world. Dr. Scott Turansky is the regional catalyst for the 4/14 Family Challenge Movement in North America. This movement seeks to gather like-minded leaders in an effort to identify and develop new strategies and resources.

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One new resource that has been developed is called the 4/14 Family Challenge 90-Day Adventure. The challenge is simple; yet, going on this adventure with others provides needed encouragement and accountability. Parents are challenged to set aside 20-30 minutes each week for a family time. 13 weekly family times are provided, which include a Scripture, key point, and an activity to reinforce the lesson learned. There is also a challenge for both young people and for any adult. The idea is to help parents get started with family times, and allow spiritual discussion to become commonplace in the family.

The movement is also establishing regional conferences where local leaders committed to the Family Challenge will gather together. The problem with many conferences today is that they generate excitement, but don't help you continue on after the conference is over. The 4/14 Family Challenge Regional Conference isn't an event. It's a process. Pastors, Family and Children's Ministry Leaders, teachers, and parents gather on a regular basis to work together on strengthening families and helping parents pass the faith on to their kids. Ongoing working groups, resources, and dialogue within the leadership of the city will facilitate long-term support for families in New York City. This conference is about establishing a collaborative network of family ministry in a city or region.

CHAPTER 12



Conclusion

Christ Chapel Bible Church in Fort Worth, TX is working on all 4 of the components of family ministry. They have come up with a creative way of communicating this with the parents in their congregation. Jeff Walchshauser (Family Ministry Pastor) and Kathy Burr (Director of Children's Ministry) have taken the lead in developing this tool. It's based on a baseball analogy called "hitting for the cycle." I (Ed) am a baseball coach, so there was an immediate connection for me. For those who don't follow baseball, hitting for the cycle means that a player gets a single, double, triple, and home run in a single 9 inning game. It is not a common occurrence, but a highly prized goal. The best players can produce each of these types of hits given the pitch and game situation.

At Christ Chapel Bible Church, hitting a single is regular and consistent involvement by the parents with the programs and content of the existing children's and youth ministries. Parents are challenged to engage with the material and the programs, thus hitting many singles. This is the first component that we have presented in this book.