

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A Four-fold Church Strategy for Training Parents to Teach
Spiritual Formation at Home

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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December 16, 2014

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the many that have made this project a success, I owe a debt of gratitude. To my publishing partners Kurt Bruner and Jim Weidmann, a thank you for your valuable family-focused input. To the greatest people a pastor could ever want to shepherd, a thank you for our thirty remarkable years together. To my children and grandchildren, you are a living example to me as to what family ministry is all about. To my life's partner Gail, your daily encouragement is immeasurable.

Indeed, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you all!

ABSTRACT

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary 2014

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A FOUR-FOLD CHURCH STRATEGY FOR TRAINING PARENTS TO TEACH SPIRITUAL FORMATION AT HOME

The purpose of this project is to aid church leaders toward understanding the dynamics of family ministry: what it is and what it is not. Having written five books for Focus on the Family and David C. Cook addressing the role of the church and family, this author has successfully transitioned his church from the traditional family ministry, (families in the support role of the church) to placing the church in the support role of the family: strengthening God's family by strengthening theirs. Based on surveys, evaluations of each individual family's health, historical and cultural documents, resources, and actual case studies, this thesis will delineate the principles and strategies that have proven effective for driving faith home. The church should then be effective in implementing a sustained ministry to parents who are intentionally passing their faith to their children.

139 Words

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem and Limitations

The author has been interested in family ministries through the local church for several reasons. First, he was raised in a pastor's home and saw the benefits of a strong family ministry from his father, Reverend Lloyd Ledbetter, who pastored churches in the Baptist Bible Fellowship. It benefited his own life, as well as the lives of his brothers and sisters. Then, the author and his wife have followed certain principles for their own family of one boy, and two girls, raising them in a pastoral ministry, and seeing all their children and grandchildren continue to serve the Lord. Third, the author has worked in and pastored local churches that have weak family ministries and has seen negative consequences in the families in some of those churches. This has motivated him to build a biblical family church ministry. Also, the author has served in denominational offices for the Baptist Bible Fellowship, and as a faculty member for Pacific Coast Baptist Bible College, San Dimas, California, where he worked with a number of churches related to that educational institution. He saw some churches that needed a biblical family ministry, and also ministered to other churches with family ministries.

As a result, the author has spent his life struggling to build a strong family ministry in the churches he has pastored. Out of this struggle has grown his authorship of five published books. These books are a result of his collaboration with Focus on the Family¹ and the

¹Focus on the Family provides relevant Christian advice on marriage, parenting, and other topics.
www.focusonthefamily.com

internationally acclaimed Dr. James Dobson, who focused on strengthening the American Christian family through his radio program.² The books were written to encourage families to pass their faith to the next generation, and not necessarily intended for an organized family ministry within the local church. The goal was to create a para-church movement where a quarter million families would engaged in teaching object lessons called family nights within their homes at least once a week. That goal was reached much more quickly than the authors anticipated. The success could easily be attributed to the eventual partnerships with other national and international ministries. It was not until more recently that it was understood that the principles found within the books could indeed be the foundation of a strategic family ministry program. The culmination of that possibility happened in May 2014 when Dr. Elmer Towns³ dedicated the family ministry resource center in the main lobby of this author's church.

Out of the above circumstances and passion, the author entered the Doctor of Ministry program at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Lynchburg, Virginia. One of his intents was to write an extensive thesis on the need for and description of a biblical family ministry program for local churches.

The author will use the following five questions to guide his research and writing. When each of the questions is adequately answered, the author will conclude the chapter with a summary and conclusion. The five questions to guide this thesis begin by asking what research is available on the current cultural crisis facing the American biblical family and its influence on local churches? The next three questions, all addressed to the local church, start with asking what are the biblical principles for a local church to follow in establishing a family ministry and

²James Dobson, Family Talk. <http://drjamesdobson.org/about/James-Dobson>. (accessed October 28, 2014).

³Elmer Towns, Meet Elmer Towns. http://elmertowns.com/?page_id=27. Lynchburg, VA. (accessed November 4, 2014).

what are some illustrations that describe that ministry? Continuing with the local body, what are the potential contributions of a biblical family ministry program to a local church? Following up with the third question to the local assembly, what are the potential negative influences on a local church that lacks or has a weak family ministry program? The last of the five questions guiding this thesis is what principles can be learned from the church survey of this study, from the Bible study directed by this study, and by the examination of both positive and negative influences on family ministry on local churches? These are critical questions that need answers before embarking on the journey toward an official, successful family ministry. Following up the answers should be the overarching question: what are the potential negative influences on a local church that lacks or has a weak family ministry program?

There are obvious limitations to this study. The above five questions will be a major focus, and guide the author in the search for answers concerning the ministry of the local church to the American biblical family. However, the following limitations must be noted.

To be sure, the topic of family is so broad and so diverse that no thesis and/or dissertation could begin to plumb the depths of this study and come up with any specific recommendations. The principle of passing a spiritual legacy can be found in virtually all religious traditions, but the author advocates his own religious framework as a strong foundation upon which to build a spiritual heritage. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to focus on the biblical (Evangelical) Christian family.

The author is committed to the biblical inerrancy of the Scriptures as reflected in the doctrinal statement of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.⁴

⁴His church also agrees with this statement, therefore he is focusing on ministry to families that are committed to the Word of God. This commitment must be expressed by the local church, i.e., in its attempt to follow the dictates and biblical commands of Scripture to have a ministry to families and in turn, the family must be committed to the commands of Scripture, that it wants to follow Scripture and expose parents and children to a ministry that comes from the Word of God.

Not all Christians fit into a biblical model of the above doctrinal statement. There are some church groups that take away from biblical inerrancy, and some add to it. It is the author's purpose to focus on *sola scriptura*, "only the Scriptures."⁵

Consequently, there are some groups that appear to give lip service to the Word of God; they have added conditions for salvation. These are usually called cults, or non-Christian denominations. Obviously, the author will not study in these areas, nor will he seek documentation and/or information from these sources.

However, there are Christian organizations that take away from biblical Scripture such as those who say they believe the Bible but not in plenary inspiration. These groups are usually called liberal Christians, or modernists, or other such designations. Obviously, if the Word of God is not the final authority in belief and practice, the author would not seek information and/or research concerning the biblical family ministry for a local church.

There are several agencies in local churches that target age groups (i.e., age groups that would include ministry to members of the family), but not focus on the total family. This thesis will target family ministry inclusively, not ministry to members of the family separately.

It has become very popular among evangelical churches to have a children's ministry. While this agency is needed and can be documented from the Word of God, it is not the intent of the author to examine churches that have a children's ministry even when their ministry is grounded on the Word of God. The same could be said about youth ministry, men's ministry, and ladies' ministry. While these ministries are needed and necessary, all of the above focus on

⁵James White. "The Bible has answers, we'll help you find them" (2002) The phrase *sola scriptura* is from the Latin: *sola* having the idea of "alone," "ground," "base," and the word *scriptura* meaning "writings"—referring to the Scriptures. *Sola scriptura* means that Scripture alone is authoritative for the faith and practice of the Christian. <http://www.gotquestions.org/sola-scriptura.html#ixzz3QL6BeMIC> (Accessed January 28, 2015).

the individual and on many occasions minister to the individual apart from connection to a local, biblical family. The focus of this study is on local, biblical families.

Again, contemporary literature identifies a local church with the phrase, “church family,” or the “greater church family.” The first title refers to all members of local churches who are in fellowship with that local church. While the phrase “church family” is meaningful and communicates a certain insight about a local church to the reader, the purpose of this study is not to study the interaction, makeup, and/or function of members of a local church who are called a church family.

Sometimes the phrase, “greater church family,” refers to both members of a local church and others who have chosen to attend and/or worship with that congregation. This might include young people who are not yet saved, and/or baptized; therefore, they would not be members of a local church. While the biblical family is speaking of a generic family, the purpose of this thesis is not to examine the broader interactions of a general church family.

Theoretical Basis

The family is the primary institution created by God to pass the faith to the next generation; however, this paper will show that the statistic on attrition from the Christian faith of children raised in a Christian home is staggering. It will also corroborate an even more staggering statistic--the large percentage of parents that know spiritual training of their children is their responsibility, but are willingly abdicating it to the church. Meanwhile, churches are struggling with trying to create a compelling vision, effective programs, and high participation for their ministry. The root problem this author has found in his and other ministries is parents are not taking on the primary role of the spiritual training of their children--furthermore, the church is not equipping them to do so.

Every problem has core obstacles that are at its root. In order to identify solutions, this paper will first spend time defining the problem and core obstacles. It is the opinion of this author that when that is done, solutions will be obvious. Therefore, it cannot just be stated that there is a problem. The root causes must also be uncovered.

The church and family cannot work separately from each other if God's people are to be successful in passing their faith to the next generation. One cannot have a strong church without strong families; neither can one have strong families without a strong church. Therefore, the link or connection between the home and church is critical to the success of their (not dependent or independent) interdependent relationship. The interdependent link is conditional. If the church provides education, training, and community that strengthen its families in their relationship to each other and to God, then it will result in its families' involvement and commitment back to the church's ministry outreach.

In order for these two important institutions to work together, each has to have some sort of a strategic plan if success is going to happen. In order for the successful alignment of these two institutions, it is critical that church leadership look at three areas of the church: its vision and strategy, its supporting organizational structure, and required financial commitments to execute. Family ministry needs to become a part of a church's vision and strategy or it will not be able to secure the staff and dollars needed to drive impact. It will be this author's intention to show that family ministry is not another program, although it is programmatic, but rather a ministry unlike the other targeted group ministries, in that family ministry strategy should be super-imposed over the entire organizational structure to help carry out the mission and vision of the church. Each ministry should constantly and consistently ask itself the question, "How is what we are doing impacting the family?"

Statement of Methodology

As the author approaches this topic, he will use the following methods to research, gather data, form a hypothesis, then test those hypotheses by formal, logical and biblical criteria, and finally arrive at principles.

The first research was a survey conducted by the author among students of the Baptist Bible Fellowship and Southern Baptist Convention at Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri.⁶ The author distributed more than 300 questionnaires and received 216 responses. This survey did not reflect the entire American database but it reflected students in churches within the fellowship of the author. These results became an illustration for, and gave direction to, the author for his continued study. The main conclusion of this study is that the survey pointed to several problems that local churches have in biblical family ministry. These problems are seen in Appendix B, the Conclusion, and also will be listed in Chapter 3 under the heading of “Modeling Faith in the Home.”

In the second survey, the author used the help of Survey Monkey to solicit pastors on a private list. There are about 250 pastors that have been invited to be on the list. Only 50 responded to answer the questions about the strength of family ministry in their respective churches.

Third, the author surveyed the church he currently pastors with an evaluation of the strength of the family in his own congregation. This survey will help his family ministry team to better serve the congregation as well as strengthen the families within the church.

Fourth, the author used several search engines available on the Internet to look up the topics: “family problems,” “crises in the American family,” and “reasons that determine family

⁶Baptist Bible College. Springfield, MO. <http://www.gobbcc.edu/>

problems.” As a result of searching these issues on the Internet, several other topics surfaced.

The three previous topics are akin to looking at a forest as a whole, but the following questions are an examination of individual trees: What are the barriers that keep fathers from passing their faith to their children at home? What negative affects does an absent father have on the children receiving a spiritual heritage? Historically, does the Sunday school ministry carry any blame for parents abdicating their responsibility to teach their children to the church? How important is “Family Ministry” to the average local church? What is the health of families within those churches? What does a family ministry “scope and sequence” look like? Can family ministry become a church growth strategy?

The next step in the author’s research was to examine articles in referred journals, and read contemporary books written by authors from the academic community and/or those who have produced a study from research and/or survey. Note that the author did not look at all problems in the American family—the issue is too extensive to examine; rather, he only deals with issues that face the American Evangelical Christian family and/or the American biblical family. The five primary books that the author consulted were: *Church + Home: The Proven Formula For Building Lifelong Faith*,⁷ *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church’s #1 Priority*,⁸ *It Starts at Home: A Practical Guide to*

⁷Mark Holman, *Church + Home: The Proven Formula For Building Lifelong Faith* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2010).

⁸George Barna, *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church’s #1 Priority* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003).

Nurturing Lifelong Faith,⁹ *A Theology for Family Ministry*,¹⁰ and *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples*.¹¹

Beyond the scholarly and research books, there are a great number of popular articles written by pastors offering self-help for the family.

Review of Literature

Books

When this author began to pastor and began to see the need for a strong family ministry in his church, he realized there were few books written and few authors or publishing companies willing to produce such literature. He also realized that the church he had begun pastoring had two distinctive characteristics that were mitigating factors in its growth both numerically and spiritually. The church was unhealthy and unhappy! This author found himself counseling more and more. The counseling he noticed had to do with the dysfunction of the family units within his church. Therefore, instead of spending a large amount of time giving advice to individual after individual, he would prepare a sermon series and perhaps write some essays that would help families strengthen themselves. All of this activity eventually turned into a family ministry within his church, and resulted in the five books he has written and published.

In the general church marketplace today there is a heightened awareness within today's church community that a family ministry is essential for the health of the local church. There is now a plethora of books and articles available to anyone wanting to research the subject of

⁹Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope, *It Starts at Home: A Practical Guide to Nurturing Lifelong Faith* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010).

¹⁰Michael and Michelle Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011).

¹¹Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011).

family ministry. This author has selected a few of those books and articles that have influenced his material for this thesis. Over the last few years he has noticed a heightened awareness for family ministry, thus this paper will rely not only on his previously limited resources for research but will add the numerous new materials introduced in the past few years. All this together will make for a solid study of what makes a strong and healthy family ministry.

George Barna's book *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions*¹² reveals a common mistake made by parents and churches which is to warehouse the children and wait for maturity to set in so the child can reason. On the surface this may make some sense. However, Barna's research points out that the moral compass is set within a child at an early age thus making an "intentional effort" to pass the faith to their children a must. Waiting too long may be a dangerous gamble. Thus, as the author writes, "the answer is for churches to recognize the need to come alongside parents to provide them biblical worldview training, parenting information, counseling, etc., that will equip them to help their children become the spiritually mature Church of tomorrow."¹³

J. Otis Ledbetter and Kurt Bruner make the point in *Your Heritage: How to Be Intentional About the Legacy You Leave*,¹⁴ that if a family ministry is going to have success, there must be tools available to accomplish the task. This book gives the parents and the church a set of three evaluations for each congregant. These evaluations appraise the strength or weakness of the heritage a person received from their parents. The book also provides a template so parents can chart a new course for the heritage they intend to pass to their children. Also a valuable component of this book is that it has a section titled "Priming the Pump." This

¹² George Barna, *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003).

¹³Ibid., 119.

¹⁴ J. Otis Ledbetter and Kurt Bruner, *Your Heritage: How to Be Intentional About the Legacy You Leave* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builder Books/Chariot Victor, 2003).

section is chock full of fun, doable ideas where parents and churches can springboard into the entertaining aspect of passing the faith to the next generation through unforgettable, non-boring, easy-to-do object lessons.

Then in the book *Family Fragrance: Practical Intentional Ways to Fill Your Home with the Aroma of Love*,¹⁵ J. Otis and Gail Ledbetter cite 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 as the foundation for the A.R.O.M.A. of a home. The authors help the reader understand how important it is for the atmosphere of the home to warm the heart, not tighten the stomach. The environment of the home is critical to establishing an atmosphere of love and acceptance where values and beliefs can be passed. By focusing on their A.R.O.M.A. (Affection, Respect, Order, Merriment and Affirmation shown in a home), parents can create a setting where their values can be caught and taught.

The definitions of the words to the acrostic are as follows. “Affection: The tangible sign of love, a consistent loving act of the will, openly and sometimes spontaneously displayed. Respect: Holding other people in honor so they may recognize their own true worth. Order: The act of managing and modeling godly leadership in the home, resulting in a resting place for the soul. Merriment: The atmosphere of enthusiasm, coupled with uninhibited laughter and noise. Affirmation: An established, clearly-held position declared as true.”¹⁶

In the must-read book titled *Church + Home: The Proven Formula For Building Lifelong Faith*, author Mark Holman not only tells his readers why it is important for churches to implement family ministry, but gives the church a simple blue-print (church plus home) and a workable plan to accomplish the faith at home task. The author helps the reader understand that values of faith and hope are more likely caught in the daily activities of the home than taught in

¹⁵ J. Otis Ledbetter and Gail Ledbetter. *Family Fragrance: Practical Intentional Ways to Fill Your Home with the Aroma of Love* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builder Books/ Chariot Victor, 2009).

¹⁶Ibid., 25, 49, 75, 103, 135.

a class with a roomful of wired children. This book includes everything needed to put faith back where it belongs: at home.¹⁷

J. Otis Ledbetter and Tim Smith in their book *Family Traditions: Practical Intentional Ways to Strengthen Your Family Identity* help the church to understand that traditions are the bearings upon which our faith glides from generation to generation. Today, traditions can serve as a backbone to the strategic plan for spiritual training within families. By creating spiritual milestones, parents can intentionally move their children through the spiritual growth process. As mentioned in the church section, it is the coming together of parent-led teaching times around a spiritual milestone first taught at home and then celebrated in the church that nurtures growth.¹⁸

Kurt Bruner and co-author Steve Stroope in their book called *It Starts at Home: A Practical Guide to Nurturing Lifelong Faith* gives this reader material that is helpful to the success of his thesis because it upholds marriage and family as the proving grounds for sustained success. It is a very present help to the pastor by challenging him to evaluate his congregation and to find exactly what the state of the health of the families in his congregation really is. It includes a 120-day marriage/family assessment—a plan and ideas for implementation of a family ministry. The authors also inject hope into their words by telling us that it is never too late to begin.¹⁹

These four authors, J. Otis Ledbetter, Gail Ledbetter, Jim Weidmann, and Janet Weidmann with their book *Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children's*

¹⁷Mark Holman, *Church + Home: The Proven Formula For Building Lifelong Faith* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2010).

¹⁸J. Otis Ledbetter and Tim Smith, *Family Traditions: Practical Intentional Ways to Strengthen Your Family Identity* (Clovis: CA: Heritage Builder Books/Chariot Victor, 2009).

¹⁹Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope, *It Starts at Home: A Practical Guide to Nurturing Lifelong Faith* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010).

Spiritual Passages identify the important times in the life of a child and help the parents and the church know how to leverage those milestone opportunities. Special times like baby dedications, baptism, first communion, purity talk, rite of passage, and a host of other suggested days and events can be leveraged. It shows how important it is for these issues to be taught in the home and celebrated in the church. There are plenty of places inside the book where parents can write their thoughts and where the authors give the parents a heads up on possible questions to ask and possible answers to questions their children may bring to the discussion.²⁰

In their book *Extending Your Heritage: Practical, Intentional Ways to Influence Your Family and Beyond*, Ledbetter and Scott speak to the people who are married but childless, as well as those who feel called to a single life and will not bear children. These people are part of the make-up of every church in America, and they wonder sometimes where they fit into the scheme of family ministry. The authors make the case that all are influencers of children. Whether as an aunt or an uncle, or perhaps a public/private school teacher or Sunday school teacher, they will find themselves extending their heritage to others with whom they have influence. A church should be ready to minister to and train this group of people to pass their heritage by extending it to those with whom they may have influence.²¹

In *A Theology for Family Ministry*, the authors help us understand that if there ever was a time when there needed to be a “theology” of the family, where the heads of families could understand their relationship between them and God, it is now. At a time when family is fighting about its roles and its definition, it is being further blurred by political correctness and cultural influences. The author says it well when he writes, “While the family may continue to

²⁰J. Otis and Gail Ledbetter and Jim and Janet Weidmann, *Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children's Spiritual Passages* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builders Books/Chariot Victor, 2009).

²¹J. Otis Ledbetter and Randy Scott, *Extending Your Heritage: Practical, Intentional Ways to Influence Your Family and Beyond* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communication Ministries Intl., 2005).

change into models that bring discomfort and angst to some of us, we rest in the assurance that God has a plan for those who live in any of these new configurations of what we now call family.”²² This paper will help bring clarity to the distorted definitions of how family is being redefined. The material in this book will serve the purpose of bringing the distorted definitions to the surface so they can be confronted.

Timothy Paul Jones writes in his book *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* that pastors and ministry leaders are struggling with how their churches can best equip families to disciple their children. His book helps lay out a plan to train the trainer, which goes right to the point of what family ministry is all about. This book’s material will help add good practical advice to the foundation the thesis has already laid.²³

Reggie Joiner wrote the book, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide*. The subtitle of this book says everything that needs to be written in this paragraph. When church and family collide (and a collision is exactly what generally occurs, as you will see), there is no end to the good that can be done to further the gospel from that collision. The author of this thesis will explain that, unfortunately, it takes a collision to destroy the long-held, divisive notion that the family should be subordinated into the support role of the church instead of the opposite.²⁴

When working together with the church being in the support role of the family, an evangelism strategy (that began with the crunching sound of a bitten “apple” in the garden) can be built that could change the entire church’s families’ world for Christ.

²²Michael and Michelle Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), Chapter 1, under “There’s No Place Like Home,” Kindle.

²³Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011).

²⁴Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009).

Articles and Authorities

A comprehensive article on the subject of family ministry is “The Problem and the Promise of Family Ministry,” by Brian Nelson with Timothy Paul Jones. This contemporary article will give the readers a glimpse of what is currently taking place within local churches today. It outlines the eminent struggles that lay either obviously or latently at the door of every neighborhood church. Indeed there are great promises with a strong family ministry as well as headaches which everyone should be aware of before setting out to build a family ministry.²⁵

Perhaps the guru of family, if there indeed is one, would be James Dobson. Because of the close working relationship of the author of this thesis with Focus on the Family, the reader will sense and feel the influence of Dr. Dobson throughout the contents of this thesis. There is no attempt at plagiarism, but Dobson’s teachings and perhaps some of his exact wording may come through this author’s words simply by association.²⁶

Anyone considering a family ministry launch within their church should read the article “Stickyfaith: Good Things Come in Threes” by Meredith Miller. This article shows that what some call family ministry really is not “family ministry” at all. Perhaps it should be called family triage where the church determines the priority of the family based on the severity of each family’s condition. It is often nothing more than a hospice for the families dying on the vine in their churches. The author of the article realizes that there are things that can be done to help the health of the family, but does not seem to be able to connect the dots to come to a sustainable family ministry that collectively ministers to each family in the church. The author

²⁵Brian Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, “The Problem and the Promise of Family Ministry” (2014), <http://www.sbts.edu/family/blog/the-problem-and-the-promise-of-family-ministry-by-brian-nelson-with-timothy-paul-jones/> (Accessed November 3, 2014).

²⁶James Dobson, Family Talk. <http://drjamesdobson.org/about/James-Dobson>. (accessed October 28, 2014).

of this thesis believes it keeps the family in the support role of the church instead of the church being in the support role of the family.²⁷

From start to finish the White Paper from “Family Ministry in Focus,” Heritage Builders Global by Jim Weidmann and J. Otis Ledbetter attempts to give the reader a complete guide for beginning, sustaining, and ultimately building a family ministry. Much of this author’s thesis will be based on this research during, as well as since, the writing of the “Family Ministry in Focus” White Paper. It is a valuable piece of writing for any church wanting to dive into the possibilities of family ministry for their church.²⁸

Every pastor who intends to champion family ministry in their congregation should be familiar with the information in this article, “A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement” by Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp. This article by a Harvard professor gives a detailed research study of the importance of parental involvement in a child’s life. The article covers school, family, and community connections. The community connections certainly include the spiritual component of a child’s family life. Churches can benefit greatly from the impact of this study. This would be a good research article for every pastor to have on his desk and in the hands of all family ministry staff. Family ministry is not a tool for churches to use to take on the parental role of children but rather to train the trainers to assume their parental roles they were given by God in Scripture.²⁹

²⁷Meredith Miller, “Stickyfaith: Good Things Come in Threes,” Family Ministry (2014) <http://stickyfaith.org/articles/good-things-come-in-threes> (Accessed November 4, 2014).

²⁸J. Otis Ledbetter and Jim Weidmann, “Family Ministry in Focus,” unpublished White Paper, Heritage Builders Global, 2005.

²⁹Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, “A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Community Connections on Student Achievement,” Connections (June, 2002) www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf (accessed October 23, 2014).

“Powerful Parents Transform Schools” by Great Schools Staff is an article that touts the power that parents have when they decide to get collectively involved with their children. The article lays out the chart one school distributed that tells how they responded to involved parents. The author writes, “If enough parents indicate interest in school improvement, administrators are usually willing to listen...Parent trainers like to use this example, called ‘Collaboration Counts.’”

Table 1 The Power of Parental Involvement

Collaboration Counts		
1 parent	=	a fruitcake
2 parents	=	fruitcake and friend
3 parents	=	troublemakers
5 parents	=	let's have a meeting
10 parents	=	we'd better listen
25 parents	=	our dear friends
50 parents	=	a powerful organization³⁰

This chart and the research material in this article could very well be used for the family ministry team of the church. An organized army of parents who care about their children’s heritage and legacy are indeed a powerful force.

³⁰Great Schools Staff, “Powerful Parents Transform Schools,” Parental Volunteers (2013), www.greatschools.org/improvement/16-powerful-parents-transform-schools.gs. (Accessed June 2, 2014).

Scriptural Basis

The following verses and passages deal with the command of God particularly to fathers and their responsibilities. The Scriptures show that the weight of passing the faith to the next generation falls squarely on the shoulders of the father. This author will bring these scriptural passages into pertinent areas of the thesis and show where they fit into the component parts of family ministry.

Deuteronomy 4:9 reminds us *why* we need to be diligent in teaching our children “lest we forget.” “Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren.”³¹

In the above verse, the parents are encouraged to take heed to themselves to be sure that what they are going to teach their children actually are virtues and principles of their own. It prohibits a “do as I say, not as I do” mentality. Remembering this evidently is not second nature to parents, this passage is a needed reminder.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is one of the premier passages on child rearing, and was given right after Moses repeated the Ten Commandments:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.³²

Again the reader is reminded that the commanded words are first to be in the heart of the father before it gets into the heart of his children. Children can easily see through the hypocrisy

³¹NKJV

³²Ibid.

of a parent whose actions are different from his words. This passage also provides a practical basis that will be discussed much more in depth in this thesis as to how to pass the faith to children. It is a perfect outline for the foundation of family ministry inside the church.

Just two chapters later after giving the pragmatic side of parenting, words that were used in chapter nine to instruct fathers crop up again in chapter eleven as a reminder of the practical manner in which the faith is to be passed from generation to generation. Deuteronomy 11:19 says, “You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”³³ Redundancy usually means importance. The redundancy here is not an accidental repetition, but a meaningful way to show the value of the statement. Family ministry needs redundancies to keep parents on track in passing their faith to their children.

Psalm 78:5-8 is another foundational Scripture about the importance of the process of passing the faith:

He decreed statutes for Jacob, and established the law in Israel, which He commanded our forefathers, to teach their children; so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children, then they would put their trust in God, and would not forget His deeds, but would keep His commands. They would not be like their forefathers--a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.³⁴

In this passage of Scripture the psalmist is stating the seriousness of the command to pass the faith from generation to generation. The writer even gives a graphic illustration of what could happen if there is failure: they would become stubborn and rebellious. The words “the children yet to be born” gives the reader the indication that life in the womb or future potential life is included in this command. This Scripture reports that passing the faith is a deterrent to becoming a generation without any faith. A solid family ministry needs to help parents see the

³³NKJV

³⁴NIV.

caveats of neglecting the command to teach their children. Again, it repeats the need due to human frailty for continuing to repeat God’s principles to live by so we “would not forget His deeds.”

The next two Scriptures are ones that most people perhaps would prefer to skip over rather than face their deeper meanings. Deuteronomy 5:9 says, “For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.”³⁵ Similarly, Exodus 20:5 states, “For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.”³⁶ These verses put personal responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the parents, especially the fathers, to be cognizant of the fact that their actions, attitudes, and beliefs have far reaching consequences: consequences way beyond their personal pleasure or pain. In fact, those consequences can tumble down three or four generations. It seems patently unfair that someone should have to pay for what someone else did in their past, but it is indeed a truism that affects every person.

Two Scriptures, written personally by Paul’s to his spiritual son, give great insight to the spiritual impact of a father. 2 Timothy 2:2 says, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” And 2 Timothy 3:14 says, “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.” This duo of verses points out that while the emotional and social components of training children should be honed carefully, the spiritual component is equally important if not more so. The sequence of the repetitive teaching and faith passing is clearly pointed out through these Scriptures. They should serve as

³⁵NKJV

³⁶Ibid.

an important reminder that the training of fathers through family ministry is critical to the spiritual success of his children.

The Apostle Paul encapsulates the definition of family in Ephesians 5:25-6:4:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. his is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.³⁷

This is an abbreviated version of what family should be and do. It perhaps could serve as the mission and vision of a church's family ministry, or at the least the catalyst for what and whom family ministry should serve. This thesis digs further into this Scripture in an effort to help expose what family ministry "training the trainer" is all about.

Psalms 127: 3-5 exclaims, "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate."³⁸ Parents are warriors! This warrior description of fathers/mothers in Psalm 127 is a clear indication of what is to be expected during the raising of children. Fathers are warriors shooting arrows in a specific direction for specific purposes. What happens when warrior parents get together and plan for the sake of their family and children is immeasurable. Family ministry needs to take notice of these warrior parents and offer them all

³⁷NKJV

³⁸Ibid.

the training and resources they can possibly muster. Outside of a strong, organized family ministry that focuses them on their God-given priorities, these warrior parents can potentially become part of a problem instead of a powerful solution.

Besides those passages of Scripture that emphasize the immense responsibilities of fathers, several verses focus on the importance of the intentional leadership of parents in general. One of those verses is the oft-quoted Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”³⁹ This Scripture is probably one of the most misquoted and misunderstood verses in the Bible about the process of raising a child. This thesis will shed further light on the subject of a child’s personality bent. Yes, we are to train up a child in the way, but what does “the way” really mean, and is that the only responsibility of the parent as far as this Scripture is concerned? The need for understanding the bent of individual children is a good way for churches to help parents know the difference from parenting one child as compared to his siblings.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 is a graphic illustration of what the atmosphere in a home can be like. “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.”⁴⁰

This thesis will point out that the atmosphere of the home is critically important. These verses go to the fact that believers are the aroma of Christ. The atmosphere we create around our persona will reflect that fact, whether it is a good atmosphere or a foul one. There is a

³⁹NKJV

⁴⁰Ibid.

parallel to be drawn from this Scripture both spiritually and physically. The question to be answered is “Does the atmosphere of your home warm the heart or tighten the stomach?”

Ephesians 6:2-3 is basic Family Ministry 101: honor your father and mother. It reads, “‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’”⁴¹ There are no prerequisites, no honor “if’s”; just “honor your father and mother.” Even a little preschooler can memorize this Scripture and follow it--or at least be reminded of it in tough family times. It, of course, cannot be left out of the resources of family ministry even though it is so simple.

Look at the love and caring that God pours into humanity in Psalm 139:13-16:

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.⁴²

What an intricate definition of what has taken place in the womb of a mother! Where it makes sense to believe that the womb contains only an embryo of human flesh, this Scripture says that God is in that womb also skillfully weaving the necessary parts to sustain life. The value this Scripture adds to the life of a child takes the parents to the depths of what it means to procreate. God has created something he has given the parents to manage. They will need help. They will need resources. They will need company on this journey. That is where family ministry helps smooth the potholes on the road to parental success.

Proverbs 1:8-9 gives us both a strong command and a blessing: “My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful

⁴¹ESV

⁴²NKJV

ornament on your head, and chains about your neck.”⁴³ This is another simple verse of Scripture packed with meaning. It contains instruction for a child concerning both parents. The father is to give instruction; the mother has laws or principles she is to share and that the child is to hear and not forsake. Often this is easier said than done. When instruction is not heeded and principles are forsaken, the family is in need of help! Thus family ministry becomes the valuable resource it is meant to be to help the parents correct a journey that has gotten off course.

As in the book of Ephesians, chapter 5, Paul begins with the man and ends with the man. In Ephesians 5:25, he begins “Husbands love,” and ends in 6:4 with “Fathers don’t provoke your children to wrath.” Colossians 3:20-21 says, “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”⁴⁴ He earlier says in that chapter, “Husbands love,” but then again ends with “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” This truth is born out throughout Scripture. All passages emphasize the responsibility of the father when speaking of passing the faith from generation to generation. The mantle of responsibility falls squarely on his shoulders. Today this is a tenuous position because of the present cultural attitude toward family, and particularly the position of fatherhood. This offers even more reason for churches to rally and come along the side of fathers and mothers to strengthen the family unit, so God’s family can be strengthened simultaneously.

⁴³NKJV

⁴⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE CULTURAL CRISIS CONCERNING THE AMERICAN FAMILY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON LOCAL CHURCHES

A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in His holy habitation.
God sets the solitary in families. Psalm 68:5-6

Where It All Began Again

Family began with Adam and Eve and it began again with Noah and his tribe. No matter if it began with the first couple or anyone afterwards, you can be sure that after a while, given enough time, the culture of the day began to attack family! So here it is, thousands of years later, still doing family, and still battling the culture. Anyone studying family ministry will be aware that there is a passage of Scripture that is thrown around, within any conversation, whose subject matter is how to pass your faith to your children in good times and even in a hostile culture. It is found in ancient writings where Moses was attempting to help fathers understand the importance of faith transfer to their children. He wrote, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the words in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. This isn't the only passage that might come under the category of passing the faith, but this passage will inevitably be quoted, particularly the part of that passage that says, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."¹ It is the talk about them part of that Scripture that was so very important at the time this was written. You see, before the printing press or any multi-media contraptions were invented, *talking* was the major medium for parents to get the important components of their faith into the

¹NKJV

hearts of their children. Yet even with modern inventions, things haven't changed much from that time until today. Parents should turn off the television and social media gadgets because talking of them still remains a major medium to pass the faith from generation to generation.

In her book *Almost Christian*, Kendra Dean, associate professor of youth and culture for Princeton University, writes, "It comes as no surprise that families and communities that encourage practices in which teenagers must put religious convictions and experiences into words are more likely to have highly devoted teenagers."² These words are not just the guesswork of some college professor; they come from a national survey of youth and religion in 2002-2003.³ However, more importantly, they come from the Holy Scriptures themselves. Long before any surveys or evaluations validated the fact that verbal interaction between parent and child would produce a child with the likelihood of a strong faith, God in His infinite wisdom laid out His outline in Deuteronomy 6.

Talk About It--Verbalize It

This communication medium is the most basic and productive of all networking channels. Word of mouth works because the content comes from a heart of experience, and what is experienced is easily communicated. It is particularly not only easy for one to speak of any experience that has great value, it comes with an almost compelling yearning to talk about it—and there is nothing of greater value than a person's faith. Even businesses are keenly aware of word-of-mouth marketing. They will tell you that it is the most effective marketing there is, that everyone knows about it, but that hardly anyone does it well.⁴ The statement "hardly

²Kendra Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 136.

³*Ibid.*, 211.

⁴Ivan Misner, "Word of Mouth Marketing: the World's Best-Known Marketing Secret" Word of Mouth/Marketing (2002) <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/53188> (accessed October 2, 2014).

anyone does it well” should strike a cord in every father’s heart. Most fathers know that passing his values is a grave responsibility but when it comes right down to it, because life is so full of daily events, it is easier to abdicate that responsibility to someone or something else than it is to create the time to do it. Raising children is a hard job at best. Dr. James Dobson wrote an entire book called *Parenting Isn’t for Cowards*⁵ to tout the perils and hardships of parenting. It is surprising how many parents find reasons to abdicate their spiritual responsibilities to a church or to a school. According to George Barna’s national survey, while more than 4 out of 5 (85%) of parents believe they have the primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of their children, yet more than two out of three of them abdicate that responsibility to their church.⁶ What Aletheia and Sophia wrote in their blog describes the outcome of this abdication attitude succinctly when they write:

Unless parents teach their children the right values and model for them these values, children will never be able to overcome the many world views out there crying out for their attention. Without a moral compass and anchor, children will grow up believing in whatever seems right to them or worse, go with whatever makes them feel good. Unless parents form deep relationships with their children, children will seek parental love from other people, their grandparents, the domestic helper, their friends, their pets, a girlfriend or boyfriend.

At the end of the day, even though parents are the ones who brought their child into the world and fed them and clothed them, their child will only be grateful to the ones who bothered to physically be there to listen to their cries and who advised and guided them through problems that they faced in life.”⁷

The words of Moses in Deuteronomy 6 are not an essay on how to find someone who will teach your children, but a command from God to parents, particularly to fathers to know of this best practice (word of mouth), and practice it best. It is through this wonderful practice (the

⁵James Dobson, *Parenting Isn’t for Cowards: The “You Can Do It” Guide for Hassled Parents* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007).

⁶George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church’s #1 Priority* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003), 77-78.

⁷Aletheia and Sophia, “Parental Advice: The Abdication of Parental Responsibility and the Qualification of a Parent,” Parental Abdication (April, 2014), <http://philoseahpher.wordpress.com> (accessed October 5, 2014).

ability to communicate to one another) that the faith is passed from generation to generation. As a parent, it is to be talked about from morning to evening. Address it when lying down and say it again when rising up. Talk about it when just sitting in the house. Speak of it when walking along the way, or for today's culture, that would be when driving the kids to school, soccer, or shopping in the SUV. It is to be a ubiquitous subject inculcated into the minds of children so as to be recalled in the right situations under peaceful or stressful times.

Tie Them as Symbols on Your Hand--Symbolize It

Simple Symbols

What familiar thing is done to remind families of important dates? Perhaps writing it down, telling significant others so they will help the remembering, or use smart phones that will automatically ring perhaps just minutes before the scheduled appointment time. All this is done so as not to miss something that is very important to everyday living. Before all of today's technology, for the nation's forefathers, the ringtone on a cell phone was the proverbial string around their fingers.

In this writer's first book *Your Heritage*, he wrote: "Why a string? Why not place a rent check in your purse or coat pocket where you will see it, or a calendar there with the anniversary date circled? You could do that of course, but the string is an unusual reminder, a picture that reminds you that something special must be done on this date."⁸ Symbols are special. They are worn all the time. People don the logo of their favorite sports team, or they wear a cross around their necks. There are symbols that represent good things and there are symbols that represent bad things such as gang symbols or satanic symbols. There is no place on earth where symbolism may be escaped.

⁸J. Otis Ledbetter and Kurt Bruner, *Your Heritage: How to Be Intentional about the Legacy You Leave* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builder Books/Chariot Victor, 2009), 167.

Iconic Symbols

Symbols are important to God so they should be important to parents. They are found in all sorts of worship, but how common are they in the average Christian home? This thesis will cover the practical side of using symbols to pass the faith later in the manuscript.

Baptism is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and communion is symbolic of His shed blood and broken body. These are deeply sacred symbols that remind believers of who they are and whose they are. These symbols are celebrated on solemn occasions. When Moses told the children of Israel to “tie them as symbols,” he was speaking about the redemption of God’s people. In Deuteronomy 5:16, Moses wrote, “And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand.”⁹ Moses wanted them to allow these “reminder” symbols to be a constant remembrance of the price that was paid for their freedom.

One of the favorite places to go when visiting Washington, D.C. is the Washington Mall. Strolling through the beautiful grassy areas and by the reflecting pool and all the iconic war memorials, one will come to an awesome place called the Viet Nam War Memorial. Walking down into the valley of that wall of black marble is an overwhelming experience. Running one’s fingertips over the indentions cut into the marble that represent the names of all who paid the ultimate cost to buy our freedom stimulates the tear ducts and brings a mist to most eyes. The violence is remembered! It brings to mind all the blood that was shed, and the price paid. Maybe one looks for that particular name that sticks out above all the others because of a relationship gone silent. That entire wall is symbolic of it all.

If the chance ever comes for a visit to Jerusalem, on the city map will be the direction to the different gates of the city. Find the Sheep Gate and go there. Walking through the Sheep

⁹NKJV

Gate (today it is called the Lion Gate),¹⁰ look across the street past the bustling bus terminal and look for a hill that resembles a skull. Most say this is just another iconic memorial place. No, it is the spot where Jesus' cross was raised and dropped into a pre-dug hole. So when standing together in the congregation of believers in a church, far away from that spot in Jerusalem, and the bread and wine are tasted, this symbolizes what happened outside that gate: the Lord's death. Don't forget to remember the violence of the crucifixion, the blood that was shed, and the price paid. It is a symbol. It is an important symbol given to each, never to be forgotten.

The Father Symbol

If any symbol has been more effective in affecting the cultural crisis on the American biblical family as the father symbol, which might it be? The writers of the Old Testament were careful to address the father when giving instruction as to how their faith was to be passed from generation to generation. Fathers are commanded to symbolize it. Fathers are to point to the biblical symbols already provided to us, and commanded to create other symbols so their children never forget the values taught them. Having said that, the father figure is one of the most important of all symbols. This would be obvious to anyone observing today's media culture, simply because the dad is usually the "dufus" type caricature or a bully, someone who can barely find his way around life on one hand, or a heavy-handed hater who beats his family into submission on the other. If he were not such an important biblical figure in family life and in the eternity of his children, perhaps he would have at best a better showing in the public media and at the least be left alone.

Yet again, conceivably a look at the culture of family today may partially validate the stereotypical father symbol the media is portraying. According to the U.S. Census Bureau,

¹⁰R. Dusatko, "Golgotha Rediscovered," <http://dusatko.de/golgotharediscovered.pdf> (accessed October, 7, 2014).

twenty-four million children in America, one out of every three, live in biological father-absent homes.¹¹ According to these numbers the culture is at a crossroads where the father symbol is missing, leaving the child to figure out what a father symbol is supposed to be other than an aberration or a sperm donor. So when it comes to the “tie them as symbols” command, as far as the father symbol is concerned, the attitude of the present culture seems to fly in the face of the Deuteronomy commands and has become one of removal of the proverbial symbolic string off the finger.

Put Them as Frontlets Before Your Eyes--Visualize It

From symbolize to visualize is no big leap. A strong symbol will usually evoke some kind of a keen visual image. Think for a moment about the game of golf. The flagstick rests in a hole, which is a symbol that stands for success. So, in the course of learning to play golf, which for some is an exercise in futility, the instructor may say something like, “Before addressing the ball, visualize the swing. Visualize how the ball is to be struck. Visualize the flight of the ball. Visualize the ball landing on the green and tracking to the hole.” If those words were said, he/she is probably a good instructor. If the swing and successful results can be visualized, chances are someday it will happen exactly as visualized. That is a good lesson that helps everyone understand a little more what this command was intended to do for their children. If they can keep the Scriptures visualized in their children’s thoughts, they are more likely to see them actually lived out exactly as they helped them visualize. Referring again to the book *Your Heritage*, the authors wrote about two types of visual impressions a parent can make.

First, help your kids “envision” right decisions before they are confronted with choices. Create for instance, “what-if” stories where a decision has to be made to

¹¹National Fatherhood Initiative, “Fatherhood in Crisis,” <http://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistics> (accessed October 7, 2014).

help them envision the solution. For instance, if they were staying at a friend's house and someone suggested watching a sexually explicit movie on TV, what would be the proper response? Paint the scenario ahead of time and form the solution. Teach your kids how to avoid being placed in compromising positions by deciding ahead of time not to make hasty decisions after the back windows of the car are steamed over with passion. At that point it is too late.

Second, "hang in front of your eyes" pictures and words that reinforce the values you seek to instill. Picture books, artwork, and house decorations all can do that. Help your children develop a love for reading, and you are giving them a powerful way to learn values (as they learn to discern, with your help, quality stories and pictures). Reading stimulates their imagination in the right direction through the words and objects on a page.¹²

The most powerful of all visuals is a life lived well in front of children. Good manners and values are more caught than taught. Fathers, when your child watches you make right decisions and choices, your influence goes deeper than what you think. Every father should ask himself, "Do my children see me treating their mother with respect and dignity in the home? Do they see us calling in sick when we are not? Do they observe us holding a grudge or see from a distance the hair trigger temper we try to hide from them? Do they see us live out the fruit of the Spirit or do we dip into the garbage pail of transgressions listed in the works of the flesh?" Parents have to remember that it is what their children see and experience in the home that creates the visual image; like standing over a golf ball, they will imagine their future actions.

Parents can and should do all of the above. They cannot relax because the current culture wants to capture the mind of their children through the visual. The new technology of cell phones and the like make it possible for the culture to elbow its way into your children's imaginations with all sorts of excitingly grim visuals. The Internet pulsates with pornography and pornographic predators vying for any foothold into the mind of any child of any family. At first it may not seem so important. It is only a cell phone, but the progress is exponential...like the proverbial frog in a beaker that does not feel the water heating up until it is too late. Keeping

¹²Ledbetter and Bruner, *Your Heritage*, 169.

the Word of God and its core values in front of our children's eyes is not just another option to occupy their minds while we parents make a living. Deuteronomy's directives let the reader know that helping their children visualize God's commands and purposes for them just cannot be left to chance.

Write Them on Your Doorposts and Gates--Journalize It

Although word-of-mouth was the premier method for our forefathers to pass the faith from generation to generation, there is a great case to be made for the value of writing it down. Someday Christian voices will be silenced. Age pretty much guarantees that fact. There will come a time when their children's children will be curious about what was valuable to their parents. What did they think about certain subjects and how did they come to their conclusions. It is a very good medium to conquer if only for the sake of setting the record straight. It is always possible that someone quoting past conversations will take a quote out of context and make it say something not meant. There are lovers who keep the letters of their suitor way past the wedding day, and after they lose that love of their life from old age or disease, they still can hear them speak from the grave through the words they wrote to them years ago. There is a power in written words. Most people can remember certain books or articles they read at different points of their lives that gave them answers they were looking for at a specific time under a specific circumstance. The words brought them comfort. They enjoyed that comfort because someone believed in journalizing. They believed in writing down solutions to problems they had encountered. Without their commitment to writing it down, as readers their posterity would be poorer.

Historical Familial Revisionism

Pointing a convinced index finger in a clear direction, Dr. James Dobson writes in his “Family Talk” radio blog, “I am familiar with the effort to redefine the family. It is motivated by homosexual activists and others who see this institution as a barrier to the social engineering they hope to accomplish.”¹³ Further, the Christian Science Monitor published an article by a guest blogger who asked a simple question, and then answered his own query. “The key question is: if the typical American family is going the way of the passenger pigeon, does it really matter? The answer seems to be: yes. Households headed by married couples lead to better educational and social outcomes for their children.”¹⁴

The biblical description of the family has been under attack as long as there has been a family to attack. The redefinition of the family unit from how the Scriptures defines it is critical to its opposition’s successes no matter what culture, in which millennium, comes against it. Later on in this paper, a deeper discussion of the theology of both the body and the family will be discussed at length, but for now, one can find a perfect definition of family in the writings of the Apostle Paul to the church at Ephesus. In the letter he penned to them he encapsulates a family role definition succinctly in the fifth and sixth chapters, verses 5:21–6:4. He writes, “Husbands love... wives respect... and children obey.”¹⁵ Each person in the family unit has a role that is not the same as the other, but is complimentary to the other. Each will identify with a basic yet essential need to be met. For the wife, it is to be loved. For the husband, it is to be respected. For children, it is to have set boundaries. So God commands each to do what he/she

¹³James Dobson, “Redefining the Family,” Family Issues (2014), <http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/familytalk/read/articles/redefining-the-family-15007.html> (accessed October 8, 2014).

¹⁴James Norton, “Modern Family Defined: Say ‘Goodbye’ to the Typical American Family,” Modern Parenthood (September, 2013): <http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Family/Modern-Parenthood> (accessed October 8, 2014).

¹⁵NKJV

is not designed to do. When followed, within each family unit, there will be love, respect, and order in the home.

The Battle for the Traditional Family Is Winnable

In an essay abstract, John DeWitt Gregory of Hofstra University, Maurice A. Dean School of Law, writes about his doubts that the current trend away from the traditional family will gain much traction. He states:

This essay examines the way in which legal academic commentators, particularly family law teachers and scholars, have urged that family be redefined, rejecting the conventional and traditional definitions to which courts and legislators have generally adhered. Self-styled progressive scholars argue that currently prevailing doctrine arbitrarily excludes many deserving suitors from the recognition and protection afforded to families under state and constitutional law. The arguments in this essay reject such assertions, pointing out that new and expansive definitions of family either ignore or refuse to accept long standing precedents, including decisions of the United States Supreme Court, that for some three-quarters of a century and up to the present time have protected parental authority and the autonomy and privacy of traditional families. This article concludes that it is unlikely that most courts and legislators will adopt radical proposals to include all manner of legal strangers within the definition and legal protection afforded to the family.¹⁶

Indeed the church has been and currently is in a raging battle with combatants of the present culture to redefine the family. The reader will see later in this dissertation that this war is having a major impact on who the church is and how it responds to the definition of the Biblical family. Revising the family unit to include anything or anybody different from whom Paul includes will bring an unsettling redundancy. It would be comparable to having multiple competing DNA in a single cell: a recipe for tragedy, which hopefully culture will not tolerate.

So how does the command Moses revealed from God to “write it down” affect family life? It is the opinion of this writer that when the faith values of preceding generations are solidly written and preserved in pen and ink, those generations can speak and share with this

¹⁶John DeWitt Gregory, “Redefining the Family: Undermining the Family,” *Redefining the Family* (2005) http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=696882 (accessed October 8, 2014).

generation their values and faith even from the grave. This is a perfect way for history to “get it right” in the lives of and for the sake of this generation of children.

The Psalm 78 Mandate

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their ancestors—a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.¹⁷

The influence of the culture on some of the people in the day this passage was written is evident. The command is clear but the winds of concession were strong. The writer of this Psalm calls them out and uses them as an example. Do not be like your fathers who were stubborn and rebellious. The occasion the Psalmist was referring to can be found in an earlier Scripture, 2 Kings 17:15. The first thought of someone reading this might be that one tribe turned back in retreat during battle. It must have been an episode that reverberated in the camp of the Israelites for it to be remembered and still be so raw in the emotions that it shows up in their poetry years later. A journey back to that Scripture will reveal that it was more than a battle. If it were just one skirmish, that could be forgiven and everyone could move on, but this was not as much a campaign as it was a mindset! A mindset of a people who had the wherewithal to engage in a cultural battle, but because of a stubborn and rebellious heart decided for whatever reason not to. Peace at any cost seemed more attractive.

Reading the story in that passage of Scripture may bring you to what is going on today. The church must fight against the culture of peace at any price when it comes to family, but at times it seems the battle is being lost. Parents are turning back in the face of cultural battles at an alarming rate. Consider the latest Pew Poll survey study on how important faith is where,

¹⁷NIV

“81 percent of ‘consistently conservative’ respondents thought it was especially important to teach their children religious faith, yet less than a third of all respondents identified faith as one the most important values to teach children.”¹⁸ The turning back is almost mind blowing. So the church must engage in the battle for the mind and hearts of the next generation. The church must find a way to train the trainers to evangelize and teach their own children.

The Single Cell of Society

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church explaining, among many truths, how each of them made up the body of Christ. In his first letter to them he writes in chapter 12, verse 12, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” He then takes the time to explain how a physical body is designed, then writes further in verse 18, “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.” If one reads the entire chapter one might get the idea he is belaboring a point because he takes another step in describing how a body functions, then asks a rhetorical question in verse 19, “And if they were all one member, where would the body be?” Nobody answers so he moves on to write verse 20 and says again, “But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.” One more time so everybody gets it, even the slow thinkers, he writes in verse 27, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”¹⁹

Since the church is called the body of Christ, most choose, because of the above quoted Scripture, to compare it to a physical body. Paul even calls it the bride of Christ making it take on a physical human element. Paul then makes the significant and compelling argument that we, the church, are indeed collectively a body. In chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians, Paul was identifying

¹⁸Stephanie Samuel, “Adults Say Children Need to Learn Responsibility; Experts Say Parents Must Stop Over-Indulging Children,” Child-Rearing Values (September, 2014) <http://www.christianpost.com/news/us-adults-say-children-need-to-learn-responsibility-experts-say-parents-must-stop-over-indulging-children-126898/> (accessed October 8, 2014).

¹⁹NKJV

to them the individual parts of the body. He was exposing that in some areas, their church body lacked health.

When a physical body undergoes a health examination, the first place the family doctor will send you is to the lab to have blood drawn. It is by examining the blood, and reading the numbers that come from the forensics of the blood exam, that your doctor can determine if you are healthy or if there are areas that need attention inside your body. The lab, if necessary, can even look into the health of individual cells. It is not rocket science to know that if the individual cells lack health, your body will lack health.

Drawing from Paul's illustrations of the church body and the idea of examining the parts to determine the health of the whole, since the church is made up of families, it makes sense to reason that the basic cell of the church, the family unit, should be examined. Take another step and reason that if the family units (the basic cells of not just the church, but also of society) in the church are not healthy, then the church is not healthy. Take one more step forward. If the family units in the neighborhoods are not healthy, then the community will not have health. Extrapolate that analysis and one can easily see how the cultural attack on the family is an attack at the very DNA of the church and society as a whole. Is it any wonder that the evil one wants the definition of family muddled and redefined?

Theology of the Body

Now move from the church as the "body of Christ doctrine," to the "theology of the physical body" that was created in the Garden of Eden. First of all, it is a sensual creation. It is with the five senses that the person interacts with their physical surroundings. It is through those senses that they know each other. If somehow each of the five senses were activated by a switch, like a light switch, and could all be shut off, that person would effectively isolate themselves from each other. There would be no seeing or touching, no hearing, tasting, or

smelling our surroundings. Yes, they could effectively be isolated from each other...but not from God. Although He created those senses, He chose to also create humans where He could bypass the senses and commune with them directly in their spirits. In their spirit somehow they could still know Him. Some are born with those senses in the “off” position. Some are born deaf or blind, maybe even deaf and blind, but not deaf and blind in their spirits.

Second, the body is a creation to house the spiritual. God created humans with a spirit so they could know Him in spirit, but He also created them with five senses that they might know each other through their bodies...their senses. He did not intend for them to only know Him in spirit. He also desires they know Him through their body and encounter Him through their senses. He made them in His image, in His likeness, so that somehow by an investigation of their body they might see His image. In his book *The Theology of the Body for Beginners*, Christopher West wrote, “God impresses His own form on the flesh...in such a way that even what was visible might bear the divine form.”²⁰ Sensuality is not just about sensuality. Sex is not just about sex. Many times Christians grow up thinking of their bodies as an obstacle to spirituality. A sect of people in Jesus’ day believed that the body was inherently evil and made rules to make sure that anything sensual was tossed aside as wicked and foul. The idea that the human body is “bad” is actually a heresy known as Manichaeism, named after Manichaeus who condemned the body and all things sexual because he saw in the material world the body being the source of evil.²¹

Although the Scripture states in Romans 7:18 that “in this flesh dwells no good thing,”²² that does not mean that the creation of the body was evil. It was not. It means within the

²⁰Christopher West, *The Theology of the Body for Beginners* (Westchester, PA: Ascension Press, 2004), 1.

²¹Ibid., 3.

²²NKJV

unrestrained flesh there is a good chance of corruption. Some may ask, “Well, if the body is good, then why do we cover it?” The answer is that people do not cover their bodies because they are evil. They cover them because they are holy. In the Scriptures, God veiled that which was holy and uncovered that which was sinful. So in Genesis 1:31, God called the creation of the body, alive with His breath, “good.”²³ What God calls good, man should not call evil. In fact it is the body that is capable of making the invisible visible. Jesus (God) took on a body. The body enables humans to experience the hidden spiritual realities of the mysteries of God... and it is through those bodies that not only do they multiply, but also through it the good news of the gospel is delivered from generation to generation.

God could have chosen angels to deliver the gospel to humans, but He did not. He could have caused the rocks to cry out the good news, but He did not. He could have used many other created means to do so, but He did not. He chose the creation of the body to house the invisible image of God to make visible His works to His creation, then gave them the command to do the same... procreate and propagate His redemptive love. It is through their bodies, as a living sacrifice, that the gospel is incarnate. It may be difficult for some people to identify with a man who died on a cross a couple of thousand years ago, but our job is to embody His truth. Yet they can do that until the “cows come home” (as my dad used to say), but unless people are in touch with the question “What does that ancient man and that 2000 year old event have to do with me?” they remain on a level of an hypothesis. So, now it is important for everyone to be the answer to the hypothesis: the gift of propagating the good news is in the body. It is an antidote that comes in different opportunities: one on one, one on some, and one on many but it all begins with His idea of creating the body to carry the good news.

Again Christopher West writes:

²³NKJV

“It was in the body that Adam realized he was ‘alone’ in the world and was not ‘good’ to be so. We were meant for love, for communion with an ‘other.’ This is what the body teaches us: we are destined for love... This is why Christ the Redeemer fully reveals man to Himself--because His body was given up for us reveals the truth about incarnate love.”²⁴

All of this says that the theology of the body teaches that God created the body male or female, for each other, no matter what culture says. A male body by itself does not make sense. A female body by itself does not make sense. It is when the two are together and complement one another that creation makes sense. The different male and female bodies were created for each other... and they were created for family!

Theology of the Family

“Houston, We Have a Problem”

The planned future of humanity was to be passed by way of marriage and the family, so there can be no rebirth of our world without a restoration of Biblical marriage and family. In addition, there will be no renewal of marriage and family without a return to the full truth of God’s plan for marriage and family.²⁵

There is a statistic that shows the rapid decline of the American culture generation after generation. The statistic by itself allows the reader to see how rapid a decline the loss of faith within the family unit became over the years. It is described in a book called, *Spiritual Milestones*. The authors write:

Thom S. Rainer,²⁶ identifies four main generational groups: The Builders (born 1910-46); The Boomers (born 1947-64); The Busters (born 1965-76); and The Bridgers (born 1977-94). Dr. Rainer gave some early findings from a survey done by the Billy Graham Association. These startling statistics may shed light

²⁴West, *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, 121.

²⁵Ibid., 117.

²⁶Tom Rainer, dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth, and author of *The Bridger Generation*. Given in a lecture at Cook Communications Ministries (Colorado Springs, Colorado) in June, 2000.

on the quick national decline of the process of passing the faith to the next generation. A scientific sampling of each generation was asked whether they considered themselves as having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The following percentages reflect those who responded “yes”:

Table 2 National Decline of the Process of Passing the Faith to the Next Generation

Four main generational groups identified
<p><i>Builders – 65%</i> <i>Boomers – 35%</i> <i>Busters – 15%</i> <i>Bridgers – 4%</i></p>

In a matter of 50 years, the passing of the baton of faith lost impetus. Think of it! From two out of three confessing a relationship with Christ to one out of twenty.²⁷

The point made from this startling survey is that families are not successfully passing the faith to the next generation. The church bears culpability in allowing parents to abdicate that responsibility to the church, who have and will continue to fail miserably at parenting the abdicator’s children! In a book called *A Theology of the Family*, Scott Brown writes:

In the mid-1990s, it began to occur to me that the modern Church had actually lost the biblical doctrine of the family. Biblical fatherhood was dead. Feminists owned womanhood. Motherhood was despised. Babies were marginalized as thieves of convenience and success. In America, we have aborted millions of children since 1973. Marriages were crumbling, and the very institution was being redefined. It was almost impossible to find men in the church who understood biblical manhood or fatherhood. The twentieth century was a bad time for the family; the trends were all running in the wrong direction, and biblical ignorance was speeding the family on its way to destruction.”²⁸

How was so much lost so quickly?

²⁷J. Otis and Gail Ledbetter and Jim and Janet Weidmann, *Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children’s Spiritual Passages* (Clovis, CA; Heritage Builder Books/Chariot Victor, 2009), 224.

²⁸Scott Brown and Jeff Pollard, *A Theology of the Family: Five Centuries of Biblical Wisdom for Family Life* (Wake Forrest, NC: The National Center for Family Integrated Churches Publishing, 2014), back cover.

Biblical Family Defined

A biblical definition of family is not found in one succinct sentence or paragraph in the Scriptures, although Ephesians 5 comes close. In fact, when looking for that definition, and they are present, one will find the supporting Scriptures sparsely scattered throughout the 31,000 plus verses in the entire Bible, but they are there waiting to be mined, read, and studied. This thesis will not take the time to exhaust the definitions but will instead focus on how a church may accomplish that task for the sake of the families within the congregation. That assignment for individual churches might follow a simple outline as the one in Ephesians 5. It defines the basic roles designed within the family unit but of necessity will eventually need to go into more depth. The key studies must include parenting, fatherhood, motherhood, singleness, launching the child as an arrow, and answering the question, “What does belonging in family really mean?”

In an article written by Jeff Patterson, he writes:

By the family you are broken and by the family you will be healed. It is through family, through relationship, that we see Christ, see our own broken humanity, and are given the privilege of learning how to imperfectly love and be loved. It is in the vulnerability that family brings that we truly learn to know and be known. And though families, and relationships, are inarguably a mess, Scripture maintains, and we heartily agree, that they are indeed a mess worth making.²⁹

If Not Now, When?

If there were ever a time when a culture needed a “theology for family,” it would be now. If there were ever a time when churches needed to rethink their spiritual formation strategies and turn their competencies toward the family, it is now. The culture is forcing its issues down humanity’s throat with an onslaught of persecution of the Biblical definition of

²⁹Jeff Patterson, “A Biblical Theology of Family: A Mess Worth Making,” *Family Issues* (December, 2008), <http://www.karipatterson.com/2008/12/02/a-biblical-theology-of-family-a-mess-worth-making/> (accessed October 14, 2014).

family, masked as “political correctness.” It is a well-designed plan of deception that seems to be working. So to battle the culture and make any significant headway for family, parents must go back to the beginning of family to get to the future of what family should be. In this regard again Jeff Patterson writes:

As God created each new aspect of creation—light, land, sea, plants, stars, sun—He approved of His work as being good. But Genesis 2:18 reveals God’s first negative commentary: “It is not good.” And what exactly was not good? That man was alone. In a perfect world, with man having perfect communion with the Father, with no death, decay, corruption, or lack, with limitless beauty, food, and creativity, it was still not good for man to be alone. The amazing thing about this statement is that God is in essence asserting that there is something besides even fellowship with Himself that is necessary for man’s well-being: It is relationship with other human beings. It is, in essence, family. It is belonging to one another. The necessity for relationship is not an effect of the fall. Relationship was part of a perfect world, family was part of a perfect world, marriage was part of a perfect world. And after its creation, God placed his most emphatically positive commentary: “It is very good” (Gen. 1:31).³⁰

From “Supported” to “Supporter”

The first institution formed by God in the Bible was the family. That makes it the foundation of all other institutions that have followed. Other institutions, which include government and the church, are made up of this uniquely original institution. In the course of time, sadly, other institutions have used the original to build their own base for whatever they want to accomplish. In other words, the family has been wrongly subordinated for the good of those other institutions. For the present day church, which is another institution God ordained, it seems the family has often been relegated to the support role to build the church. This is opposite of what should happen. Instead of the family being in the support role of the church,

³⁰Jeff Patterson, “A Biblical Theology of Family: A Mess Worth Making,” *Family Issues* (December, 2008), <http://www.karipatterson.com/2008/12/02/a-biblical-theology-of-family-a-mess-worth-making/> (accessed October 14, 2014).

the church should be in the support role of the family. The body does not look at the single cell that makes it possible to function and say to it, “Do whatever is necessary, Mr./Miss single cell, to stay healthy so that my body can stay healthy.” Instead the body eats properly, exercises often, and has periodic checkups for the health of the myriad and variety of the single cells to keep it healthy. Consequently, the body is in the support role of the cells. By keeping a watch on their health, the body insures its own. Indeed, in the same fashion, the church should purposefully subordinate itself to be in the support role of the family for the sake of keeping itself healthy.

The following statement is how this paper will view and support the thesis of the arrangement of the church going from the supported to the supporter in order that it may stay vibrant and healthy.

“If the church provides education, training, and community that strengthen families in their relationship to each other and to God, *then* it will result in the families’ involvement and commitment back to the church’s ministry outreach and growth.”³¹ In other words the church should be strengthening God’s family by strengthening yours!

³¹J. Otis Ledbetter and Jim Weidmann, “Family Ministry in Focus,” unpublished White Paper, Clovis, CA: Heritage Builders Global, 2005.

CHAPTER III

PRINCIPLES FOR CHURCH AND PARENT DERIVED FROM BIBLICAL RESEARCH, CHURCH SURVEYS, AND CULTURAL ISSUES

Therefore you shall stumble in the day;
The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night...
My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.
Because you have rejected knowledge...
Because you have forgotten the law of your God,
I also will forget your children. Hosea 4:5-6¹

A Biblical Exploration

Perhaps the most difficult situation to stomach is the betrayal of being forgotten. One can be decked by an uppercut from failure, and stand back up to fight again. One could lose everything they worked for in a disastrous fire or weather event, then look into the camera of a news reporter on the scene and tell the audience that the loss was only “stuff.” It is true: “stuff” can mostly be replaced. When one has been a part of something or somebody for any significant length of time and invested a part of their life to help the success of that something or somebody, then to be betrayed by being relegated to a forgotten part of it stings like no other betrayal. Perhaps you have witnessed it as a person walks away from a “senior-assisted living” home, having visited a parent or spouse, wiping away the tears of realization that their loved one’s memory of them has been stolen by an awful disease. Not only are they not remembered, they are not missed. Similarly, the Scripture above to a generation gone astray says, “I also will forget your children.” This served as a warning to a generation of parents who were perishing because their land was being destroyed... not because of political correctness or moral issues,

¹NKJV

but rather because of a spiritually self-generated, temporal lobes infection called the lack of knowledge of God and His instructions. The sad thing is that their children would now suffer because of it. What a terrible thing for God to have to write such a condemnation.

A Truism

This author has often mulled over the thought that if it were possible to have a Scripture left out of the Bible, although knowing it is not possible, perhaps Exodus 20:5b might be the one. It reads, "...for I the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation...."² But, if it were possible, it should have been this one. It seems patently unfair that anyone should pay for the sin of someone else that they may not even know or may have never met. Why should they suffer for what others did? Yet...it is a truism. Consider that alcoholics raise alcoholics. Abusers raise abusers. Screamers raise screamers. Liars raise liars. Abraham in fear of his life told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister.³ Then Isaac, Abraham's son, walks in his father's steps of fear and lying and tells the same lie to Abimelech about his wife Rebekah.⁴ Then notice what kind of a liar Jacob turned out to be over and over to his elderly dad, incited by his mother.⁵ Yes, Exodus 20:5b indeed seems to be a truism.

Understandably this information could be disheartening to those who have had the misfortune of being born to parents who do not live out this truth, or could not care less if generational sin tumbles into the next generation, and the next, and the next. If the previous parental indictment is true of anyone reading this thesis, you need to know that there is hope.

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³Genesis 20:5

⁴Genesis 26:6

⁵Genesis 27:19

The cycle of hurt that has tumbled down into your life has a remedy. You can stop the cycle. You can begin again.

That hope comes from a Scripture in the second giving of the law found in Deuteronomy 23:5. The nations of the enemies of God hired a traitor, who was a prophet, to curse them. Because Israel was not at fault, God would not allow the prophet Balaam's curse against them to stand. The Scripture read, don't miss this beautiful truth, "...Balaam son of Beor from Pethor... was hired to curse you. Yet the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but He turned the curse into a blessing because the Lord your God loves you."⁶

Week after week families sit in churches across this land with a heavy heart. The hurt that has tumbled down into their lives seems crushing and disheartening. They hear the message being delivered, but have no thought that there might be hope. Because of this reality, it is incumbent upon every church to be in a support role of families like these, and not just these, but for all families for the sake for the next generation...that they will not be forgotten.

A United States' President Speaks of Family

At times a leader comes along who not only does not forget future generations but also understands how a nation can crumble from lack of knowledge if "the main thing isn't kept the main thing." The main thing is the knowledge of and acknowledgements of the Creator and His master plan. On May 20, 1981, then President Ronald Reagan made Proclamation 4845. In this proclamation he recognizes the importance of family structure, and does something about it. This action could serve as a beacon for any leader that followed to be able to walk in its light. He calls on the nation on behalf of the first institution God created when he writes:

There is no institution more vital to our Nation's survival than the American family. Here the seeds of personal character are planted, the roots of public virtue first nourished. Through love and instruction, discipline, guidance and

⁶HCSB

example, we learn from our mothers and fathers the values that will shape our private lives and our public citizenship.

The days of our childhood forecast our lives, as poets and philosophers long have told us. “The childhood shows the man as morning shows the day,” John Milton wrote. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it,” Solomon tells us. Clearly, the future is in the care of our parents. Such is the responsibility, promise and hope of fatherhood. Such is the gift that our fathers give us.

Our fathers bear an awesome responsibility—one that they shoulder willingly and fulfill with a love that asks no recompense. By turns both gentle and firm, our fathers guide us along the path from infancy to adulthood. We embody their joy, pain and sacrifice, and inherit memories more cherished than any possession....

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this 20th day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred eighty-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fifth.

Ronald Reagan⁷

The Culture, the Family, and the Church

“Fathers,” says Reagan, “bear an awesome responsibility.”⁸ However, is that what the culture believes too? Probably not! It isn’t the responsibility of the father to follow the erratic flow of the culture’s belief system. It is the father’s responsibility to follow the biblical plan for passing the faith to his children and the culture will then take care of itself. The great apologist Francis Schaeffer put fighting against the culture in perspective while speaking at Liberty University. The Baptist Press published an article recounting Schaeffer’s response to a question from a student about the Christian’s responsibility as far as the cultural war is concerned:

Little of Southeastern Seminary understands firsthand why Schaeffer was so influential. He [Little] remembers listening to him speak at Liberty University in April 1984, the month before he died. By that time Schaeffer was so weak that

⁷Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 4845 – Father’s Day, 1981,” Fathers (May, 1981), <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1981/52081b.htm> (accessed October 21, 2014).

⁸Ibid.

he was living on milkshakes and sometimes had to be carried to speaking engagements on a stretcher.

During a question-and-answer session, one student stood to his feet and said, “Dr. Schaeffer, it seems to me that the church is in the 10th round. It's bloody. It's beaten. It's on its knees. Is there any hope we can win?” Little recounted.

“I can see Schaeffer now,” Little continued. “He leaned forward, brought the mic to his mouth and said, 'Son, if you do it to win, you've lost already.'” Whether they win or lose, Christians fight the culture wars, Schaeffer said, “because our risen Lord has commanded us.”⁹

The following paragraph is not a recommendation for readers to watch the movie *Footloose*, primarily because it is not family entertainment. So the question may be asked, “Then why put it in this thesis?” That is a fair question! The answer is that the writers of *Footloose* captured the cultural norm of a society that caused a local pastor to struggle to accomplish what he thought was *his* job. The town, up to the entrance of a new young fellow who had taken residence there, had for the most part fallen in line with what the local pastor was preaching, or so he thought. Then he heard that there was going to be a dance that even his own daughter was going to attend. He could not stand the thought. He wrestled with sleepless nights and a deep feeling that he was losing his family and failing in what God called him to do and to be. While getting ready for bed one evening, he turned to his wife and let his thoughts roll off his tongue. The parents in the town had abdicated their parental responsibilities to the pastor and the church, and consequently he told his wife that he saw all the town’s children as his own responsibility. The weight of it was just too great. He had to do something about all the children being down the street at a dance. The problem was that they were not his children, and

⁹David Roach, “Francis Schaeffer ‘indispensable’ to SBC,” Culture Wars (October, 2014) <http://www.bpnews.net/43626/francis-schaeffer-indispensable-to-sbc> (October 31, 2014).

there was nothing that could be done. The culture, which taught those parents that the church would be responsible to raise their children, turned on him leaving him a failure in his eyes.¹⁰

Sadly, today many pastors hear a frustrated mother or father say to them, “This church has failed my family.” They say it because they have bought into the culture that says spiritual childrearing is the responsibility of the Sunday School teacher and the church. That is why young parents get up every Sunday and take them to church. That is why they give to the church. The pastor and teachers are the ones they depend on to straighten out a child who is difficult to handle.

This attitude toward the church is corroborated in the forward to the book *Church + Home* where George Barna writes, “A decade ago, I was a pretty typical church leader, believing that the ministry of the local church should revolve around the needs of its adults. The theory was that if we could effectively reach adults and help them, they would convert that investment into a moral and spiritual windfall for society.”¹¹ Having bought into the idea that it is the church’s primary responsibility to just minister to adults, leaving out the parents responsibility of teaching their children, he goes on to admit that God had to give him a wakeup call about the church’s responsibility to the home. Later on he writes, “A community of faith can—and should—support parents in that effort (raising Godly children), but the responsibility and opportunity to raise God-honoring children are given to the parents.”¹²

Parents are passing a heritage to the next generation. They cannot opt out! Yet if they attempt to opt out, the culture will elbow its way in to the life of the child and pass its own brand of a heritage. Barna goes on to say:

¹⁰Dean Pitchford, *Footloose*, directed by Herbert Ross (Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 1984), DVD, 2011.

¹¹Mark Holman, *Church + Home: The Proven Formula for Building Lifelong Faith* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2010), 9.

¹²*Ibid.*, 10.

Having now conducted thousands of interviews with parents and children regarding moral and spiritual development, some elements of the process have become crystal clear. For instance, the local church plays a role in the growth of children, but its involvement is not the key success in raising Godly children. The critical factor is what takes place in the home.¹³

Barna is accurate! It is not the church's responsibility to raise Godly children. The church plays a role in the growth of children as it trains the trainer. God's design to teach children is awesome. He intends to have two Sunday School teachers for each child. Their names are Mom and Dad, and the children are not taught in just one or two hours on a Sunday morning. The children have availability to them 24/7.

Understanding these realities, three fathers (a pastor and two executives in para-church ministries) had been meeting regularly to attempt to find solutions to the problems between home and church. They formed an idea, which they believed would bring a clarification to the conundrum and named it Heritage Builders. This gave them a platform to present their passion about fathers teaching their children. When the Heritage Builders Family Ministry¹⁴ products first came on the market with the belief that it was the primary responsibility of the parents to teach their children and not the church's, there was push back. Placing the church in the support role of the family when the family had been relegated to the support role of the church seemed to be something new to workshop attendees. Time after time during Heritage Builders workshops, pastors would question the value of putting an emphasis on children who brought in no income to support the church. "Doing that," one pastor said, "will cause the church to crater financially." Some of the pastors had been the ones who had previously sold out to a fad disguised as a church growth strategy. They had bought a fleet of busses and hauled in children by the hundreds (allowing parents to abdicate their responsibility) to inflate their attendance

¹³Mark Holman, *Church + Home: The Proven Formula for Building Lifelong Faith* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2010), 10.

¹⁴Justin Davis, Family Resources. <http://heritagebuildersglobal.com>. (accessed November 12, 2014).

numbers. Later some started a Christian School—and not because one was needed. The church two blocks down the street had started one earlier. It was a part of the growth rage. So pastors now were understandably reluctant with this seemingly new tactic. Each new fad seemed to only bring more problems, and the churches appeared to be weakened by the fads, notwithstanding their people being overworked and burned out. It seemed their thought processes said to them, “So, here is another fad, right?”

However, in one particular Heritage Builders workshop, several leaders in attendance seemed to stop and rethink their strategies. A groundswell of agreement began to rise to the highest ranks of ministries. Focus on the Family¹⁵ joined the groundswell and partnered with the three fathers who had founded Heritage Builders, which further legitimized the movement in the churches toward training parents to teach their own children in their homes. The churches that placed themselves in the support role of the family took on the slogan “Train the trainer!” The glass ceiling (so to speak) had been broken. The obvious next step to keep momentum was to identify the health of family ministry in each local church. It was and will continue to be a monumental task.

Anatomy of a Family Ministry Survey

Because Deuteronomy 6:6-9 seems to be the springboard verse for all things that look like family ministry, it is reasonable to look at the depth of that Scripture in order to create survey questions. After all, Moses, in a succinct manner, laid down the outline for what parents were to do. In chapter 2, this thesis spoke in detail of Moses’ “to-the-point” manner. It is there in his words, moved by the Holy Spirit, that he lays the mantle of responsibility on the shoulders of every father. First, it is to be in Dad’s heart. Second, it is to be talked about,

¹⁵James Dobson, Family Talk. <http://drjamesdobson.org/about/James-Dobson>. (accessed October 28, 2014).

verbalized. Third, it is to be symbolized. Fourth, it is to be visualized. Fifth, it is to be journalized. Moses laid out a perfect outline for a survey. These commands are the essence of family ministry.

The survey is broken down into three components. First, there are questions in the area of modeling faith in the home. If indeed it is in the hearts of Mom and Dad, it will be lived out in their everyday lives in front of their children. It is in such a home as this that values are more caught than taught. Second, there are questions concerning formal teaching of values in the home. Times when the family sits together and, through object lessons or stories, values are brought to the surface through perhaps object lessons and then discussed. Third, there is the area of training. Maybe to some it would seem odd that a parent would have to be trained to handle these disciplines, but it is true. There is a palpable fear of standing before one's family and teaching biblical truths while being commanded to live them out.

As a member of a private email list for pastors, this author asked for and received permission to offer an anonymous survey to the couple of hundred pastors on this list. Hoping for twenty or twenty-five respondents, he received fifty-seven, which is a good sampling of differing philosophies of ministries as well as different-sized congregations. Later, the dots will be connected which will offer some insights, or at the very least offer a path for discussion, as to how passing the faith to the next generation has suffered setbacks. This author will help you follow their paper trail and examine their answers.

Modeling Faith in the Home

Notice that the following survey begins with asking questions concerning the church having a formal ministry whereby parents may learn what it means to model these truths inside the home. The pastors were asked to choose one of three answers: none, somewhat, or ongoing.

None speaks for itself, *somewhat* could mean that the church he pastors offers an activity as little as one or two times a year. For instance, perhaps the pastor schedules a sermon on modeling or offers a handout in the Sunday bulletin that addresses an area on how to model in a certain area. *Ongoing* of course also speaks for itself. A church could offer repeatable and sustained parenting classes, monthly/weekly bulletin inserts, an annual series of Sunday sermons on family, a resource center where families can find help with life situations or life's stages, or age appropriate classes for everyone that support the family with their weekly agenda by answering the question, "How does this strategy impact the family?" Any collection of several similar ideas constitutes *ongoing*.

The first four questions of the following survey concern the issues from Deuteronomy 6 where the command is given to the father that "these should be on your heart first." The "these" are stated in verse six: "Write these commandments that I've given you today on your hearts. Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children."¹⁶ A prominent professor in the 1960's in a Midwest Bible college would often say to the students, of which this author was one, "Telling someone what you don't know is like coming back from where you've never been."¹⁷ Attempting to get truth into the heart of a child, when the parent does not live out (model) that truth or knows little about that truth, is nearly impossible. When children see their parents reading their Bibles or having a personal prayer time, it is impactful. Early in their childhood a child will mimic the actions of the parent. Many times parents realize this too late when their child comes out with an inappropriate "word" Mom or Dad uses not realizing the child is hearing it, and it is met with a "gasp!" Some parents will walk in on a child kneeling beside his bed praying, or after having witnessed a baptism at church sees the child baptizing a

¹⁶The Message

¹⁷Noel Smith, professor, Baptist Bible College, Springfield, MO.
http://www.tribune.org/files/noel_smith.pdf

doll. Modeling a personal quiet time will show the child the importance of getting alone with God. It seems many parents don't know how to do this, so it is incumbent on the church that it offers training to parents, showing them how to model these truths in front of their children, in the home!

Survey Questions about Modeling in the Home

Modeling question one:

Does your church have an intentional formal ministry, other than children's Sunday School, to help parents in modeling spiritual truths for their children to: Have a personal quiet time?

Table 3 Modeling Question One

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	31	55.36%
SOMEWHAT	13	23.21%
ONGOING	12	21.43%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Modeling question two:

Does your church have an intentional formal ministry, other than children's Sunday School, to help parents in modeling spiritual truths for their children to: Participate in family Bible Studies?

Table 4 Modeling Question Two

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	31	55.36%
SOMEWHAT	12	21.43%
ONGOING	13	23.21%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Modeling question three:

Does your church have an intentional formal ministry, other than children's Sunday School, to help parents in modeling spiritual truths for their children to: Initiate family prayer time with children?

Table 5 Modeling Question Three

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	30	52.63%
SOMEWHAT	14	24.56%
ONGOING	13	22.81%
Total Response (57 Answered)	57	100%

Modeling question four:

Does your church have an intentional formal ministry, other than children's Sunday School, to help parents in modeling spiritual truths for their children to: Teach husband and wife to pray together?

Table 6 Modeling Question Four

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	29	52.73%
SOMEWHAT	13	23.64%
ONGOING	13	23.64%
Total Response (55 Answered, 2 Skipped)	55	96%

The Training Component

The following four survey questions get to the area of training the trainer. If the church successfully answers the question of “WHY?” a parent should participate in family activities together, the question that will come back to the pastor will be “HOW?” There is a kind of magic in getting an answer to the “WHY?” should there be family activities in the home, but there is power in the “HOW?” to accomplish it! Unfortunately most parents consider themselves creatively challenged when it comes to passing their faith in the home. So the church family ministry curriculum should be filled with answers and helps on training the trainer. The church could offer ongoing, repeating classes on how to teach object lessons for a fun family night that really help as to the “power of how.” The following questions reveal how the churches are doing, on average, in training parents this family discipline.

Survey Questions about Training in the Home

Training question one:

Does your church have an intentional official ministry to train parents to formally teach their children spiritual truths: To have family fun nights?

Table 7 Training Question One

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	27	48.21%
SOMEWHAT	19	33.93%
ONGOING	10	17.86%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Training question two:

Does your church have an intentional official ministry to train parents to formally teach their children spiritual truths: To have family traditions with a spiritual focus?

Table 8 Training Question Two

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	33	58.93%
SOMEWHAT	12	21.43%
ONGOING	11	19.64%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Training question three:

Does your church have an intentional official ministry to train parents to formally teach their children spiritual truths: To have one on one spiritual teaching time with children?

Table 9 Training Question Three

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	31	55.36%
SOMEWHAT	16	28.57%
ONGOING	9	16.07%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Training question four:

Does your church have an intentional official ministry to train parents to formally teach their children spiritual truths: To go on mission trips as family?

Table 10 Training Question Four

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	35	62.50%
SOMEWHAT	10	17.86%
ONGOING	11	19.64%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

The Teaching Component

The question should be asked and answered as to the difference between training and teaching. Teaching would include the more formal component to get the parent to understand and accept the responsibility of passing their faith to their own children as their obligation, and not the churches. It is getting a mindset inside the head of the father that opting out of or abdicating the responsibility is not an option. Teaching ongoing, repeatable parenting and heritage passing classes is not just important it should be mandatory. It is easy to lose sight of the parental obligation in the “everyday-ness” of life. If there are classes to attend that keep the responsibility in front of the parent, then the percentages of participation successes in each individual home should be high. Teaching is not a onetime event. It is a process. Even the airlines understand this truth. Although this author has flown thousands and thousands of miles and could probably recite what the flight attendant is going to tell all the passengers, every time he gets on a plane the flight attendant will go through the routine without fail. One thing that she/he will say is also valuable to success in teaching family ministry: “If there is the unlikely event of the loss of cabin pressure, a yellow mask will drop down from the overhead luggage rack above your seat. *If you are traveling with a young child, place your mask on first before you assist the child with theirs*” (emphasis mine). Repetition is the best teacher! Later in this thesis there will be a flowchart as to how to plan a yearly teaching plan for the church to carry out this responsibility to support the family unit (see appendix C).

The pastors who took the survey answered questions as to the teaching component of family ministry. Their responses are shown below.

Survey Questions about Teaching in the Home.

Teaching question one:

Does your church have an intentional formal teaching ministry or resource center with assets to train parents how to informally (in everyday life) teach their children spiritual truths: For bedtime?

Table 11 Teaching Question One

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	33	58.93%
SOMEWHAT	12	21.43%
ONGOING	11	19.64%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Teaching question two:

Does your church have an intentional formal teaching ministry or resource center with assets to train parents how to informally (in everyday life) teach their children spiritual truths: For mealtime?

Table 12 Teaching Question Two

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	35	62.50%
SOMEWHAT	13	23.21%
ONGOING	8	14.29%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Teaching question three:

Does your church have an intentional formal teaching ministry or resource center with assets to train parents how to informally (in everyday life) teach their children spiritual truths: For drive time?

Table 13 Teaching Question Three

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	43	76.79%
SOMEWHAT	6	10.71%
ONGOING	7	12.50%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Teaching question four:

Does your church have an intentional formal teaching ministry or resource center with assets to train parents how to informally (in everyday life) teach their children spiritual truths: For quiet time?

Table 14 Teaching Question Four

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	29	51.79%
SOMEWHAT	14	25.00%
ONGOING	13	23.21%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Table 15 Resulting Averages of All Survey Questions

57 Pastors Surveyed
<p><i>NONE – 57.6%</i></p> <p><i>SOMEWHAT – 22.9%</i></p> <p><i>ONGOING – 19.5%</i></p>

The alarming 57.6 percent who answered “NONE” was lower than expected. This author over a period of a little more than twelve years visited 1,200 +/- churches. While in each church, he observed many of the areas of ministry that were important to the individual churches. Without being judgmental and only observational, it is his unofficial opinion that family ministry was an area that received little attention and seemed foreign to the

congregation. Often children and/or youth ministries were construed as family ministry, yet were far from it. While incredibly important to the health of a church, a healthy children's or youth ministry can represent a gathering of people who are subconsciously abdicating their parental responsibility and walking to their cars after worship on Sunday feeling good that they have their children in Sunday School. They walk away often having nothing spiritual again in the home, except maybe incidental activities like mealtime prayer, until the next Sunday morning.

The survey results of this study correlates closely to a study done by Timothy Paul Jones found in his book *Family Ministry Field Guide*. He writes, "For so long I had seen parents as the problem. I thought most parents were denying their responsibility for their children's spiritual development, but had located the problem in the wrong place. The greater problem was the church's failure to acknowledge or equip parents as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives."¹⁸ Jones goes on to reveal the percentages in the church in which he is a pastor and others of like practice, where he collected information about factors in parental disengagement from family ministry. He enters data in a chart that 52% say they lack both the training and time to be effective "disciples" of their children.¹⁹

Student Survey

In order to test the veracity of this thesis, a survey, the same survey given to the pastors on the email list, was given to the students at Baptist Bible College of Springfield, Missouri. In a chapel service, the anonymous survey was passed to students who volunteered to participate. They were asked to answer to the best of their recollection the same questions that their own

¹⁸Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 110.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 111.

pastor may have answered also. A complete copy of the results of the survey can be found in Appendix B of this thesis. To the best of this author's ability, the survey was explained, ample time was given to the students to think about the answers, and the results collected. The students were aware that the survey was anonymous and the individual answers would never be connected with their names. The results were telling. The overall percentage averages were as follows.

Table 16 Results of Student Surveys

214 Students Surveyed
<i>NONE – 41.6%</i>
<i>SOMEWHAT – 31.9%</i>
<i>ONGOING – 26.5%</i>

It is curious as to the difference in percentages. These students come from either the churches represented in the pastor's survey or from churches of like methodology and philosophy... so why the gap in percentage points between the pastors' and the students' answers? For the "NONE" category, the average percentage answers the pastors gave was 57.6 and the average of the students was 41.6. That is a difference of 15 percentage points. Again in the "ONGOING" category, the pastors' percentage was 19.5% and the students were 26.5%. That represents a difference of seven percentage points. When adding the "NONE" and "SOMEWHAT" categories together, the pastors put their churches at an 80.5% and in the same two categories the students put their churches at 73.5%, seven percentage points lower than the

pastors. Either the pastors were harder on themselves knowing this important ministry has not captured their attention as they would wish, or the students were easy on their churches, trying not to be too critical of their pastor. It is also possible that the students see some of the questions in a different light than the pastor. Perhaps a student hearing a sermon or sensing an activity the pastor promoted was family oriented, and fell into a category that the pastor did not see the same way. It is also within the realm of possibilities that churches with an ongoing family ministry have sent more students to Baptist Bible College than those in the “NONE” or “SOMEWHAT” columns.

Connecting the Dots

Sometimes raw numbers are cold and calculatingly painful. When the family doctor calls a patient in and reads the numbers off their health chart, some may be quite agreeable and easy to accept, but if a number is way off normal, a sense of doom can easily overtake a person. In the busy life of a pastor it is nice to see numbers that are agreeable. It is very nice if those numbers show healthy growth of the body of Christ. But if one risks taking a family ministry survey and the numbers are not close to “normal,” can that same sense of doom overtake him, or can it be easily explained away? Timothy Jones, in his *Field Guide to Family Ministry*, provides some similarly interesting percentage numbers in the Appendices of his book. Some of the numbers may take your breath away, especially the ones where the numbers show that churches are failing to train the trainer. In one survey he enters the data that presents the answer to a straightforward question. The question is “How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me engage actively in my child’s spiritual development?” The answer to the category “NEVER” is 68%.²⁰

²⁰Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 218.

In order to connect the dots and make sense of them, one only needs to go back to the Billy Graham Association survey where the four different generations were asked the question “Do you consider yourself to have a personal relationship with God?” You perhaps will remember the numbers dropped considerable from generation to generation until the fourth generation found it’s number at 4%. There was a 61 percentage-point drop in the course of about forty years indicating that as parents, we were not successfully passing our faith to the next generation.

When one sees the percentages of churches that do not possess an ongoing, family ministry strategy at 80.5%, it makes one ask questions about the focus of ministry toward the culture in which we live. It is true that a pastor has many issues besides family ministry with which to engage that takes a lot of his time and energy. But seeing the magnitude of the failure of families inside this present culture, isn’t it time to, at the least, look to where we might find some “best practices” of family ministry and position them into the strategies of family ministry within our churches? If the two percentages were added together and divided by two, the number of churches falling into the “NONE and SOMEWHAT” categories still tells us that churches are severely lacking and that family ministry as a whole is on life support and in need of immediate attention.

Health Checkup for a Church

It is easy to look at survey numbers and make judgment calls as to whether or not different churches view family ministry as important. It is another thing altogether to buckle down and find out if the church you pastor, which has an ongoing family ministry, is being effective in its mission to families. Sonrise Church of Clovis, California, did just that. The announcement was made several Sundays before, then on a given Sunday the family ministry team distributed family evaluations to every adult attending. No pressure was placed on anyone,

and there were some who declined, but a large contingency of the adult congregation decided to take the evaluation. The family ministry team, consisting of seven individuals from the congregation, met and scoured the anonymous evaluations. Even with an ongoing ministry, the evaluations showed that there were families falling through the cracks and were struggling.

Actually it should come as no surprise that families all over the nation are struggling when seeing their country becoming more and more secular. Before we look at the numbers from Sunrise Church, consider an article in *USA Today* written October 27, 2014, concerning this very issue.

If you're dismayed that one in five Americans (20 percent) are "nones"—people who claim no particular religious identity—brace yourself. How does 38 percent sound? That's what religion researcher David Kinnaman calculates when he adds "the unchurched, the never-churched and the skeptics" to the nones. By his count, roughly four in 10 people living in the continental United States are actually "post-Christian" and "essentially secular in belief and practice." If asked, the "churchless" would likely check the "Christian" box on a survey, even though they may not have darkened the door of a church in years."²¹

That is a frightening 18-percentage point jump in people saying they have no religious identity. Forty percent of our nation considers that they are post-Christian, which is another way of saying they are secularists. "Ed Stetzer, of LifeWay Research, once called nominals, people attached by name only, "survey Christians." They do not want to cut ties with their parents or go all the way to atheism, so they just say "Christian" since it is the default category from their heritage."²²

Of course there have been doubters that our nation's children are leaving the faith at alarming rates. But Kinnaman now has the numbers to back that up: "...the wall between the churched and the churchless is growing higher and more impenetrable as more people have no

²¹Cathy Lynn Grossman, "Secularism Grows as More U.S. Christians Turn 'Churchless,'" Churchless (2014), <http://www.christianheadlines.com/news/secularism-grows-as-more-u-s-christians-turn-churchless.html> (accessed October 27, 2014).

²²Ibid.

muscle memory of what it means to be a regular attendee at a house of worship.”²³

All this causes a pastor to wonder about the people he pastors; thus the reason for evaluating the congregation at Sonrise Church. The family ministry team found that 157 participated in the anonymous family evaluation; 137 completed the marriage section, and 20 completed the singles category; 123 completed the category titled children/grandchildren. Under the heading Nurturing Intimacy they found the following:

Those who indicated they had a date night twice or more per month to focus on one another without children equaled 44.5%. Participants who said they wrote a note, gave a flower, or some other tangible expression of love at least twice per month totaled 35%. Those who called during the day, sat down to chat, took walks together, or some other time of focused, non-task driven communication at least three times per week came to 77.4%. Contributors who said they prayed with my spouse at least twice per week were at 35.8%, and those who demonstrated meaningful touch and/or verbal affirmation at least once per day equaled 76.6%

Although two of the above categories registered a high percentage, the other three were severely lacking and disappointingly low. Sitting down to chat and experiencing meaningful touch could simply be that the physical desires have forced the couple to verbally communicate before satisfying physical needs. It seems that if the two statements that pulled high percentages were indeed deeply meaningful, they would somehow be able to pull the percentage points of the important other three (date nights, cards/flowers, prayer) upward.

Under the heading Avoiding Dangers, the team found that 59.7% took steps to reduce risk to my marriage in vulnerable areas (bad temper, office relationships, demeaning

²³Cathy Lynn Grossman, “Secularism Grows as More U.S. Christians Turn ‘Churchless,’” *Churchless* (2014), <http://www.christianheadlines.com/news/secularism-grows-as-more-u-s-christians-turn-churchless.html> (accessed October 27, 2014).

language, etc.) by maintaining boundaries, increasing accountability, etc. Spouses who indicated they took care physically and emotionally to be the best lifelong partner they could be came out to be 54.7%. Those brave enough to admit they were wrong and apologized and/or forgave before going to bed after conflicts with their spouse was 67.2%.

Further inquiry into the area of marriage found that 81% said they were confident that their marriage would last until one of them dies, yet only 52.6% said they believed their marriage for the most part was God-honoring and happy. The percentage disparity between the couples that said they believed their marriage would last until one of them dies and the percentage of couples that said they believe their marriage, for the most part, is God-honoring, is curious. It seems to say that some are living in a situation that has the potential of trouble boiling from under the surface of the relationship. Perhaps there is uncertainty in the home. There is little doubt that the children in those homes feel the tensions it brings.

When asked to evaluate following the statement, “I am confident my children/grandchildren will have a strong faith in adulthood,” only slightly over one-third of the parents/grandparents surveyed said they were confident to highly confident. When 66% of the parents and grandparents are not confident that their children/grandchildren will have a strong faith in their adult life, it tends to make one believe that Americans are indeed entering a dark time in a now secularist nation. All this brings to the forefront of a pastor’s awareness the call for and a solid motivation to build a strong family ministry as the core of the church strategy.

Don’t Just Curse the Darkness

There is a continual battle for the hearts and minds of your children. It rages day in and day out. With the nation going more and more secular, away from faith in God, parents sometimes wonder how they can somehow be more effective in giving our children the best possible chance to have a strong faith to pass on to their children. It is not enough to just curse

the darkness that seems to be closing in on families. Moms and Dads must be bearers of the light, for no amount of darkness, no matter how thick, can extinguish one light, however small. The church is not the sole answer. The home is not the sole answer. It will happen much more easily when the church and home are neither dependent on nor independent from each other. Rather, the church and home need to be interdependent, working together to carry out the Deuteronomy 6 and the Psalm 78 mandates. It takes a strong, collective will to accomplish it together. It will require a workable, doable, sustainable plan to carry out the ministry effectively, and then to drive it into the home. Hopefully the following chapters will help give pastors a plan, a starting point with which to lay out such a plan for the families within a congregation.

CHAPTER IV

DEFINITIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAMILY MINISTRY AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO A LOCAL CHURCH

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children of one's youth.
Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!
He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. Psalm 127:3-5¹

Warrior Parents

The church is full of warriors whose hands are holding arrows readying to be placed on the bowstring and launched toward significant targets. The targets are represented by the evident needs of the culture where spiritual darkness lies. The warriors (parents) constitute a sizeable throng of participants useful in spiritual warfare taking place in their communities on a daily basis. These warriors assemble in the local churches in every town and village in the United States. A beautiful fact about these gathered warriors is that they emerge weekly from every segment of the culture to worship together. If they can be trained and organized, then every area of society can be affected by their contributions, and targets can be identified in every segment of society.

The local church is the only place in society where all seven cultural entities are consistently gathered each week at one time. These sectors have been identified as “Arts and

¹ESV

Entertainment, Business, Education, Family, Government/Military, Media, and Religion.”² If the church members consisting of representatives of these groups can pull together and head in the same direction, then that church can make a difference in its community, if not the entire city. It is the assertion of this thesis that since individual families make up the whole of the congregation, then it makes sense that they should be organized, taught, and trained to make the best use of the arrows they hold in their quivers!

Like all armies, if the troops are not organized, then their power is limited and even threatening. Sadly, this author has had conversations with leaders who see any new family coming to join the church as a threat. They are something/someone to battle over the next few years, a problem to overcome. This fear of a threat is not anything new. Perhaps parents are tagged with this title more often than is thought. A humorous article on this possible threat can be seen in Table 1, The Power of Parental Involvement.³

Table 1 The Power of Parental Involvement

Collaboration Counts		
1 parent	=	a fruitcake
2 parents	=	fruitcake and friend
3 parents	=	troublemakers
5 parents	=	let's have a meeting
10 parents	=	we'd better listen
25 parents	=	our dear friends
50 parents	=	a powerful organization⁴

²Stoyan Zaimov, “Engaging the ‘Seven Mountains of Culture’—Christians Urged to Transform Culture Outside of Church Walls,” *Cultural Wars* (December, 2013), <http://www.christianpost.com/news/engaging-the-seven-mountains-of-culture-christians-urged-to-transform-culture-outside-of-church-walls-110491> (accessed October 29, 2014).

³ See Appendix B Table 1.

⁴Great Schools Staff, “Powerful Parents Transform Schools,” *Parental Volunteers* (2013), www.greatschools.org/improvement/16-powerful-parents-transform-schools.gs. (Accessed June 2, 2014).

One of the things immediately noticeable about this humorous list is the last line: fifty parents make a powerful organization. Indeed they do! Any church that realizes this fact will be ahead of the game from the start. It seems that every church could eventually gather fifty parents together and create a powerful force within the church called family ministry.

Strategy One: Somebody Who Will Lose Sleep

There will be little progress toward a powerful family ministry without taking the first step and that first step begins with the gatekeeper (pastor). Lacking his blessing, it is doubtful the ministry will survive because it will be necessary for him to use his pulpit to promote and sell it to the congregation. When the senior pastor is on board, perhaps the largest hill family ministry has to climb has indeed been scaled. It will be important to remember that because the senior pastor has so many more issues to solve with other ministry silos within the church, he should act as the cheerleader and not the champion of the family ministry. The pastor, after bathing the issue in prayer, should recruit a fitting couple that will champion the family ministry cause. It should be someone who will lose sleep over the health and administration of such an important ministry. The use of the phrase “lose sleep” has been correctly chosen because as soon as a church decides to enter the arena of “family,” it enters what Satan considers his territory. He has been working and is still on the prowl to redefine family as anything except the biblical definition. When family life within the church begins to turn for the better, be very aware there will be a battle to wage and it will not be pretty. Also, it needs to be said that a pastor may not want to be the champion of the family ministry because of the condition in which his family finds itself. If he has one or more prodigals, he may feel disqualified to be the champion, or in a worst-case scenario, he may unintentionally battle the ministry so as not to

allow it to show the perceived weakness of his own. He may choose to be in the background which is okay, and hopefully it may even encourage him to move toward finding a solution for his. It is true, when two great forces such as church and family come together, a synergy will materialize that will attract attention on all sides of the church/family issues.

When Family and Church Collide

Any collision will attract attention. Who has not witnessed two cars colliding, or two football players colliding, or heard of two airplanes colliding in mid-air that has not attracted immediate and overwhelming attention? When two great influences collide, neither remains the same after the collision. When a collision occurs between the church and family, neither remains the same. If it is a negative collision, perhaps passions such as bitterness or cynicism may result that can weaken both parties; but if it is a positive collision, a synergy can occur that will strengthen both entities. In his book *Think Orange* the author lists the major institutional church movements and writes:

Some leaders suggest these movements could never be relational,
that traditional churches can never be relevant,
that megachurches can never be intimate,
that attractional churches can never be missional,
that missional churches don't draw people,
that emergent churches never teach anything substantial,
that seeker churches don't have depth,
that organic churches don't have any direction.⁵

It can be amusing to see how some view others differently than themselves and create a box into which each neatly fit. It is easy to see how some perceive how others are different than they are, and usually it is to validate the way they want to do church. However, instead of seeing everyone differently, and trying to find ways to divide, why not find a way to unite. Would not one great way for that to happen be through the family? The author of *Think Orange*

⁵Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide*. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 19.

believes it is important to be willing to rethink how your church partners with and influences family. For the above list he has some ideas, so he feigns a joke when he suggests:

If you are institutional, it can create more stability,
 If you are attractional, it could make you more relevant,
 If you are emergent, it will create a meaningful dialogue,
 If you are missional, it helps build a bridge to the community,
 If you are traditional, it can reclaim your heritage,
 If you are non-denominational, it will give you the flexibility to adapt.⁶

Although the author suggests he is “kind of kidding,”⁷ his ideas have a nice ring to them.

Successful family ministry can and does bring with it a lot of added value. No matter the philosophy or methodology of the church movement (and there will be more future movements thought up), every local church across the board should, for reasons stated in this thesis, make one of their pillars of practice, family ministry. Even though this paper is not touting family ministry as a major growth strategy, in and of itself growth will happen because of the very nature of it. The synergy of the positive collision of church and family will create it. Perhaps many “lookie-loos” will come just to witness the collision. The question then is can that local church capture the synergy and make it useful for both entities.

Strategy Two: The Plan

Before the plan can be laid out and executed, barriers to the plan need to be identified and overcome. It is doubtful that anyone will argue with the statement that there are difficulties within every home. If left unattended, difficulties will slouch into problems, which cause every problem to have core obstacles that are at its root. In order to identify solutions to the problems, time must be spent defining the problem. When that happens, the solution will usually be

⁶Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide*. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 19.

⁷Ibid.

obvious. Therefore, it cannot just be stated that there is a problem. Its root causes must be uncovered.

Overcoming the Barriers to Family Ministry in the Home

Looking at the family and its resistance or lack of pursuit of spiritual training within the home, this author has identified four barriers to implementing a formal path to passing the faith. They are delineated in the following chart as well as in the written descriptions provided below the chart. These identified barriers will severely hinder the intentionality of the father as he considers teaching his children in the home. They are identified as biblical illiteracy, abdication of the responsibility to the church or school, there are no role models, and there is no urgency.

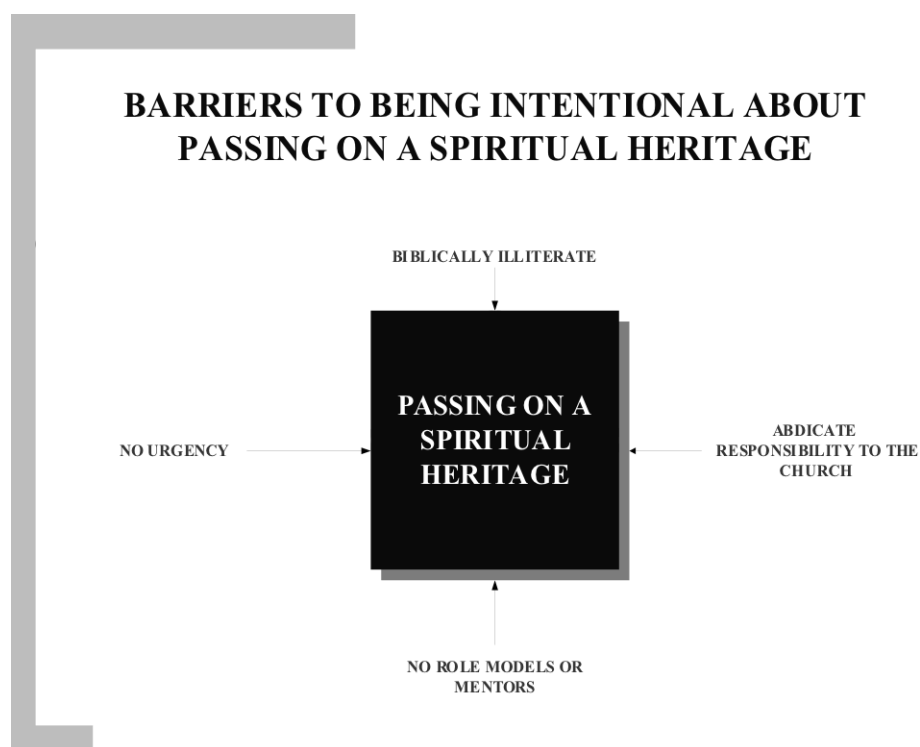


Figure 1. Barriers to Being Intentional about Passing on a Spiritual Heritage.⁸

⁸J. Otis Ledbetter and Jim Weidmann, "Family Ministry in Focus," unpublished White Paper, Heritage Builders Global, 2005.

Parent's Biblical Illiteracy

The justification behind Barna's statistic of their more than 67% abdication rate⁹ may be that parents do not feel confident in their understanding of the Bible and their ability to teach it to their children. Fathers are being asked to take on the spiritual leadership of the home and are not being instructed in how to use God's Word to solve family issues and instruct their children.¹⁰ Many do not understand or know how to use commentaries, leading search software, and/or translations.

Parents Are Abdicating Responsibility

The church is offering Sunday school programs for children and youth, relieving the parent of their responsibilities. The church cannot assume the primary responsibility for the spiritual training of children when they only get forty-five minutes to three hours per week to influence. Parents have the children seven days a week for hours of contact time per day!

Parents Have No Role Models or Mentors

In a show of hands survey conducted at a family workshop this author was conducting, about 90% of the parents said that they were not intentional because they did not have a plan. No one had shown or demonstrated to them how to be the spiritual leader within the home. The unofficial, nonscientific survey found that the majority of households represented at that conference had been married for a while. Sadly the show of hands indicates that a high percentage of the couples were admitting to a lack of mentors and role models early on in their lives. The percentage of this unofficial survey is validated by another statistic that shows just

⁹George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003), 77-78.

¹⁰Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 111-112.

33% of “20-somethings” are taking their children to church.¹¹ It seems they too have no role models demonstrating the way.

Parents Have No Sense of Urgency

Twenty-one years seems like a long time to influence your children. However, in the book *Spiritual Milestones for your Children*, the authors report that there is “very little difference in a person’s theology between the ages of thirteen and when they become an adult. The receptivity to a parent’s values and beliefs is strongest between the ages of five and thirteen.”¹² Parents need to be very intentional in cultivating a relationship and laying the foundation for their child’s beliefs at this time. Author Jim Weidmann goes on to state “research shows that there is a 32% probability of a child coming to Christ before the age of thirteen. If a person does not accept Christ as Savior before the age of fourteen, the likelihood of ever doing so gets slimmer.”¹³ Armed with this statistic, if parents develop a certain sense of urgency, perhaps the barriers would begin to crumble.

Overcoming the Barriers to Family Ministry in the Church

Many churches have good intentions as they enter the reality that family ministry must be a part of the church’s program. When the collision between family and church happens, some leaders will back off because of the sheer labor intensiveness of the ministry.

Similar to the barriers that parents will face, the church will also face a series of barriers to family ministry. These barriers have been identified in Figure 2. These problems must also be solved before the church can move successfully into the family ministry arena. There are four

¹¹Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 220.

¹²J. Otis and Gail Ledbetter and Jim and Janet Weidmann, *Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children’s Spiritual Passages* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builders Books /Chariot Victor, 2009), 12.

¹³Ibid.

key issues to be faced down before moving past the planning stages. There are delineated on the barriers chart below.

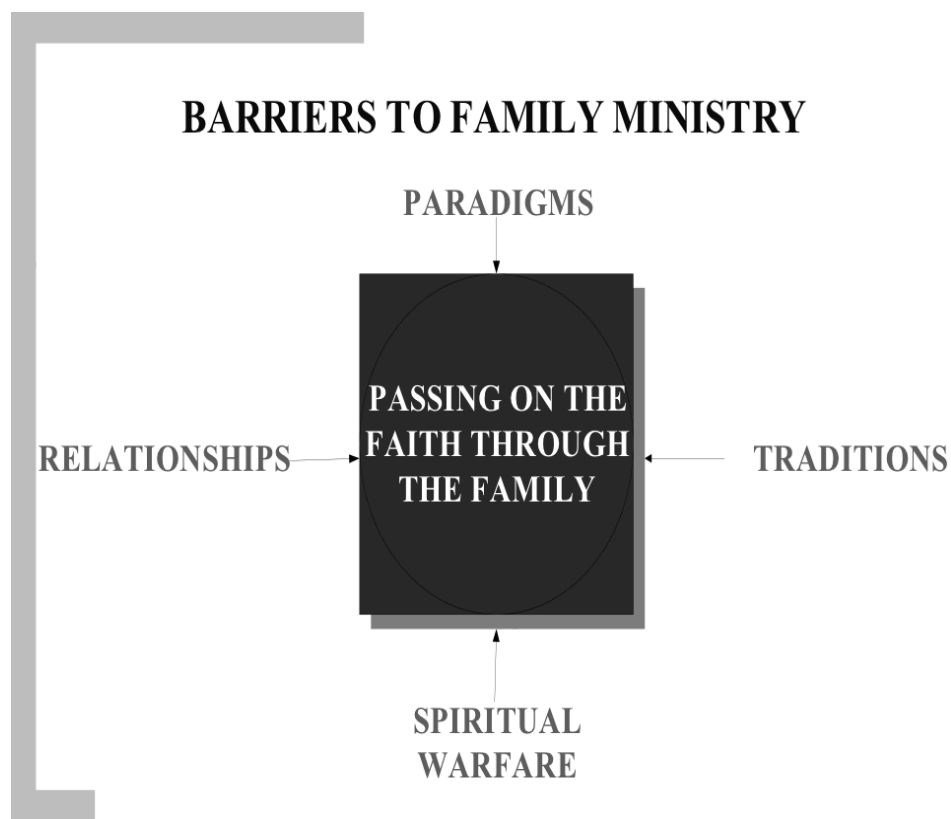


Figure 2. Barriers to Family Ministry.¹⁴

Paradigms

There are several key rules and experiences that filter information to help form our judgments and perceptions. These faulty perceptions need to be faced down before a church can experience the full transition to family ministry.

First, the church cannot treat all families as the same. They must deal with the different marital statuses that exist within church: e.g. traditional, blended, single. Second, the measurement of success needs to change. It is no longer about people in pews; it is about the

¹⁴J. Otis Ledbetter and Jim Weidmann, "Family Ministry in Focus," unpublished White Paper, Heritage Builders Global, 2005.

impact on the home. Perhaps the church might do well to pay attention to the number of baby dedications, baptisms, and families involved in formal and informal teaching times (family nights) at home. The third issue is that the ad hoc individual ministry silo programming needs to change to an integrated approach focused on impacting the family at home. Fourth comes the idea that who is responsible for the spiritual training of children must shift to the parents. The church needs to let it go! Finally, the church needs to understand that paradigms take time. This is not an overnight process.¹⁵

Traditions

Some of the existing “traditional” church efforts need to be adapted to support family ministry. Typically, the church pulls families apart by separating the children from the parents and putting them in different age groups called Sunday School or junior church. The family ministry team will draw from the different silo ministries to form an advisory group. They should include the children’s, women’s, and men’s programming ministries, then unite them in family ministry outreach. A problem to overcome here traditionally is the family has not been considered a core value of the church. One of the critical success factors will be the need for the senior pastor to buy-in, making family part of the church’s vision/emphasis and to promote family from the platform.

Spiritual Warfare

The number one issue will be that when the individual church steps out into serious Family Ministry, the spiritual attacks will begin. Satan knows that the family is the primary means to pass the Gospel message, and is doing everything in his power to destroy it. So, as a church steps onto the front lines, prayer must be the foundation of the

¹⁵J. Otis Ledbetter and Jim Weidmann, “Family Ministry in Focus,” unpublished White Paper, Heritage Builders Global, 2005.

church's efforts. The people, the programs, and the families must be constantly lifted up in prayer. A prayer team needs to be started before any decisions are made!

Relationships

Perhaps if there is a lack of spiritual leaders in the church today, it is because there is a lack of spiritual leaders in the homes. Until these relationships in both areas are established, a church will struggle to get the support it needs. This lack calls out for a need to have a strong men's program in the church to help cultivate godly relationships for male encouragement and mentoring. It seems that there are a number of people who go from church to church searching for connection. In leisure conversation this author finds that people leave churches due to a lack of connection to that church through relationships. Also keep in mind that there is an issue here to be recognized. Some Senior Pastors will not preach on family or champion family ministry because their relationships at home need mending.

Family Ministry Facts to Consider

The church, family, and government are the only three institutions ordained by God. They were created to be interdependent not independent. Just looking at the church and home today, churches seem to emphasize ministry outreach and do not focus on growing and equipping families to pass their faith to the next generation. For instance, the traditional family is the most effective instrument ever designed to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The vast majority of believers come to Christ when they are children, under the influence of their parents. This means the church and family cannot work separately from each other if God's people are to be successful in passing their faith to the next generation. One cannot have a strong church without strong families and the reverse is also true; one cannot have strong

families without a strong church. Consequently, the “link” or connection between the home and church is critical to the success of their interdependent relationship.¹⁶

Everyone involved has to sometimes be reminded that the interdependent link of church and home is a conditional one. If the church provides Education, Training, and Community that strengthens families in their relationship to each other and to God, then it will result in the families being involved and being committed to the church’s ministry outreach.

What are the definitions of those three critical components? Education means parents must be taught biblical doctrines and parenting principles. Training is the practical teaching tips and techniques shared so parents can be equipped with the resources that engage the family in their spiritual training and growth. Community requires creating an environment that allows families to serve, go on mission trips, be engaged in spiritual leadership roles, and enjoy fellowship opportunities with others.¹⁷

The result will be that church educates, equips, and encourages parents to be the spiritual leaders and the spiritual hearts of the home to pass on their faith to the next generation.

The Solution

The beautiful element of ministry is that each church is different and each is called to a different community of people to meet the various needs of the community, whether they are spiritual, relational, or physical. It is true that every staff team and individual has his or her ideas of what is required to fulfill their ministry calling. Inside today’s church-building economy, there are associations of churches that try to leverage what may be working in one church and make it a one-size-fits-all situation. However, the application of the association’s

¹⁶J. Otis Ledbetter and Jim Weidmann, “Family Ministry in Focus,” unpublished White Paper, Heritage Builders Global, 2005.

¹⁷Ibid.

ideas of growth will look different in each unique setting. Therefore, a common solution does not exist across the spectrum of church ministries. What does exist to help each church drive their vision, programs, and participation is a common architecture of effective family ministry elements. These elements represent categories of church programming that must be addressed for the family unit whereby each element takes on a different application to meet the unique needs of a congregation.

The architecture provides the organization for an individual church's integrated strategy. Integration must be addressed at three levels:

1. Integration with the church's overall vision.
2. Integration with the church's overall programs offered.
3. Integration with the home and family efforts to pass the faith to their children.

The Organization

Drawing on the experience from numerous churches where workshops have been held and that have experienced impact in engaging their families in the spiritual training of their children, the following architecture was developed. The architecture brings together five areas that are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive in representing their offerings. The key to understanding this is that these areas are viewed from the perspective of impacting the home through intentional education, engagement, and encouragement.

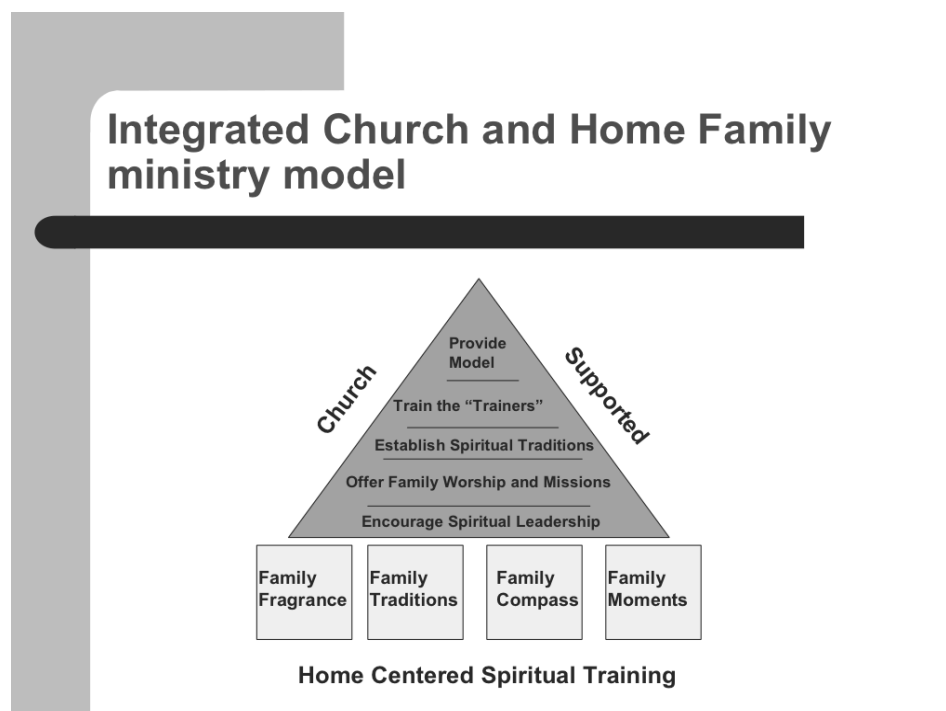


Figure 3. Integrated Church and Home Family Ministry Mode¹⁸

This structure is unique in its approach because it establishes a spiritual training model for the home and a supporting church model based on the effective elements for Family Ministry within the church. It will facilitate linking the church and home in their efforts to pass the faith to the next generation. This author believes that the church and home operate independently of each other when it comes to the spiritual training of children. This type of structure, with the proper complimentary resources, will help provide training and programmatic content addressing both models (home and church) in order to maximize its impact.

¹⁸J. Otis Ledbetter and Jim Weidmann, "Family Ministry in Focus," unpublished White Paper, Heritage Builders Global, 2005.

Strategy Three: The Coordination of Church and Home

The Role of the Church

The foundational biblical understanding, found in Deuteronomy 6:4-7, is that the parents, not the church, are responsible for the spiritual training of children. God created the family as the primary “institution” to pass the faith to the next generation, not the church. However, the church must have a plan, based on the architecture, to support the family in their efforts by:

Providing a Model

The objective of the church is to give parents a plan that they can follow. One obvious reason parents do not engage in the spiritual training of their children in the home is that they do not have a plan or model to follow. Perhaps they do not know what spiritual leadership looks like in the home. To this author, it all begins by defining what a family heritage looks like and begin with the goal in mind. The book *Your Heritage* provides a biblically based model believing that a heritage consists of three components.

The spiritual legacy defined is the process whereby parents model and reinforce the unseen realities of the spiritual life. The emotional legacy can be described as the enduring sense of security and stability nurtured in an environment of safety and love. The third definition is of the social legacy. It includes giving to children the insights skills necessary to cultivate healthy and stable relationships.¹⁹

¹⁹J Otis Ledbetter and Kurt Bruner, *Your Heritage: How to Be Intentional About the Legacy You Leave* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builder Books/Chariot Victor, 2003), 27, 40, 60, 77.

The husband comes to the marriage with his legacy elements and the wife with hers... good or bad. Through completing three legacy surveys provided in the book *Your Heritage*²⁰, the couple will make an intentional decision as to what to keep from what they were given and what not to pass on.²¹ Then by focusing on the “tools” for passing a legacy, the church teaches the four areas of intentionality which are: “Family Fragrance—the atmosphere of the home; Family Traditions—spiritual milestones in the life of each child; Family Compass—biblical truth or what is true north; and Family Moments—teachable opportunities for a family night.”²²

It cannot be overstated, so let it be stated again. The Senior Pastor must teach “family” from the pulpit and assign a champion for the family ministry cause. Just as the families must have a plan, the church must identify, communicate, and support their plan for family ministry. The Senior Pastor is like a CEO and must balance many areas of responsibility; therefore, a Champion for Family Ministry must be identified who can execute the plans at the church level.

Training the Trainers (Parents) through: Education, Equipping, and Encouragement

One good way to make the family ministry plan work more efficiently is to position parents as children’s pastors. Today’s culture seems to be spiritually illiterate. Parents are not confident in their understanding of biblical principles.²³ The concept here is to train the trainers by educating parents on spiritual impact opportunities, teaching and equipping them with the “curriculum” they need to teach their children, and encouraging them by celebrating their achievements in the church. Therefore, parents must be brought to a level of confidence in their

²⁰J Otis Ledbetter and Kurt Bruner, *Your Heritage: How to Be Intentional About the Legacy You Leave* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builder Books/Chariot Victor, 2003), 55-56, 74-75, 89-90.

²¹ See Appendix D for surveys and C for charts

²²*Ibid.*, 102.

²³George Barna, *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), 78.

faith. Parents must be brought to the understanding that spiritual formation in the home is their responsibility.

If the parents are to be their children's pastors, then they should be offered classes that lay a solid foundation in their understanding of their faith and how to teach it to children. To begin with, parents must be taught how to lead their children to Christ. It is one of the greatest privileges a parent has, and, for whatever reason—maybe due to a lack of understanding and confidence—many give it to the “children's/youth” pastors. Here the church can provide special catalytic equipping classes. These classes can be incorporated into the church calendar and address areas such as discipline or spiritual milestones in the life of the child. The church could also consider providing a Faith at Home resource center. The parenting classic books and resources can be made available--perhaps even a book of the month highlighted in the bulletin to inform parents.

Establishing Spiritual Traditions

The church needs to create opportunities for parents to train and celebrate spiritual milestones on a child's maturation journey. As churches have moved away from denominational affiliations, they have left traditions behind. Traditions were critical in the Old Testament to help carry the understanding of their faith from generation to generation. Today, traditions can provide the strategic plan for the spiritual training of children and engage parents in the process, if used to drive and encourage the spiritual growth process. By establishing traditions that require the parents to “teach” their children and then are reinforced through existing youth and adult programming, a church can be successful in transferring the spiritual leadership role to the home.

The church can use key events to create opportunities for spiritual training. Just like a church uses marriage as a requirement for pre-marital classes, so it can use baby dedication to

teach its spiritual parenting plan to equip parents to become intentional. Perhaps it can use baptism to teach parents the apologetics of the faith, or it can use the transition into college to teach a joint parent-teen Christian Worldview class. The church can even use family “crisis points” to cultivate relationship opportunities, turning them into spiritual breakthroughs. An integrated church strategy with home will equip and engage parents. The goal is to always look at the impact in the home, not the program offerings. So whatever is offered at church, it must be done with an understanding of a desired impact in the home.

Engineering Family Worship and Missions

Providing a real life faith experience will be an opportunity that will have a lasting impact. You see passion is caught more than taught. Children need to see and experience with their parents true worship and true faith being lived out. The church needs to provide opportunities that bring families together for life changing impact.

For instance, create family ministry programming such as family VBS or family projects like “Trunk or Treat” for Halloween. Develop a monthly worship service to bring “big people to little people church” where both can worship together. One approach is to shut down all activities one week for family worship service so as not to conflict with current programs. This will also give teachers a break. Offer service projects or mission trips for families. To reach the next generation, you reach them through experience, compassion, and story, all of which can be incorporated into a mission’s project or a trip.

The Role of the Family

This author believes that every person receives a heritage from his or her parents, good or bad. As stated earlier, it is composed of a spiritual, social, and emotional legacy. The key is to be intentional in understanding what and how to pass your values, beliefs, and skills to the next generation. Within each family there are four areas where parents can engage their children

that will help the heritage passing process be successful. The first is the atmosphere of the home. Based on an acrostic, the components of the atmosphere are identified in the book *Family Fragrance*.²⁴

Family Fragrance

The environment of the home is critical to establishing an atmosphere of love and acceptance where values and beliefs can be passed. Each parent should ask himself or herself, “Does the atmosphere of our home warm the heart or tighten the stomach?” By focusing on their A.R.O.M.A. (Affection, Respect, Order, Merriment, and Affirmation, shown in a home), parents can create a setting where their values can be caught and taught. These five components defined are as follows.

Affection is the tangible sign of love, a consistent loving act of the will, openly and sometimes spontaneously displayed. Respect is holding other people in honor so they may recognize their own true worth. Order is the act of managing and modeling godly leadership in the home, resulting in a resting place for the soul. Merriment is an atmosphere of enthusiasm, coupled with uninhibited laughter and noise. Affirmation is an established, clearly held position declared as true.²⁵

Family Traditions

The second area parents can use to pass heritage to their children is family traditions. These traditions provide the bearings on which the heritage glides from generation to generation.

²⁴J Otis and Gail Ledbetter, *Family Fragrance: Practical Intentional Ways to Fill Your Home with the Aroma of Love* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builder Books/Chariot Victor, 2009).

²⁵*Ibid.*, 25, 49, 75, 103, 135.

Today, they can serve as a backbone to the strategic plan for spiritual training within families. By creating spiritual milestones, parents can intentionally move their children through the spiritual growth process. As mentioned in the church section, it is the coming together of parent-led teaching times around a spiritual milestone taught in the home and celebrated in the church. The following are suggestions to add to the church calendar so the church and parents can use these celebrations as leverage to reach others who perhaps would otherwise not be reachable.

Baby Dedication: A time when parents stand before the congregation and commit to raise their child through prayer, modeling, and education so the child can come to the point of decision for Christ.

Baptism and Communion: The time when parents lead their child to commit their life to Christ and the child desires to make a public expression of their faith to the church body allowing them to “commune” with fellow believers.

Preparing for Adolescence: A weekend away with the same gender parent to prepare the child for the big changes he/she will go through socially and physically in his/her life during the teen years. This is also when the act of intimacy is addressed to capture the child in their innocence to place it in proper biblical context.

Purity Ring: A commitment in marriage starts now (before marriage it is call purity; after marriage it is called integrity). In biblical terms, it is important to explain why children should wait until marriage to give themselves to another.

Rite of Passage: This is the time, as the son or daughter steps off into manhood or womanhood, that they understand the priorities and disciplines of a godly man and woman, and take responsibility for their own spiritual growth.

Christian Worldview: Before heading off to college or the workplace, children need to know how their faith is relevant to their culture, enabling them to make “wise” decisions in life.²⁶

Family Compass

What is truth in today’s culture of tolerance? More than fifty percent of teenagers today do not believe in absolute truth.²⁷ However, you cannot expect children to make a decision between right and wrong if you have never taught them what right is. Parents must teach their children the fundamentals of the faith to help them navigate through the deceptions of their culture.

Every element of what you believe should transcend all elements of any family ministry model whether affirming your child in Christ, celebrating a spiritual milestone, or using a teachable moment. The goal is to help your children understand truth in a culture of tolerance. You cannot expect a child to make a decision between truth and non-truth if you have never taught him truth! In their book *Family Compass*, Kurt and Olivia Bruner articulate four principles that support the need for a family to know where “true north” really is. Of course the underlying answer is the Holy Scriptures. The authors offer these four principles:

The Legacy Principle is described as parents doing today what will directly influence the multi-generational cycle of family traits, beliefs, and actions--for good or bad. The Likelihood Principle, defined in the context of healthy relationships, is where children tend to embrace the values of their parents. The Lenses Principle is when children need the corrective lenses of truth

²⁶J. Otis Ledbetter and Jim Weidmann, “Family Ministry in Focus” unpublished White Paper, Heritage Builders Global, 2005.

²⁷Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, 36.

in order to navigate the deceptive roads of life. Last is the Learning Principle which states that children can only learn what they are taught in a manner that will reach them.²⁸

Many Christians will embrace the essential tenets of orthodox Christianity as summarized by the National Associations of Evangelicals. Parents should know them and understand the associated apologetics to help their children stand firm for Christ in this culture where they now call good, evil, and evil, good. These four principles offer a workable manner in which to absorb the essential tenants, using them to inculcate the faith into the lives of their children.

Family Moments

Parents need to capture and create opportunities to pass their faith, in the everydayness of life, to their children. The ability to share biblical wisdom in daily life is teaching the application of God's Word, enabling our kids to be "doers" not just "hearers" of the Bible. So, parents need to create "formal" times of teaching to set up the "informal" opportunities of life. Moms and Dads can use the Family Night concept to use object lessons to teach biblical points for children around the ages of three to thirteen, or weekly family discussions on current events with biblical perspective for teens, and to gather the family together every night for evening prayers.

Parents also need to use the power of teachable moments to help children understand application of God's Word and God's wisdom. Look for moments each day to illustrate the application of biblical truth, whether it is on the way to soccer or discussing daily activities on the way home from school.

²⁸Kurt and Olivia Bruner, *The Family Compass: Practical, Intentional Ways to Pass Godly Values on to Your Child* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, 2003), 21, 34, 50, 60.

Strategy Four: Providing a Suggested Model

The word “suggested” used in the title of this paragraph is employed because there is not just one model to be used. This is not a one-size-fits-all plan. There are many plans available from which to choose. This thesis includes one that has worked in the author’s family and is presently working in many of the families of the church where the author of this paper is pastoring. So this paper puts forth “a” way, not “the” way to organize and implement a doable, sustainable model of family ministry within a local church. Also the plan this paper provides can be tweaked and stretched in order to super-impose its components over any church program silos currently operating without an overarching family ministry model. The plan that is to follow is one that had several heads getting together, looking at best practices, and then developing one from several others. Citing where the embryo ideas that grew into a full grown plan came from would be impossible, because it came from ideas being thrown into a conversational mix, then picking concepts from that stack of ideas and puzzling it together. That group of “heads” had two scribes, one of which was this author, who then placed the ideas into an understandable, unpublished model that has been shared, tweaked, and used by several churches. Perhaps some readers of this manuscript may eventually do the same as others, and fine-tune this plan to fit their ministry. One thing is certain, if a church is serious about family ministry, then it will all start with a plan or it will not successfully “get legs” at all.

The Implementation

After the senior pastor has bought into the idea of implementing a family ministry and a champion has been selected, then a team should be assembled. The first assignment for the team is to assess the families in the church. The team has to know whom they are serving. It is important they understand the uniqueness of the church members and their maturity when it comes to spiritual disciplines. It is those spiritual disciplines that the family ministry will be

attempting to influence. Assessments help to establish a baseline so you will later be able to measure the impact (see Appendix C for sample assessments). It is important to understand that each church's implementation will vary according to its demographics and vision.

The Vision

It all begins and ends with the family. So to start, the first question that you must answer is, "What do we want the families to do?" Once the plan has been developed, the team now must turn its focus on the church and its role to impact and support the families in their efforts in the home. Working through each architectural element in Table 15, the team will be answering the question, "What must the church provide to enable the parents to accomplish each component of their 'in the home' plan?"

With assessments in hand, the team now is beginning to understand what the church wants families to do in the home, and what the church must provide (programmatic elements) to support what is happening in those homes.

A Sample Model

Home (What the Church Wants Families to Do)

The church begins with teaching the parents to be the Spiritual Leaders of their children. This may include some parenting classes that excite the parents about the possibilities of having a fun and engaging family life. The family plan includes general planning and simple prioritizing schedules, bringing spiritual training into the family calendar. It would start with daily and weekly plans, and eventually evolve into a yearly plan. The daily plan covers prayer times at meals, bedtime, and how to begin the day. The weekly plan is when fun family nights are instituted (hopefully one night a week) where the children are taught Bible truths with object lessons that will stick with them throughout their lives (see Appendix C). The yearly plan consists of family traditions (celebration of Christmas, Easter, birthdays, etc.) and spiritual

milestones (baptism, communion, Rite of Passage, etc.). Bible study can be included throughout the daily/weekly/yearly plans with the goal of encouraging private Bible study, one-on-one times reading with parents, and teachable moments. Keep it simple. Remember, family life is not an event, it is a process! It is likely the family would want to participate in church events whenever it meets, with the entire family or for age-appropriate gatherings.

What the Church Must Provide

The church first and foremost should identify a curriculum for spiritual leadership and educate the husband and wife or single parent on how to teach in the home. Doing this as an ongoing basis helps the church to “train the trainer” in personal growth and disciplines. Such a curriculum will help identify and teach a plan for home with a training element included. It will also provide family resources for support that will help strengthen the family unit. The material should include how to leverage family milestones taught in the home (baptism, communion, purity contracts, rites of passage) and celebrated in the church. When these traditions are celebrated in the church, it provides an opportunity for the entire family to gather there, perhaps even some who do not attend church regularly. Parents can create a church calendar of events that establishes scheduled events to “plan” around. This will encourage spiritual leadership at home as it provide opportunities for Dads and Moms to learn and experience spiritual leadership through participation in the church.²⁹

Conclusion

Through the front door of the church every Sunday steps a crowd of willing warrior parents from every walk of life, with children in tow. Organized, they are indeed a formidable force that has the opportunity to counter the culture in a way that would make it easier for their children to grow into a Godly faith, if the parents were only trained to do so. Even without

²⁹See Appendix C for complete chart.

training, some will be successful by accident. Others will watch their children grow toward adulthood wishing they could offer them a more solid heritage, but not really knowing how or even where to begin. Some will become frenetic with life, and out of desperation will abdicate their more seriously spiritual parental responsibilities to the church or a school. The church, if it would position itself in the support role of the family, could help those families become intentional in their heritage passing efforts and successful about passing their faith to the next generation. Because of these possibilities a family ministry becomes necessary for every local church. An assembled team, trained, armed with a plan, and allowed to work together for the good of the family, will strengthen God's family by strengthening theirs.

CHAPTER V

THE POSITIVE INFLUENCES OF FAMILY MINISTRY WITH THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCES INSIDE THE CHURCH THAT LACKS ONE

On the back cover of a book written by Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope is a line that sums up the theme that has been recorded in this thesis. It says, “Faith must be nurtured in the rich soil of a God-honoring family. The church’s role is to water. But life-long faith requires deep, abiding roots.”¹ It is important that the leaders of both the family and the church know their roles and then commit to diligently preserving them. There is no greater responsibility for a parent than this. It is incumbent upon fathers and mothers to find a church that believes and practices these truths and provides the needed resources to make it happen. It is well said by Bill Hybels, “If the local church is the hope of the world, then we must take seriously the church’s responsibility to call couples, parents, and grandparents to create God-honoring homes. Only then will we see the tide turn on declining generational faith transference.”²

A church, with a family ministry whose strategy to reach families is well thought out, will reap many positive results from this labor-intensive ministry. The results of the positive traits of this type of ministry will be enjoyed for years to come. Seeing children raised in a church, stay in the church, and then become leaders in that church is indeed a beautiful thing.

This author has been pastoring the same church for almost three decades. Children who were at one time infants are now leading some of the major ministries of the church. The opposite result can also be true. Children, who were once excited about Sunday School, have

¹Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope, *It Starts at Home: A Practical Guide to Nurturing Lifelong Faith* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), back cover.

²*Ibid.*, 11.

left the faith and are offering their talents to the world outside of ministry with no intention of coming back.³ Family ministry of course does not guarantee a parent the first scenario, but it increases the possibilities of a positive outcome.

The following two segments of this thesis will list four positive influences that a church with a family ministry will experience and four negative influences a church without a strong family ministry might expect to encounter. These eight offerings are of course not exhaustive but serve as a warning signpost to a church that neglects such a ministry and an applause meter for those that take on the challenge of launching one.

Positive Influences of Family Ministry

One of the challenges of a pastor and his staff is to make the experience of Sunday morning church to be exciting. There is no greater failure than to take the most exciting event that has ever happened to mankind—redemption’s story—and wrap it in boredom. It is difficult to hear stories of parents that have to make their children go to church. For them every Sunday morning becomes a battleground and the parents often dread for that day to come around. Committed parents will do their duty, just like making their children brush their teeth or eat green vegetables. They know how important church attendance is, so they will drag them kicking and screaming into church. What a pity!

It does not have to be that way. Consider this scenario. The children are out of bed before their parents, asking for breakfast. They begin dressing themselves to save time and are in the car without coercion. The drive to church is pleasant and filled with anticipation, and when the car is parked, the children are dragging the parents toward the building afraid they will not get a good seat. The parent registers the kids and notices a sign on the wall of the children’s

³Grossman, Cathy, “Young Adults Aren’t Sticking With Church,” *Life Situations* (August, 2007), http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2007-08-06-church-dropouts_N.htm (accessed November 10, 2014).

theater that reads, “Saturday Morning Fun, with Sunday Morning Values!” You may ask, “Does that really happen to any family outside of a Disneyland trip?” The answer is “Yes, it does!” This author has witnessed it first hand in his own church. There is great value in a well thought-out and well-planned family ministry program.

A Church Growth Strategy

Parents go where they can get answers to their questions. Parents also go where their children are happy to be there. If these two elements can be found in one church, then there will be de facto growth. Not only will parents go where they are getting answers, they will tell all their friends where and what answers they are getting. As was written in chapter two of this thesis, one of the best ways to advertise is word of mouth. Young parents hang out with each other. They register them to play youth soccer and T-ball together, and while watching their children run around on the field, they talk family and family problems. It is not unusual for them to reveal something they learned to a friend and get the response, “Where did you learn that?” to which the response comes, “At church.” Although family ministry should not be just another program, it should be programmatic at the operational level of the church. When every ministry silo in the church is saturated with the culture of a strong family ministry strategy, new families will find their way into the mainstream of the church.

A Pool of Potential Leaders

In chapter four of this thesis, Figure 1 lays out the barriers faced when attempting to challenge fathers to teach their children inside the home. The first barrier named is that, for whatever reason, fathers tend to be or at the least think they are biblically illiterate. This creates a fear in the heart of the father—one that tells him he must not fail in front of his family and look like a fool. If he is convinced it is his responsibility, it will drive him into the Scriptures to find answers. This author has seen this happen repeatedly. Once Dad steps out of his comfort

zone and conquers this fear and takes the position of spiritual leader of the home, he begins to get experience in basic spiritual leadership skills. As he leads his family successfully, he begins to have faith in himself and has the confidence to believe “I can do this!” It is amazing how this confidence can be harnessed and moved into the church culture. This often begins to give the church a pool of male leadership that perhaps once was missing.

In a thesis such as this one, academic research is perhaps the most valued component, but there comes a time when anecdotal evidence is also critical to the thesis. In other words, the thesis may look good and work on paper, but does it work when it is then tested against real life situations.

David was happily married with three children, but the difficulty in their marriage was that they both came from different religious backgrounds. He willingly allowed his wife to take the girls and pursue her faith, only asking that she not force it on him. On her first visit to a church in the area where they had just moved, she saw that they had a thriving family ministry. She immediately knew that this was where she belonged. Wanting to turn in a visitor card and yet realizing that the pastor might then drop by for a “welcome to the church” visit, she asked that the pastor not stop by because of the agreement between her and her husband. So he did not.

The family ministry had a burgeoning ministry that included an intergenerational, fun worship once a month about which the children were wildly happy. Dad kept hearing about it and decided to attend with his daughters and check it out. Long story short, he liked it so much that after that he never missed that once-a-month gathering. He was raised in a faith that believed the Deuteronomy 6 mandate was important, so it all rang true to him. In fact he bought

some Family Night books⁴ and began to teach the fun biblical object lessons in the home! It alarmed the wife and she asked the pastor if that was okay, seeing she and her husband did not see eye-to-eye on doctrine. She was assured it would be no problem. All this led to David's conversion and then his joining the church. His teaching at home gave him confidence with spiritual leadership skills and he became an important leader in his new church.

David's story is lived out over and over in churches all across this country when they invest in a strong family ministry program.

Parents Know How to Be "the Parents"

Just because a couple conceives and bears children does not guarantee they automatically know how to parent. One trip to the grocery store to observe how two-year-olds handle their parents around the goodies placed near the checkout stands will validate that statement. The merchants know what they are doing when they arrange their products in such a place. They are relying on parents with non-existent parenting skills coming through the lines. It is a curious thing to witness. The thought then comes across the mind of the spectator that if that parent cannot handle a two-year-old, they don't have a prayer when that kid is twelve. One of the anxieties of being a parent is feeling unprepared for what they are going to face.

In the book *Be the Parent* the author writes, "Everyone who has ever been given the privilege of parenting has dealt with the challenge of preparing versus reacting, of being proactive parent rather than a reactive one. Being proactive means being prepared."⁵

Getting prepared and then knowing how to parent is not just a skill that needs developing for the order of any particular family. It is a skill that needs to be passed on to

⁴Kurt Bruner and Jim Weidmann, *Family Night Tool Chest: 12 Lessons in Spiritual Growth for Families* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builders Publishing, 2011).

⁵Kendra Smiley, *Be The Parent: Seven Choices You Can Make to Raise Great Kids* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 14.

children for the sake of an orderly society. It teaches the children the necessity of boundaries early in life and helps them with their respect for boundary-setting goals in adulthood. A child that is not taught respect in the home will not respect outside the home. The parent, within a loving relationship, teaches respect for the reasonable rules placed on a child, which will then serve as a deterrent to rebellion. Without boundaries a society can quickly become an unmanageable anarchy.

A strong family ministry can contribute to the cure for this situation. It can and will prepare parents for the daunting task of raising responsible adults. Parenting classes—that teach Biblical, practical “how to” principles when it comes to inevitable confrontations between parent and child—should be offered semi-annually or at the least be an annual class.

Strengthens Children and Teen Ministries

Even before a church reaches critical mass in attendance, it usually has already decided that the children’s and teen’s ministries are indeed specialized and in need of attention. The two ministries will probably be separated from the congregation and taught at their own age-appropriate level. Usually adults from the congregation who have at least raised children will be the chosen champions of those ministries that have been fragmented from the congregation. One of the problems with fragmentation is that it does indeed separate. If the pastor is not careful with the separation, the fragments may fall into a weakened position. Those two ministries need to be something more than enthusiastic babysitting while the adult worship and Bible studies meet. Separate is only good if there is something holding the pieces together to create a sort of mosaic. Family ministry facilitates the possibility of a mosaic. Being superimposed over every ministry, it becomes the glue that lays the pieces in a beautiful arrangement, bringing everything together. Inside this scenario the children’s ministry and the teen’s ministry—along with all the other adult ministries—take on a new power.

Potential Negative Influences to a Church that Lacks Family Ministry

In the paragraphs above, this thesis brought out the positive effects that family ministry have on a local church. They are awesome indeed. If one becomes familiar with the family ministry positive traits, then turning them inside out can expose the negatives traits and family ministry takes on a different significance... sort of like taking the word “NOT” [emphasis added] out of the Ten Commandments. Stealing, with the “NOT” out, takes on a completely new meaning. Church with the “family ministry” out has a completely different meaning. Without family ministry you may observe parents disengaged from their children’s spiritual development. You might see ministry programs viewed as ordinary, and then ignored from lack of interest. Teens leaving for college may return with their faith severely tested and maybe even stripped from them.

The following four negatives are not a given. They are a clear and present danger if the church looks the other way, lacks intentionality, or gives way to chance. Without family ministry, four destructive issues are possible.

Families Are Separated

From the time the tires hit the approach to the driveway into the church parking lot to the time the tires leave the parking lot, the family has been separated. Adults go here. Babies go there. Children over there down the stairs and the teens up there. You can hear Mom say as she heads to her Bible study, “See you back at the car after church.” The children do not get the chance to see Mom and Dad worshiping. They do not witness them hearing and responding to the spoken Word. Since values are caught more than taught, missing this visual (frontlets before your eyes) can be unhealthy if not harmful.

Families Are Frustrated and Restless

There is nothing more frustrating than a problem that seems unsolvable. Most families are driven to find a church because the children are asking questions that the parents cannot answer. “Go ask your dad,” or “Ask your mother” have ceased to be a good distraction and the children are now pressing the issue on their parents’ belief system without even realizing it. So, Mom and Dad start going to church.

In the book *Spiritual Milestones* the authors created a chart that shows a bell curve that follows the age of the child and the receptivity of the child to his/her parents’ values. It can be seen in Figure 4. Following the bell curve, you will see that around the ages of 8-14, children are at their highest level of receptivity to their parents’ values. It is during this period of time that children begin asking the spiritually hard questions. It is here where most parents who are not regular church attenders begin to be. Possibly it is here that churches with no family ministry lose the ability to influence those parents convincingly.

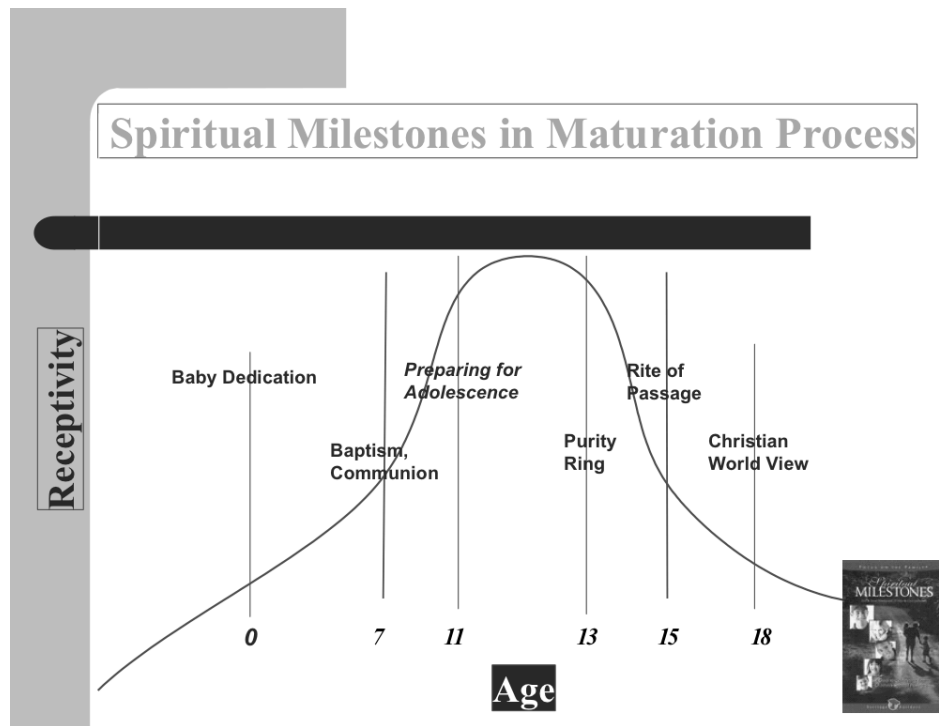


Figure 4. Spiritual Milestones in Maturation Process.⁶

Children Become a Statistic

The last thing in the world a parent wants for their children is that they somehow become part of an adverse statistic. No parent at the outset of parenthood sets out to fail. On the contrary each parent at some point entertains the idea that they will be the best parent ever! With a positive attitude, they set out cautiously on the rocky road of parenting.

There are three windows of opportunity in which parents parent. From ages 0 to 7 it is called the “Imprint” period. From the ages of 8 to 15 it is called the “Impression” period. From the age of 16 and above it is labeled the “Coaching” period.⁷ The Imprint period is where the parents are benevolent dictators because the child is without the ability to reason a thing out.

⁶J. Otis Ledbetter and Jim Weidmann, *Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children's Spiritual Passages* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builders Books/Chariot Victor, 2009), 12.

⁷Ibid., 12-13.

During the Impression period the children now are developing the ability to reason, so the parents are constantly answering the question, “Why,” which often causes them to seek answers from outside the home. So church is one of the suitable options. When parents find themselves with children in all three windows, they realize they must have good parenting skills if they are to have a successful experience in raising children. The point here is, if the church does not have a family ministry capable of helping these parents find answers, the risk is that the children and parents become spiritually detached. This may unintentionally allow the child to become a part of the disastrous statistic concerning kids raised in a Christian home and leaving the faith before finishing college, as the article in *USA Today* points out.

Protestant churches are losing young adults in "sobering" numbers, a survey finds. Seven in 10 Protestants ages 18 to 30—both evangelical and mainline who went to church regularly in high school said they quit attending by age 23, according to the survey by LifeWay Research. And 34% of those said they had not returned, even sporadically, by age 30. “...It seems the teen years are like a free trial on a product. By 18, when it’s their choice whether to buy in to church life, many don’t feel engaged and welcome,” says associate [LifeWay] director Scott McConnell....In research for an upcoming book, *unChristian*, Barna Research Group director David Kinnaman found that Christians in their 20s are “significantly less likely to believe a person’s faith in God is meant to be developed by involvement in a local church. This life stage of spiritual disengagement is not going to fade away.”⁸

Parents Go Looking

Desperate parents are impatient. It seems they are thinking if they make one mistake with their child, they are a failure. They tend to forget that parenting is a process and not an event. So when they encounter difficulty, they will seek answers. They will seek them anywhere they can find them. Their only loyalty in this picture lies with their children and not the church.

Although parents are engaged with the social and emotional stages of their children, most are not consistently engaged with the intentional process of the spiritual development of their children. In a survey, 80% of the parents said that perhaps it’s because they lacked training

⁸Cathy Lynn Grossman, “Young Adults Aren’t Sticking With Church.”

and time or both when it comes to family discipleship.⁹ Because of their busy schedules they fault themselves, so they go looking. They think possibly a larger church with more to offer their family will be the answer to eliminate their parental failures. Until they find a place that has answers or until the children are grown, the restlessness will not be satisfied. However, size really does not matter. To mitigate their wandering desire, family ministry can be effective, and it can work in any size or setting.

Conclusion

A friend once asked, “In the game of baseball, would it be possible for the coach to send a player to the batter’s box without a bat?” It seemed like a pointless question until he played out the scenario in the theater of the mind. The answer is “Yes!” the coach could send a player to the plate without a bat. The rule is that a player must be in the batter’s box, but it does not say he must possess a bat. He could enter the box with a baton if he wanted, and the player could even get on base and even score a run for his team without a bat! He could do that only if the pitcher is wild, and then only if those players who come after him in the lineup are successful. What has the coach done when he sends a player to the batter’s box without a bat? He has put his player and even the team’s destiny in the hands of those who oppose them.

So for whatever reason, a move like that by a coach is not just questionable, it is potentially devastating. He strikes no fear into the heart of the opposing team. No matter how good the opposing pitcher may be, when a batter stands in the box with a weapon like a big bat in his hands, he places the fear back onto the opponent. The batter has the weapon that will allow him victory over the adversary, which causes the adversary to move forward cautiously.

Family is the chosen creation to which the gospel can glide from generation to generation. Its health and sustainability is critical. Therefore, it is important for churches of all

⁹Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 111.

shapes and sizes to recognize that fact, and then to do what it can to connect with the needs of the families within the congregation. In other words, it is imperative to turn the present situation of the *family* being underneath in the support role of the *church*, to the *church* being in the support role of the *family*. For too many years now the upside down scenario has been tolerated—if not promoted—where the family has found itself in the inferior position in a strategy being used in many churches to build an empire instead of building families.

This is not to say that all other silo ministries are less important, but a church without the power of an overarching family ministry, to this author, is similar to sending a batter to the plate without a bat. It is possible to have successful families without it, but the destiny of the family is too important when left to chance, which would leave it at the mercy of those who oppose it. To those who want it redefined. To Satan, who believes it is his territory.

The solution is as simple as casting a vision and making it doable. Periodic sermons and family campaigns promoted from the pulpit will make it probable that the families will buy into the vision. However, it all begins with the intentional resolve of the senior leadership of the church to make it happen.

Someone may ask, “What does success look like when it comes to family ministry?” That is a fair question because families are at stake, and shouldn’t any ministry the church deems valuable to its health end in success? However, success is as individual as is each of us. One church’s success may not look on the surface like another’s success. Because of that reality, this thesis is not designed as a “one size fits all” program. The bibliography¹⁰ has many resources to help the church take positive steps forward. Success will be found when the individual church determines if it is meeting and supporting the needs of the families that make up its constituents. To one, success may be measured as shallow as a visual appraisal. Perhaps

¹⁰ See bibliography appendix page 160

it might be as to how the families conduct themselves in the public arena. If a deeper evaluation is preferred, then the family appraisals within this thesis will be a very good place to begin! The numbers that show up on each individual family's appraisal forms may give a previously hidden indication as to the health of each family.

It is good for a church to remember a successful family ministry is not an event, but a process. The process will be labor intensive on everyone's part, family and church, but positive end results can have a lasting effect on the health of a church and ultimately the community.

APPENDIX A

Surveys Consent Form

Family Ministry Strategies For Training Parents To Pass Their Faith To The Next Generation
J. Otis Ledbetter Liberty University

Theological Seminary

You are invited to be in a research study of family ministry strategies for training parents to pass their faith to the next generation. You were selected as a possible participant because you either pastor a church or you have been involved in an ongoing basis in a local church. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

J. Otis Ledbetter, a doctoral candidate in the Theological Seminary at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study/project is to help church leaders understand the dynamics of family ministry—what it is and what it isn't—and to delineate the principles and strategies that have proven effective for driving faith home.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

There are two surveys for which I will be asking participants to submit. One is a three-question survey that asks the participant to evaluate the strength of their home church family ministry. This same survey will be in survey monkey format, and is designed to be distributed to a pastors' email list for participation. The second survey is designed to be distributed to the church congregation during a regularly-scheduled service. This survey is much more in depth, yet will take less than ten minutes for the participant to complete. Both surveys are anonymous. There are no audio or video components to either survey.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks. Because the surveys are anonymous, and the participants are asked NOT to sign the survey, the risk perhaps might be that spouses or partners answering an identical question differently (e.g., her positive response verses his negative response) may create tense moments in the relationship.

The benefits to participation are first, the participants may for the first time realize there are blind spots in their marriage or their parenting skills. Second, this knowledge could move them to immediately take steps to strengthen any weaknesses that surface.

Just the strength of the survey questions also may provoke a couple or single parent to change his/her tactics or strategies for the better. In any case, these surveys are designed for the church at large to strengthen itself by strengthening the families in the church.

Compensation:

You will receive no payment or compensation for participation in this survey.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. If on the other hand participants later discuss the questions among themselves, any confidentiality or privacy enforcements may be breached beyond the investigator's control.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Baptist Bible College. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is J. Otis Ledbetter. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at oledbetter@gmail.com.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Church: Family Ministry Survey

In an effort to understand how the church is presently serving its families in passing their faith to the next generation, please fill out the following questions.

Please do NOT sign. This is a volunteer survey and participation is NOT mandated.

- 1. Does your church have an intentional formal ministry, other than children's Sunday School, to help parents in modeling spiritual truths for their children? (Check all that apply)**

	None	Somewhat	Ongoing
a) To Have a Personal quiet time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) To Participate in Family Bible Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) To Initiate Family Prayer Times with children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) To Teach Husband and Wife to pray together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Other: Click here to enter text.			

- 2. Does your church have an intentional official ministry to train parents to formally teach their Children Spiritual Truths? (Check all that apply)**

	None	Somewhat	Ongoing
a) To Have Fun Family Nights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) To Have Family Traditions with Spiritual Focus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) One on One spiritual teaching time with children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Go on mission trips as family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Other: Click here to enter text.			

- 3. Does your church have an intentional formal teaching ministry or resource center with assets to train parents how to informally (in everyday life) teach their children spiritual truths? (Check all that apply)**

	None	Somewhat	Ongoing
a) For Bedtime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) For Mealtime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) For Drive time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) For Quiet time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Other: Click here to enter text.			

Church Survey – Family Ministry Evaluation

*(This section should be completed only by those currently married.
Those who are widowed or divorced should complete the Single section below.)*

Positives: Nurturing Intimacy

1. In each of the past three months we had a “date night” (without any children) twice or more per month to focus on one another:

☐ Absolutely
☐ Some months, not each month
☐ Need to work on this area
2. In each of the past three months I wrote a note, gave a flower, or some other tangible expression of love at least twice per month:

☐ Absolutely
☐ Some months, not each month
☐ Need to work on this area
3. In each of the past three months I called my spouse during the day, sat down to chat, took walks together, or some other time of focused, non-task driven communication at least three times per week:

☐ Absolutely
☐ Some months, not each month
☐ Need to work on this area
4. In each of the past three months I have prayed with my spouse at least twice per week:

☐ Absolutely
☐ Some months, not each month
☐ Need to work on this area
5. In each of the past three months I have demonstrated meaningful touch and/or verbal affirmation at least once per day (where “meaningful” is to my spouse, not just to me):

☐ Absolutely
☐ Some months, not each month
☐ Need to work on this area

Negatives: Avoiding Dangers

1. In each of the past three months I have taken steps to reduce risk to my marriage in vulnerable areas (bad temper, office relationships, demeaning language, etc.) by maintaining boundaries, increasing accountability, etc.:

☐ Absolutely
☐ Some months, not each month
☐ Need to work on this area
2. In each of the past three months I have taken care of myself physically and emotionally to be the best lifelong partner I can be:

☐ Absolutely
☐ Some months, not each month
☐ Need to work on this area
3. In each of the past three months I have admitted I was wrong and apologized and/or forgave my spouse when she was in the wrong, before going to bed after conflicts with my spouse:

☐ Absolutely
☐ Some months, not each month
☐ Need to work on this area

My Marriage

1. I am confident that my marriage will last until one of us dies.

Highly confident 4 3 2 Not Confident

2. I believe my marriage is, for the most part, God-honoring and happy.

Always 4 3 2 Never

Faith@Home

Parents

- ☐ Children live at home all the time.
- ☐ Children live at home some of the time (shared custody).
- ☐ Adult children no longer living in my home

1. In each of the past three months I connected relationally with my children daily (help with homework, eat together, etc.).

☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area

2. In each of the past three months I did something special with my children (hobby, ice cream date, etc.) at least twice per month.

☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area

3. In each of the past three months I created an opportunity for discussing my beliefs and values with my children at least once per week.

☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area

4. In each of the past three months I prayed with my children (including meals, bedtime, etc.) at least five times per week.

☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area

5. In each of the past three months I admitted I was wrong and apologized and/or forgave before going to bed after conflicts with my children.

☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area

6. In each of the past three months I served together and/or participated in an intergenerational faith experience with my children.

☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area

Grandparents

1. In the past three months I did something to connect with my grandchildren (a letter, phone call, etc.) at least once per month.
☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area
2. In the past three months I did something to help my grandchildren inherit a strong spiritual legacy at least once.
☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area

Parents / Grandparents

1. I am confident my children/grandchildren will have a strong Christian Faith in adulthood.
 Highly confident 4 3 2 Not Confident

Single Adults

- ☐ I am called to the Single Life and I have no plans to marry.
- ☐ I hope to marry in the future.
1. In the past three months I have prayed about / for my future spouse.
☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area
 2. In the past three months I have kept myself sexually pure knowing my body is God's gift to my future spouse OR I have repented of past sexual sin and committed to remain abstinent until married.
☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area
 3. In the past three months I have taken proactive steps towards finding a Godly mate.
☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area
 4. In the past three months I have practiced spiritual and physical disciplines to help me become the best gift possible to the person I marry.
☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area
 5. In the past three months I have attended pre-engagement or pre-marital counseling or other sessions to learn the Christian view of marriage so I can submit to its demands and expectations.
☐ Absolutely ☐ Some months, not each month ☐ Need to work on this area
 6. I am confident my future marriage will be God-honoring and happy.
 Highly confident 4 3 2 Not Confident

APPENDIX B

Tables and Figures

Table 1 The Power of Parental Involvement

Collaboration Counts		
1 parent	=	a fruitcake
2 parents	=	fruitcake and friend
3 parents	=	troublemakers
5 parents	=	let's have a meeting
10 parents	=	we'd better listen
25 parents	=	our dear friends
50 parents	=	a powerful organization

Table 2 National Decline of the Process of Passing the Faith to the Next Generation

Four Main Generational Groups Identified
<i>Builders – 65%</i>
<i>Boomers – 35%</i>
<i>Busters – 15%</i>
<i>Bridgers – 4%</i>

Does your church have an intentional formal ministry, other than children's Sunday School, to help parents in modeling spiritual truths for their children to: Have a personal quiet time?

Table 3 Modeling Question One

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	31	55.36%
SOMEWHAT	13	23.21%
ONGOING	12	21.43%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Does your church have an intentional formal ministry, other than children's Sunday School, to help parents in modeling spiritual truths for their children to: Participate in family Bible Studies?

Table 4 Modeling Question Two

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	31	55.36%
SOMEWHAT	12	21.43%
ONGOING	13	23.21%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Does your church have an intentional formal ministry, other than children's Sunday School, to help parents in modeling spiritual truths for their children to: Initiate family prayer time with children?

Table 5 Modeling Question Three

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	30	52.63%
SOMEWHAT	14	24.56%
ONGOING	13	22.81%
Total Response (57 Answered)	57	100%

Does your church have an intentional formal ministry, other than children's Sunday School, to help parents in modeling spiritual truths for their children to: Teach husband and wife to pray together?

Table 6 Modeling Question Four

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	29	52.73%
SOMEWHAT	13	23.64%
ONGOING	13	23.64%
Total Response (55 Answered, 2 Skipped)	55	96%

Does your church have an intentional official ministry to train parents to formally teach their children spiritual truths: To have family fun nights?

Table 7 Training Question One

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	27	48.21%
SOMEWHAT	19	33.93%
ONGOING	10	17.86%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Does your church have an intentional official ministry to train parents to formally teach their children spiritual truths: To have family traditions with a spiritual focus?

Table 8 Training Question Two

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	33	58.93%
SOMEWHAT	12	21.43%
ONGOING	11	19.64%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Does your church have an intentional official ministry to train parents to formally teach their children spiritual truths: To have one on one spiritual teaching time with children?

Table 9 Training Question Three

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	31	55.36%
SOMEWHAT	16	28.57%
ONGOING	9	16.07%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Does your church have an intentional official ministry to train parents to formally teach their children spiritual truths: To go on mission trips as family?

Table 10 Training Question Four

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	35	62.50%
SOMEWHAT	10	17.86%
ONGOING	11	19.64%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Does your church have an intentional formal teaching ministry or resource center with assets to train parents how to informally (in everyday life) teach their children spiritual truths: For bedtime?

Table 11 Teaching Question One

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	33	58.93%
SOMEWHAT	12	21.43%
ONGOING	11	19.64%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Does your church have an intentional formal teaching ministry or resource center with assets to train parents how to informally (in everyday life) teach their children spiritual truths: For mealtime?

Table 12 Teaching Question Two

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	35	62.50%
SOMEWHAT	13	23.21%
ONGOING	8	14.29%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Does your church have an intentional formal teaching ministry or resource center with assets to train parents how to informally (in everyday life) teach their children spiritual truths: For drive time?

Table 13 Teaching Question Three

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	43	76.79%
SOMEWHAT	6	10.71%
ONGOING	7	12.50%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Does your church have an intentional formal teaching ministry or resource center with assets to train parents how to informally (in everyday life) teach their children spiritual truths: For quiet time?

Table 14 Teaching Question Four

Answer Options	Responses	Percentages
NONE	29	51.79%
SOMEWHAT	14	25.00%
ONGOING	13	23.21%
Total Response (56 Answered, 1 Skipped)	56	98.24%

Table 15 Resulting Averages of All Survey Questions

57 Pastors Surveyed
<p><i>NONE – 57.6%</i></p> <p><i>SOMEWHAT – 22.9%</i></p> <p><i>ONGOING – 19.5%</i></p>

Table 16 Results of Student Surveys

214 Students Surveyed
<p><i>NONE – 41.6%</i></p> <p><i>SOMEWHAT – 31.9%</i></p> <p><i>ONGOING – 26.5%</i></p>

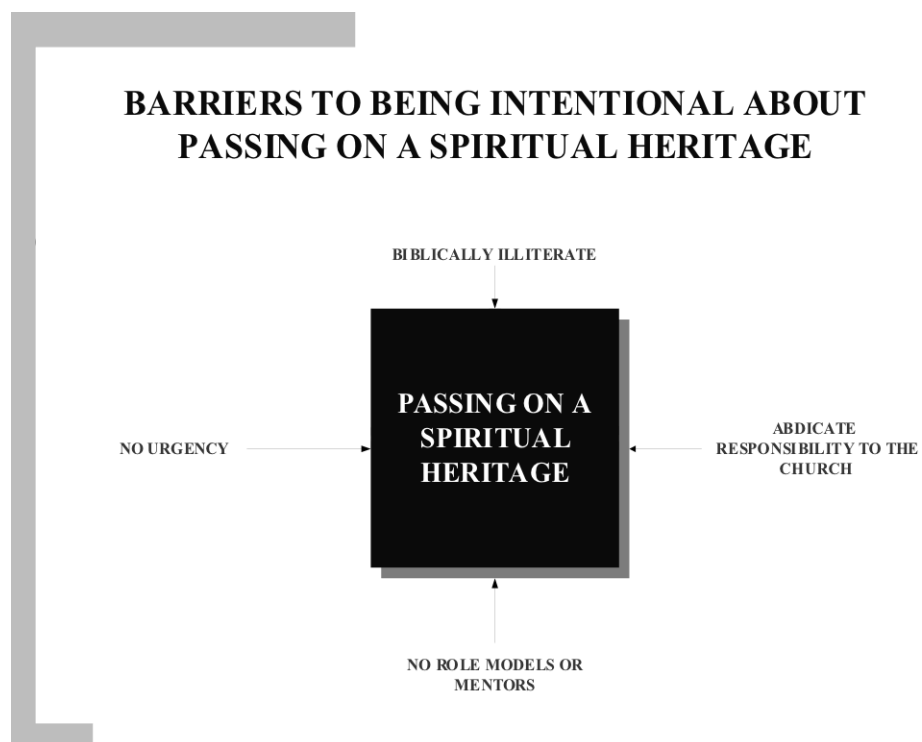


Figure 1. Barriers to Being Intentional about Passing on a Spiritual Heritage.

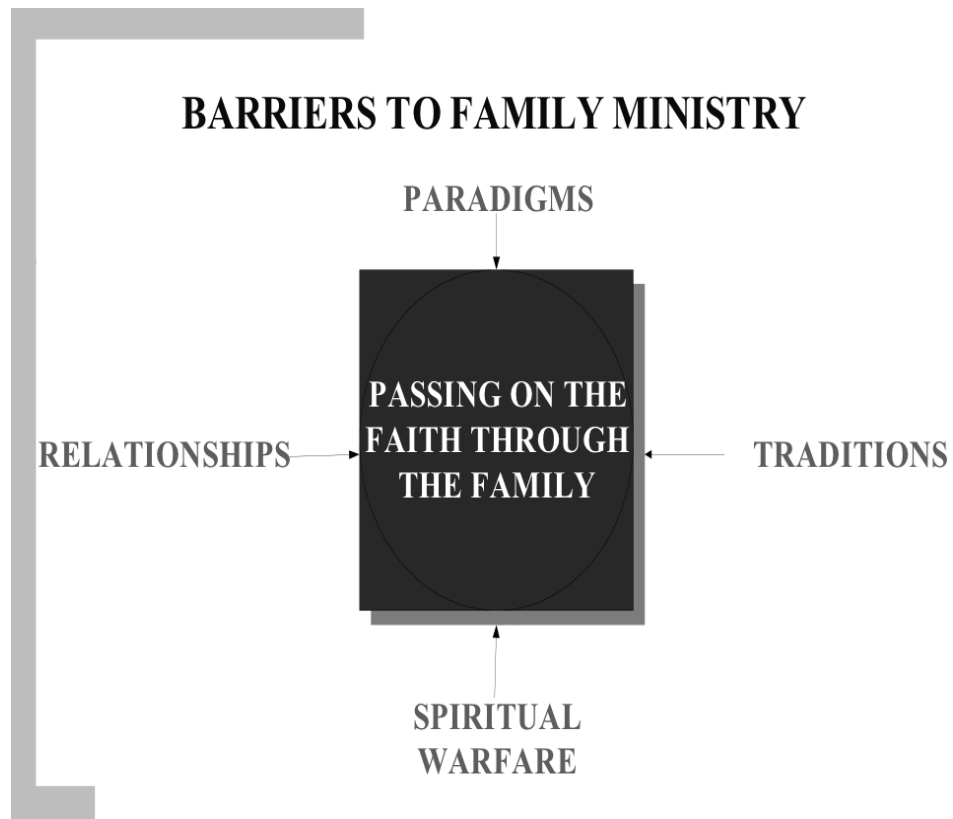


Figure 2. Barriers to Family Ministry.

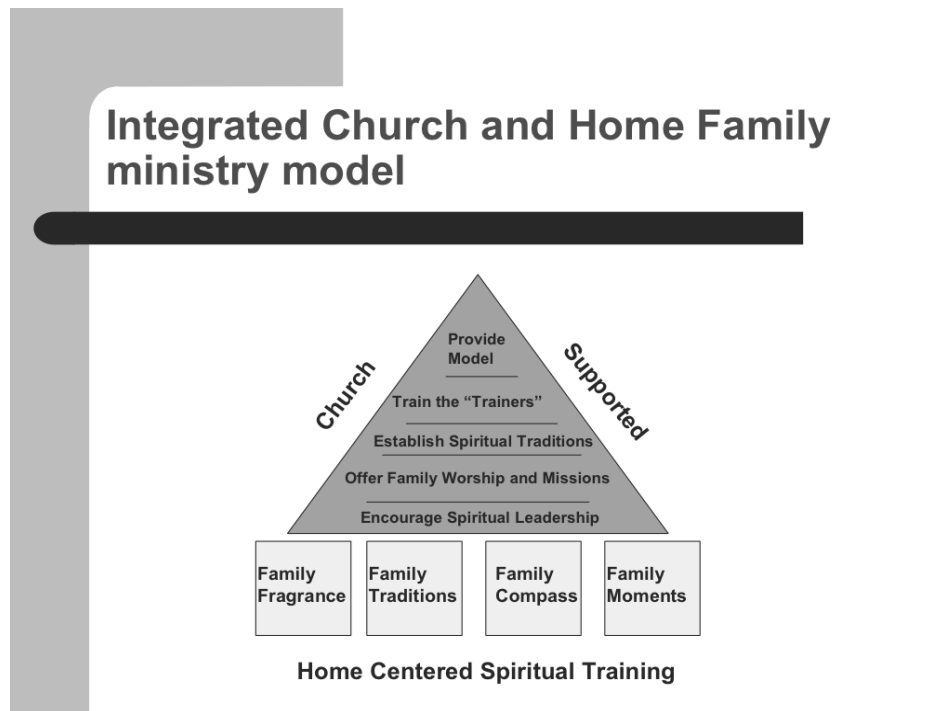


Figure 3. Integrated Church and Home Family Ministry Model

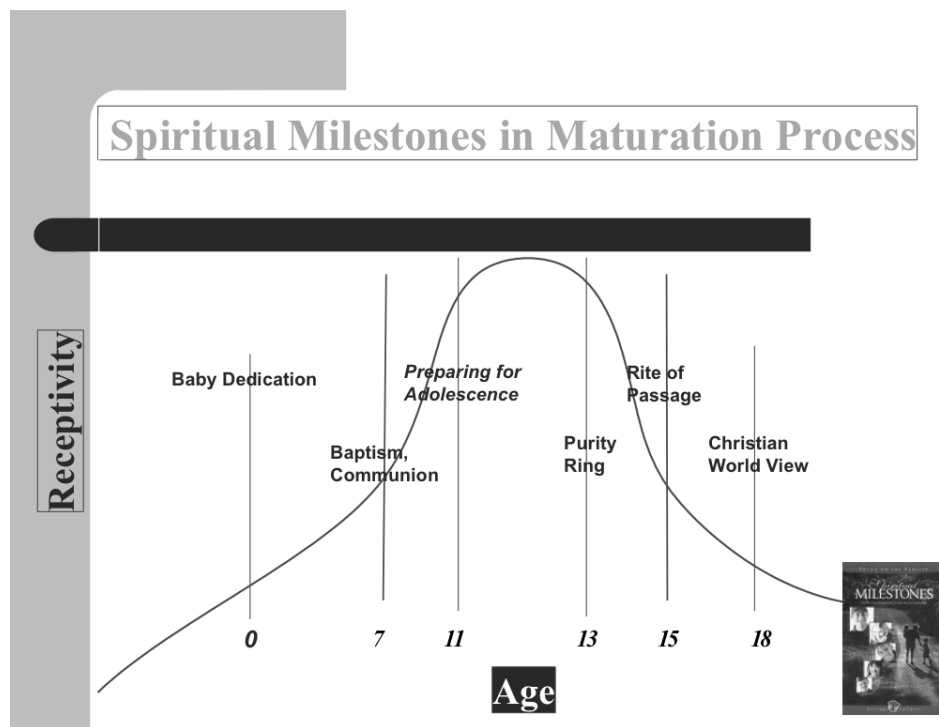


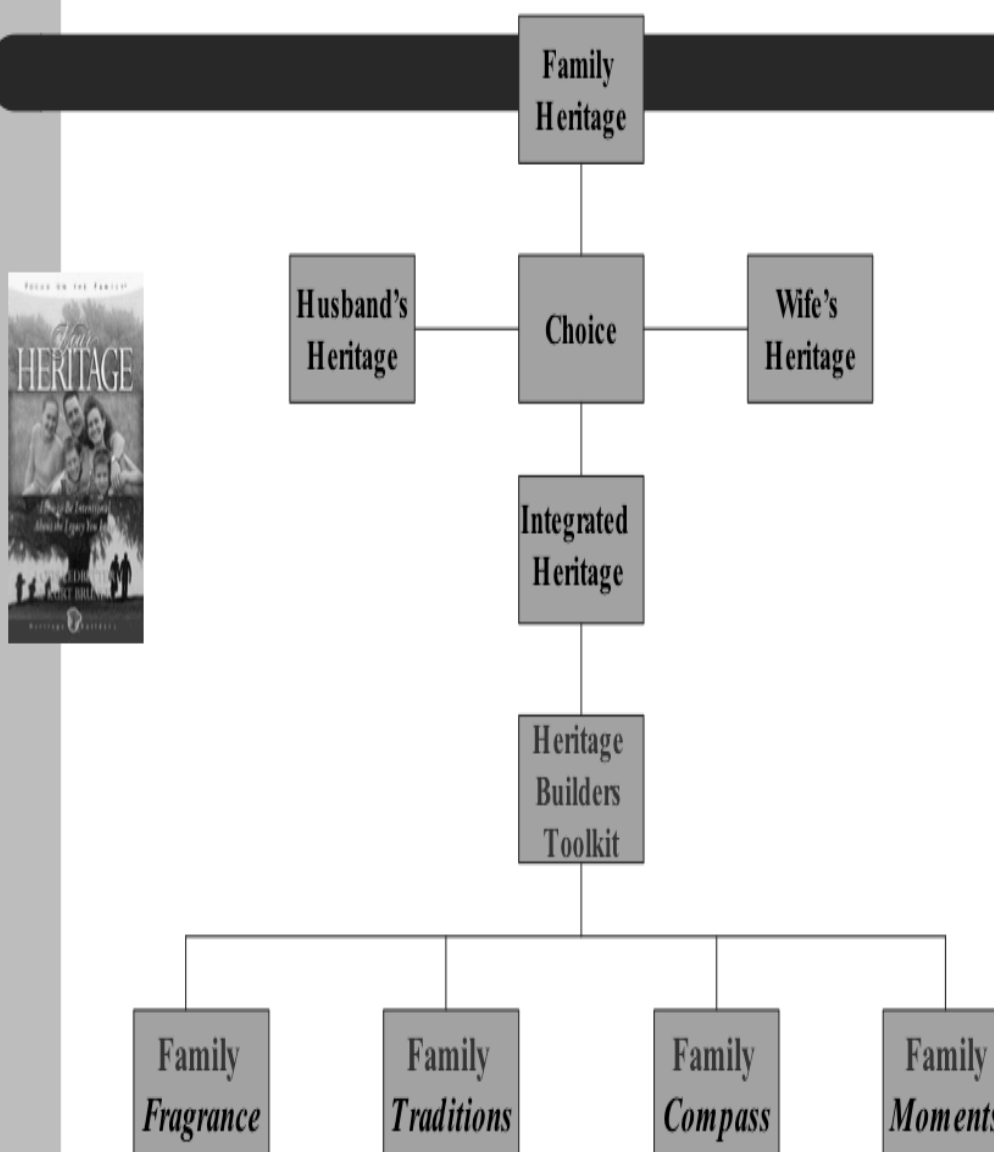
Figure 4. Spiritual Milestones in Maturation Process.

APPENDIX C

Church Model Sample

<p>Parents as Spiritual Leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fathers Mothers <p>Family Plan: Process of planning and prioritizing schedules around spiritual training into family calendars.</p> <p><u>Daily:</u></p> <p>Prayer times</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals Bed Begin day - Blessings <p>Bible study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal time Teachable Moments Devotions <p><u>Weekly:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Nights – Formal teaching <p><u>Yearly:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Traditions/Spiritual Milestones Participate in Family Church Events Training classes Mission trips/service projects Worship or intergenerational 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Plan</u></p> <p>1.1-Identify “curriculum” for Spiritual leadership w/in home for husband and wife to give confidence (teach to fish!)</p> <p>How study Bible</p> <p>How teach children</p> <p>Apologetics of faith</p> <p>CWV</p> <p>Personal growth disciplines</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Train the Trainers</u></p> <p>2.1-- Identify and Teach plan for home w/ training on each element</p> <p>2..2- - Provide family resources to support each element of plan for sustainability</p> <p>2.3- - Provide website support</p> <p>2.4- - Provide financial management, parenting and marriage classes to strengthen family units.</p> <p><u>Spiritual Traditions</u></p> <p>3.1- - Provide support programming to reinforce what is taught at home</p> <p>Education and equipping classes for Spiritual Milestones</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Family Worship and Missions</u></p> <p>4.1-- Create Church calendar of events that establish “impending” events for parents “plan” elements</p> <p>4.2-- Offer family worship, service projects, intergenerational events and mission trips</p> <p>4.3- Establish Spiritual Milestone strategy to be supported by church participation</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Encourage Spiritual Leadership</u></p> <p>5.1 – Provide opportunities for Dads and moms to learn and experience spiritual leadership at church:</p> <p>End of service Huddles – teachable moments in the car</p> <p>Family Communion</p> <p>Church ministry opportunities for dads – be example: ushers, prayer..</p>	<p>1.1.1-Spiritual Leadership track for fathers in Men's Ministry by life stage:</p> <p>Parenting of toddlers</p> <p>Parenting of middle schoolers</p> <p>Parenting of Teens</p> <p>Parents</p> <p>1.1.2 Spiritual leadership Track for mothers in Women's ministry</p> <p>2.1.1— Age appropriate <i>Take Home Classes</i> at the kick off of each new Sunday School semester</p> <p>2.1.2- - Family Orientation classes offered quarterly to teach plan and Roles for Family and Church</p> <p>3.1.1-Wednesday Night “equipping” classes</p> <p>3.1.1-- Theme months for emphasis and encouragement during service</p> <p>4.1.1 – Men's and Women's ministry Develop intergenerational programs: Father Daughter, Mom's Tea, Dad and sons camping...</p> <p>4.1.2 – Mission's ministry schedule family trips and service projects.</p> <p>4.1.2 – Sunday Service team develop in-service celebrations for Spiritual Milestones</p> <p>5.1.1 – All Staff focus on how engage Dads and Mom's in leadership roles that provide confidence to take it home.</p>
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Heritage Builder's Model



APPENDIX D

Legacy Evaluations

SPIRITUAL LEGACY EVALUATION

Answer each question by circling the number that best reflects the legacy you have received from your parents, and then add your total score.

1. To what degree were spiritual principles incorporated into daily family life?
 - 1) Never
 - 2) Rarely
 - 3) Sometimes
 - 4) Frequently
 - 5) Almost always
 - 6) Consistently
2. Which word captures the tone of how you learned to view / relate to God?
 - 1) Absent
 - 2) Adversarial
 - 3) Fearful
 - 4) Casual
 - 5) Solemn
 - 6) Intimate
3. How would you summarize your family's level of participation in spiritual activities?
 - 1) Nonexistent
 - 2) Rare
 - 3) Occasional
 - 4) Regimental
 - 5) Active
 - 6) Enthusiastic
4. How were spiritual discussions applied in your home?
 - 1) They weren't
 - 2) To control
 - 3) To manipulate
 - 4) To teach
 - 5) To influence
 - 6) To reinforce

5. What was the perspective in your home with regard to moral absolutes?
- 1) If it feels good, do it!
 - 2) There are no absolutes
 - 3) Let your heart guide you
 - 4) Dogmatic legalism
 - 5) Moderate conservatism
 - 6) Clear life boundaries

RESULTS:

Above 24	Strong spiritual legacy
19-24	Healthy legacy
14-18	Mixed legacy - good and bad elements
10-13	Weak spiritual legacy
Below 10	Damaged spiritual legacy

EMOTIONAL LEGACY EVALUATION

1. When you walked into your house, what was your feeling?
 - 1) Dread
 - 2) Tension
 - 3) Chaos
 - 4) Stability
 - 5) Calm
 - 6) Warmth

2. Which word best describes the tone of your home?
 - 1) Hateful
 - 2) Angry
 - 3) Sad
 - 4) Serious
 - 5) Relaxed
 - 6) Fun

3. What was the message of your family life?
 - 1) You are worthless.
 - 2) You are a burden.
 - 3) You are okay.
 - 4) You are respected.
 - 5) You are important.
 - 6) You are the greatest.

4. Which word best describes the “fragrance” of your home life?
 - 1) Repulsive
 - 2) Rotten
 - 3) Unpleasant
 - 4) Sterile
 - 5) Fresh
 - 6) Sweet

5. Which was the most frequent in your home?
 - 1) An intense fight
 - 2) The silent treatment
 - 3) Detached apathy
 - 4) A strong disagreement
 - 5) A kind word
 - 6) An affectionate hug

RESULTS:

Above 24	Strong emotional legacy
19-24	Healthy legacy
14-18	Mixed legacy - good and bad elements
10-13	Weak emotional legacy
Below 10	Damaged emotional legacy

SOCIAL LEGACY EVALUATION

1. Which words most closely resemble the social tone of your family?
 - 1) Cruel and cutting
 - 2) Cutting sarcasm
 - 3) Chaotic and distant
 - 4) Non-communicative but stable
 - 5) Secure with open communication
 - 6) Loving and fun

2. What was the message of your home life with regard to relationships?
 - 1) "Step on others to get your way."
 - 2) "Hurt them if they hurt you."
 - 3) "Demand your rights."
 - 4) "Mind your own business."
 - 5) "Treat others with respect."
 - 6) "Put others before yourself."

3. How were rules set and enforced in your home?
 - 1) Independent of relationship
 - 2) In reaction to parental stress
 - 3) Dictatorially
 - 4) Inconsistently
 - 5) Out of concern for my well-being
 - 6) In the context of a loving relationship

4. Which word best characterizes the tone of communication in your home?
 - 1) Shouting
 - 2) Manipulation
 - 3) Confusing
 - 4) Clear
 - 5) Constructive
 - 6) Courteous

5. How did your family deal with wrong behavior?
 - 1) Subtle reinforcement
 - 2) Accepted in the name of love
 - 3) Guilt trip
 - 4) Severe punishment
 - 5) Discussion
 - 6) Loving, firm discipline

RESULTS:

Above 24	Strong social legacy
19-24	Healthy legacy
14-18	Mixed legacy - good and bad elements
10-13	Weak social legacy
Below 10	Damaged social legacy

APPENDIX E

52 Sample Family Nights

Opposites

Truth is the opposite of lying, and God is truth. You'll need two magnets and a Bible. Give the kids two "naked" magnets (ones that have a north and south pole, not embedded into plastic holders). Have them walk around the house and experiment to see what things they can pick up with the magnets. For fun, give them a time limit and see how many items they can find that stick. Next, demonstrate how the magnets can be attracted to each other, and how they can repel each other. Have the kids fight the repelling force and see if they can get the ends to meet squarely. Ask: *How is the force of the magnets repelling each other like the way people try to explain a lie and make it sound like the truth?* (A lie will never match up with the truth; lies and the truth are opposites.) Have the kids list as many opposites as they can. Here are a few: Dark/light, up/down, inside/outside, big/little, man/woman, dog/cat, tall/short, lie/truth. Share: *Lying affects others and can hurt them in many different ways. God wants us, as imitators of Christ, to treat others with love and respect. And He wants us to speak the truth and not lie. When we lie, we are doing the opposite of telling the truth and our lives will not match up with Jesus' life, just as the magnets don't line up.* Read Matthew 12:36-37. Share: *God looks at the heart and the words we say are a reflection of what is inside. Our words are an outward sign of an inward attitude. We need to be right before God so we can be right before others. If this is a problem for us, we need to pray that the Holy Spirit will fill us with a desire to always tell the truth.* Teach the slogan: "You shall not lie." Close in prayer, asking God for strength and wisdom in being truthful in all things.

What Really Matters

There are only two things that will last: people (relationships) and God's Word. You'll need paper, marker, and a Bible. Write each of the following letters on a separate piece of paper and give them to your children: R-P-W-D-D-O-G-O-O-E-P-S-L-E. Have your kids attempt to unscramble the letters to list two things that will last long after material goods have turned to dust: People and God's Word. If your kids are having difficulty, put the letters in three separate piles - one for each word. After unscrambling, read Matthew 6:33 and ask: *What does this verse mean to us?* (God will take care of our every need; seek God first; our wants are secondary to our relationship with God.) *Knowing that what matters most is people and God's Word, how do you think God would want us to live?* (Love others; focus on the needs of others first; love God above all things.) *What are ways we can live this out in our own lives?* (Go out of our way to serve others; live like Christ wants you to so that others notice your love; share the Gospel with as many as we can.) Share: *Our relationship with God goes on forever. Our impact on others' lives can also be eternal. But the things we buy or own will someday be gone. Someday our toys will be rusted away and our house will be nothing but ashes, but the friendships we make will*

live on and our love for God will bring us to heaven - and into His presence. Have your children join you in prayer, asking for a mind and heart that doesn't covet things, but desires to grow closer to God and build relationships with other people.

Grab What You Can

We should be on guard against "wanting," for true happiness is not found in things. You'll need pennies or candy, and a box. Cut a hole in the box just big enough for your child's hand to fit into, but not big enough for the hand to slip back out when clenched in a fist. Place pennies or candies in the box. One by one, have kids attempt to grab as many candies or pennies as they can with one hand. They will soon discover that they can't get as many items as they'd like because they can't pull their clenched fist out. Discuss: *Was it easy or difficult to pick up lots of candy or pennies? What were you feeling as you tried to get your hand out? If you could have anything in the world right now that would make you happy, what would it be?* Share: *We always seem to want more and more stuff. And it's not easy to let go when we see something we want. When hunters want to catch monkeys, they cut a hole in a small gourd just big enough for the monkey to get his hand in, place the food inside, and then attach the gourd to a tree. The monkey will reach in and grab the food, but when he tries to pull his hand out, he cannot because it is too big with the handful of food. Instead of letting go of the food, he will stay tiring himself out until captured, because he will not let go of the food. Sometimes we are like that monkey. We get so focused on things we want that we forget what is really important in life. Material things only bring temporary happiness.* Have everyone think of one thing that they know a friend has that is better than something they own. Discuss: *How would having something better make you happy? How long would happiness last?* Share: *When we compare what we have to what someone else has, we're setting ourselves up for disappointment. Wanting something that another person owns, or that we see in a store or catalog, is called coveting. The tenth commandment tells us it is wrong to covet or want things that we don't need or can't afford.* Teach the slogan: *"You shall not covet."* Close in prayer, asking God for gratefulness for what we have, and strength to not covet what others have.

Picture This!

The Ten Commandments help us to identify what sin is in today's world. You'll need paper, pens and a Bible. Prepare a list of words: rock, boat, chair, parrot, beaver, house, bed, skyscraper, bulldozer, reindeer. Play a few rounds of Pictionary and have kids take turns drawing objects from the list, while the others try to guess. Afterwards, discuss: *What did you like about this game? What did it take to win? What was it like when you guessed the wrong name?* Share: *It's fun to play a game like this and call out the right names for objects. But in today's world, people often call things by the wrong name on purpose, so they don't have to deal with the consequences.* Discuss some of the following examples of how people call things by different names for the sake of explaining them away or not taking responsibility for the true nature of the issue. Choose examples that are appropriate to the ages of your children: When you hurt someone's feelings - "Just teasing!"; when you are mean to someone in front of others - "Just having fun!"; pornography - free speech; abortion - free choice; homosexuality - diversity; lying - eating off the salad bar on Mom's ticket or staying at a hotel free even though you're 13, you look 12 years old; cheating - copying someone's homework and saying it's yours and they helped you. Have the kids suggest other examples of how people explain away things that are

wrong with fancy words or excuses. Read aloud the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). As a family, list as many sins as you can that fit under each. Ask: *What does the world use for its standard?* (Whatever it wants; whatever most people agree on; wrong things.) *What is our standard for living?* (God's Word and teachings found in the Bible.) Share: *The world tells us that it's okay to do things that are wrong and uses excuses to explain why it's okay. But the Bible tells us it's important to call sin, "sin" and to follow God's teaching. The Ten Commandments help us follow God's teaching and remind us of things that are sin. When we follow them, we are following what God wants us to do.*

Bean Bag Toss

The Ten Commandments are the standards for how God wants us to live. You'll need a target with 10 holes, balls, bean bags or rolled socks to throw at the target. Prepare by cutting 10 various sized holes in a large sheet of cardboard. Make sure each is big enough for a ball to fall thru. Number each hole from 1 to 10. You may want to have your kids help you create the target and decorate it. Set the target up in a large room free of breakable items or outside. Mark a "tossing line" a few feet from the target. Give each one a chance to make 10 tosses, adding the number of points each one earns. Ask: *What was it like to try and hit the target?* (It was hard, I kept missing.) Share: *Trying to hit the targets and score lots of points isn't always easy. After God led Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt, they were having a hard time "hitting the target" too. But their target was the target of following God. They kept missing the holes and making bad choices. The Ten Commandments were given to Moses to share with the Israelites - ten rules for living. Why do you think God gave the Ten Commandments?* (It gave the people a clear understanding of how God wanted them to live; helped them know what decisions to make; helped them hit the target.) *Do you think they apply to us?* (Yes, God's expectations for us are the same.) *Look at the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17) and tell me what you notice about the first four and the last six.* (The first four tell us about God; the last six tell us how we are to love one another.) Share: *God wanted His people to "hit the target" and learn to follow Him. That's why He gave the Ten Commandments, to help us aim to live a life of obedience because we love God. He knows what's best for us and wants us to love Him more, and treat others with love.* Repeat the slogan from last week: *"God gave the big ten to guide all men."*

Stealing Memories

We need to respect others' property. You'll need valuable family items, such as old coins, Grandpa's old pocket watch, the "handed down" generational family Bible, and so on. Ahead of time, sneak into your children's rooms and "steal" their most prized possessions. Hide the valuable family items somewhere in your meeting room, out of sight. Gather the family together; read aloud Exodus 20:15 and have each one give a definition of "stealing." Explain that the Bible has lots of stories about thieves, including the description of the two thieves who were crucified on the crosses on either side of Jesus. Spend time talking about stealing. Then send them to locate the specific prized possessions and bring them to the meeting room. Allow a few moments for searching, then call everyone back together and discuss: *What was it like to try and find your possession and discover it was missing?* (I was worried; it made me feel sad.) *Let me assure you that the items aren't stolen. But why would you miss these items if they were?* Share: *Even though the possessions you were looking for were just "things," they each had a special meaning for you. Many of our possessions have value that can't be counted in dollars.*

When someone steals something of value from us, that item can't always be replaced. Ask: What concern does a thief have for another person's property? (None; he only thinks of himself.) What does it mean to respect each other's property? (Let people keep their own stuff; don't take or break things that belong to others.) Return the possessions to family members. Close in prayer, thanking God for what He has given us, and asking Him to help us remember to respect the things of others as much as we treasure the things He has given us.

Caught!

You can choose to obey or not obey, but you can't choose the consequences. You'll need a bandana and a Bible. Gather the family and have them sit in a large circle surrounding the bandana. The object of the game is to be the person who grabs the bandana and returns to his or her seat before being tagged by another. Call out names of two people at a time, and say, "Go" to start a round. The one who grabs the bandana and gets back to their seat without being tagged gets one point. Play until everyone has had a few turns or is tired and breathless. Ask: *What was the object of the game? What did it feel like when you got caught?* Share: *Prisons today are full of people who tried to steal something and got caught. Unlike this game, the consequences of getting caught were quite severe. For every sin, there is a punishment or price to pay. In our game, if you got caught, you lost the game. In real life, that's not the case. Let's talk about how we should respond to stealing.* Read Joshua 6:12-27, 7:1-26. Discuss how someone should respond when they have sinned: (1) Acknowledge you sinned and specifically state your sin, (2) Ask for God's forgiveness, (3) Acknowledge your sin to the owner of the item or items, return or compensate for them, and ask for forgiveness, (4) Face the consequences. Talk about times of temptation to steal, or if you have ever been burglarized, or examples of people taking things that are not theirs. Use this as a time to show how God's forgiveness can help us when we mess up. Share: *When people steal things, they usually think it's not a big deal if they never get caught. But when we steal, God always knows and so do we, that we've done something wrong. Let us pray that we will always avoid the temptation to steal and instead make good choices about how we treat other people's property.* Teach the life slogan: *"You shall not steal."*

Spinning Lies

Lying has consequences. You'll need a baseball bat, masking tape, and a Bible. Tape a straight line about 10 feet down the middle of the floor in a large room that has been cleared of obstacles. Place a baseball bat at one end of the line. Have each family member race down the taped line, set the bat on one end, place their hand on the top end, set their head on their hand and spin in place 5 to 10 times. Then have them run down the taped line to tag the next person. Repeat until everyone has two turns spinning and attempting to run a straight line. Consider: *What happened when you tried to run down the line after spinning? What were the consequences of spinning?* Share: *When we spun around and tried to walk straight, we couldn't do it because of the way the spinning affected our balance. The same is true when people "spin" lies or tell "tall tales." There are consequences to telling lies.* Read Exodus 20:16 and Matthew 5:37. Discuss: *What does the Bible say about our words? (We should speak the truth.)* Take a few moments to role play a few situations with the kids: (1) *You and your friends are in a restaurant that gives free ice cream on your birthday. You decide to give in to your friends' taunting and lie about your birthday to get free ice cream. Now your parents have found out.* (2) *You "borrow" answers to an important test in school and copy them so you can get a good*

grade when you take the test. Your teacher finds out. (3) You break a valuable lamp while your parents are away, but tell them someone else did it. In each situation, what do you say? What are the consequences? Discuss how these situations can be avoided. Teach the slogan: "You shall not lie." Close in prayer, asking God for strength and wisdom in being honest and always telling the truth.

Always With Us

God will never leave nor forsake us. You'll need a long sheet of paper, pencil, scissors, tape or glue, and a Bible. Read Matthew 28:20. Ask family members to tell about some of God's promises. You may wish to refer to a children's Bible for this. Here are a few things they may come up with: God will never flood the whole world again. God loves us. God is always near. Those who love God will be with Him in heaven. Discuss: *When have you felt lonely or alone? Who is with us, even when we feel alone?* Make a Mobius strip for each family member by cutting a 2" x 10" strip of paper, giving one end a twist, and taping or gluing the ends together. Have children draw a line down the middle of their ring until it circles around and comes back to where they began. They may be amazed at this, wondering how one line can get on both sides of the paper. Then give them an even greater surprise. Ask what they think will happen if you cut the strip down the middle. Help the kids cut their strips carefully, following the drawn line. Instead of two loops, you'll have one larger Mobius strip. You may repeat again with the larger strip to show how it continues to grow and never ends. Ask: *How is this strip like God?* (It never ends; nothing we do separates us from God; it goes on and on.) Share: *We may think that we've cut God out of our lives when we sin, but God is always near. He will keep His promise and walk beside us always. God never leaves. And like this strip, the more we get to know God, the "larger" He becomes.* Teach the slogan: "We need to believe that God will never leave." Close in prayer, thanking God for being ever present and walking with us always.

Who Is My Friend?

God looks at the heart. You'll need 4 cans of pop (2 diet, 2 regular), 1 large tub to put these in (five-gallon bucket), duct tape, water, and a Bible. Prepare for this activity by taking the soft drink cans and wrapping them with duct tape so you can't see what kind of soft drinks they are. Have children examine them, then fill the bucket with water. Ask: *What do you think will happen when I place the cans in the water?* (Sink, float.) Put the cans in the water and watch as some float (diet) and some sink (regular). Consider: *How are the soft drinks like our friends?* (They seem the same on the outside, but they're different on the inside; some are nice, some aren't.) *What do you think makes some of the cans float?* (More bubbles, more air.) Note: *The scientific reason is that the artificial sweetener used in diet soda is lighter than sugar used in regular soda. What do you think makes some people good friends and others not-so-good friends?* (What they believe; how they act; what they think is important.) Remove the duct tape and look at the soft drinks and read aloud I Samuel 16:7 and Galatians 2:6. Ask: *What does this passage tell us about people?* (It's what's on the inside that counts; our hearts are important to God.) *How can we make sure we "float" with God's love?* (Read the Bible, trust Jesus; go to church, pray.) Open and enjoy the soft drinks together and share: *God tells us in the Bible that what's on the inside is what's most important to Him. When we look for friends, we need to look beyond their clothes and appearance to see what's inside.* Ask family members to share ways

they can discover what's inside someone. Then pray, asking God to help them to make good choices when making friends.

Support System

A good friend encourages us to do what Jesus would do. You'll need strips of cardboard cut out from a cereal box, books, 50 pennies, and a Bible. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Cut 2" wide strips out of a cereal box, the height of the box. Place two stacks of books (about 5 inches high) on a table about 7 inches apart and set a bunch of pennies next to the books. Send everyone out of the room and have them return one at a time for the activity. Have each one attempt to use one strip of cardboard and two stacks of books to make a bridge. Then have them see how many pennies they can stack on the bridge before it falls. Repeat for each person, and keep track to see who is able to stack the most pennies. After everyone has attempted this activity, gather together and show family members how easy it is to balance more pennies on the bridge. Take the second strip of cardboard and secure, placing edges of cardboard at bottom of the book stacks, arching it upward until it touches the top piece of cardboard. Then have family members stack as many pennies as they can on the newly supported bridge. Ask: *What made this bridge sturdier than the other?* (The support of the extra cardboard.) *How is this bridge like someone who has good, godly friends?* (They can support someone; good friends make you stronger.) Share: *By encouraging us to do what Jesus would do, standing by us, and helping us to seek God's will, good friends can support us and make us stronger.* Have family members share ways friends can be a positive influence (encouraging us to obey parents, showing love to others, using positive words) and a negative influence (gossiping, disobedience, hurting others). Show how bad friends can "let us down" by turning the support cardboard over into a "U" shape (the pennies will fall as the support is gone). Close by thanking God for friends and asking Him for wisdom in choosing positive, supporting friends. Teach the slogan: *"God never lied; what's important is inside."*

Measuring Our Lives

The Ten Commandments show us our sinfulness and our need for a Savior. You'll need butcher paper, pens, measuring tape and a Bible. Lay butcher paper on the floor. Have children take turns making marks on the paper to indicate approximately how tall they think they are. For added fun, have them draw outlines representing themselves on the paper. Don't allow them to measure themselves or lie down on the paper yet. During this part of the activity, it's important for kids to guess their height. When each has drawn an outline or marked their height, ask: *How close do you think you came to your actual height?* Have them take turns lying down on the paper while you mark their actual height next to their guesses. Ask them to guess how many inches tall they are, and list next to their outline. Then use a measuring tape to find the true height of each one. Ask: *How close were you to guessing the right height or making the right marks on the paper?* Read Romans 3:20 and 7:7-20 and ask: *What is sin?* (Disobeying God; missing the mark; making wrong choices.) *How is the way we missed the mark in measuring ourselves like the way we miss the mark in our relationship with God?* (We can't do everything on our own; we mess up even in small things.) Share: *The Ten Commandments reveal to us how we miss the mark for the way God wants us to live. It shows us that we need to repent (confess) to restore our fellowship with God.* Spend time in prayer together, thanking God for the Ten Commandments and asking for forgiveness for the times when you've messed up and not

followed them or have sinned in other ways. Teach the slogan: *"God gave the big ten to guide all men."*

The Sheep and the Goats

God will separate those who love Him from those who don't. You'll need coarse salt, ground pepper, a plastic spoon, a piece of wool cloth and a Bible. Pour a bunch of coarse salt and ground pepper onto the table and mix them together. Then invite family members to see if they can separate the pepper from the salt. Encourage them to try, even if they think they can't. After a moment or two, interrupt by asking: *What is difficult about this activity?* (The salt and pepper are mixed together too well; it's hard to pick up the small pieces of salt.) Read the story of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46. Then share: *In this story, Jesus used the idea of sheep and goats because these animals were similar. They would often graze in the same fields, but they would be separated when it was time for shearing. Explain that the sheep and goats, like salt and pepper, represent people. Ask family members to imagine that the goats and pepper are people who don't love God and the sheep and salt are people who do. Ask: What did Jesus say to the sheep (or salt)? (You get eternal life; I was sick and you took care of Me.) What excuse did the goats (or pepper) have when God separated them? (We didn't see when God was hungry; we never saw when God was in prison.) Share: This passage tells us that when we serve people here on earth, we're also serving Jesus. When we serve Him, we get the prize of eternal life. Now let's go back and see if we can separate the salt and pepper again. As we do, let's remember why it's important to be the salt or the sheep - to serve God by serving others. Take the plastic spoon and rub it with the wool cloth, then hold it over the mixture. The pepper will jump up onto the spoon and remain there. Throw away the pepper and use the salt that evening to season your food as a reminder of the importance of being like the salt or sheep. Teach the slogan: "If we want to be a sheep, to the needs of others we must leap."*

Neither Hot Nor Cold

God wants a passionate relationship with us. You'll need a pan of hot water, pan of cold water, pan of lukewarm water, variety of hot and cold drinks - all to be served at room temperature, and a Bible. Serve family members each a lukewarm drink that would taste much better if it were cold or hot (such as lemonade, "hot" chocolate, tea, etc.). As they are tasting their drinks, consider: *What would have made these drinks taste better? What are other things that taste better when they're hot or cold, not in-between?* (Hot french fries are good, warm ice cream is not good.) If possible serve some samples of these at room temperature to help them understand "lukewarm" as described in the Bible. Read aloud Revelation 3:16 and ask: *What does the author mean when he tells the church of Laodicea that they are "lukewarm"?* (They're not hot or cold toward God; they don't care about anything.) *In what ways are we lukewarm for Christ?* (We don't always live like Jesus wants us to; we don't do anything to grow in faith.) Place 3 pans of water on the table, one hot, one room temperature, one icy cold. Have family members place one hand each in the hot and cold pans and leave them there for a couple of minutes. Have them remove their hands and place them both in the lukewarm water and close their eyes. *What is the temperature of the water for each hand?* (The hand that was in cold water will feel hot and the hand that was in hot water will feel cold.) Share: *The church at Laodicea was neither hot nor cold in their faith. Place your hands back in the room temperature water and notice how the water doesn't feel hot or cold any more. That's how this church seemed to feel about*

God. Sometimes we're this way too; we aren't doing anything against God, but we aren't doing anything to grow closer to Him, either. Have the family brainstorm ways to prevent becoming lukewarm or cold in their relationship to God. Close in prayer, asking God for guidance and strength in building a strong relationship with Him.

Which One First?

Putting God first builds a solid relationship. You'll need a wide-mouth glass jar, large rocks (golf ball size), sand, water, a permanent marker, and a Bible. (Prior to this activity, test the amounts of rocks, sand, and water that will fit into the jar. Place the large rocks in the jar, pour in the sand and shake it to fill in cracks. Pour in enough water to fill up the jar. You'll need a new supply of sand and water to redo this activity with your family, but should be able to wash off the rocks and the jar to be reused.) Ask family members to tell you how all the items (rocks, pebbles, sand, water) might fight into the jar. They may not believe it's possible or may suggest placing the pebbles, sand, or water in first. Listen to their ideas and ask: *What are activities that are occupying your time?* (School, eating, sleeping, playing.) Pour the sand into the jar for each of the items listed until all the sand is in the jar. Ask: *What are the things God would have us do with our time?* Read Mark 1:35, Luke 4:16 & Mark 13:31. Using the marker, label the large rocks with activities we should spend time on such as Bible study, prayer, church, sharing our faith, etc. Attempt to place these in the jar (they won't fit with the pebbles and sand already in place.) Share: *It looks like we've run out of room in the jar...just like we run out of room in our lives by putting other things ahead of prayer, Bible study, and things that bring us closer to God.* Remove the rocks and sand. Place the rocks in first this time, and then pour in the sand, shaking it so it settles around the rocks. Then pour in the water until the jar is full. Consider: *How does this compare to the first attempt?* (It worked this time; we put big things in first.) *Why is it important to put the most important things in our lives first?* (Otherwise, they might not fit; the rest can flow around those things.) Read Luke 12:31 and share: *When we seek God first, the rest of our lives fall into place better. Putting God last means we probably won't have any time for Him at all. We must learn to thirst for God first!* Teach the slogan: *"Keeping Him first drives our thirst."*

Promises, Promises

God keeps His promises. You'll need a plastic coffee can lid, flashlight, bubble solution, straw, and a Bible. Read or summarize the account of Noah and the flood in Genesis 6-9:16. Emphasize the focus of Genesis 9:12-16. Consider: Why did God flood the world? (Because nobody loved God; people forgot God; it was full of sin.) Why did God save Noah and his family? (Because they loved God; they were the only people who followed God.) What does it mean to be "godly"? (To be like God; to follow God.) Have family members share ideas on what it means to be godly. Then talk about how Noah kept working even when the other people were laughing at him and making fun of him. Ask your children when they've felt like Noah's family. Then share that being godly means standing for what you believe even when others don't agree or make fun of you. Tell the family that God made a promise to never flood the earth again and that the rainbow would be a reminder of that promise. Explain that you're going to make a rainbow as a reminder to your family that we should pursue godliness, just like Noah's family. Set or hold the flashlight upright on a table. Balance the plastic coffee lid on the flashlight. Pour a spoonful of bubble liquid into the lid. (Add 2/3 cup liquid clear dish soap to a

gallon of water.) Wet the lid and the straw with the bubble liquid. Turn on the flashlight and turn off the room lights. Use the straw to gently blow a bubble on the lid. Pull the straw out of the bubble and watch. Soon the bubble will get thin on top and thick on bottom. Keep watching and you will be able to see a rainbow of colors in the bubble. Just for fun, have a child get a finger really wet and carefully push it into the bubble...the bubble won't break! As you do this, remind the family that God won't break His promises, either. End this activity by asking family members to remember two things every time they see a rainbow: that God keeps His promises, and that God wants us to be godly.

Shadow Plays

Because we Love God, we obey His commands. You'll need a light source and variety of objects (stuffed animals, spoon, bottle, shoe, remote control, pair of glasses, etc.). Set up a light source somewhere in a room where you can cast shadows on a plain wall. Have kids sit near the wall, but in front of the light source so they can't see what you're holding up to the light. One at a time, hold up different objects so they cast shadows on the wall, having the kids guess what they are. Ask: *What did you see on the wall? How was the shadow similar to the actual object?* (It was the same shape; it looked like it; it was the same size.) *How was it different?* (It was just a shadow; you can't pick it up.) Share: *The shadow was created by the object, but it wasn't the object. In the same way, our obedience is not love, but only a reflection of our love for God. People who obey the Ten Commandments may or may not love God. But people who love God will know that it is important to reflect that love by obeying Him. Our obedience comes out of our love.* Teach the slogan: "Call sin, sin - don't enter in." Close in prayer, asking God for strength in living in obedience to Him, and thanking Him for His love for us. Have each family member say a sentence prayer, naming something they are thankful for.

One True God

There is only one true God we can trust and believe in. You'll need small identical cups (Dixie cups), a small object (like a ball), and a Bible. Place a small ball on a table, then cover it with one of the cups and place the other two cups on either side of it. Play the "shell game" where you randomly slide the cups around the table, mixing things up so the kids have a difficult time keeping up with the cup that covers the ball. After mixing up the cups, have them guess which cup is covering the ball. Repeat, speeding up the cup mixing, and taking turns mixing up the cups. Afterwards, discuss: *What made it hard to know which cup was covering the ball? If we call the ball "truth," how is this game like the way people make choices in real life?* (People look for truth in the wrong place; truth is hard to find sometimes.) Share: *Trying to find the ball among the cups is like trying to find truth when you don't have a relationship with the one true God. People who don't know God or who believe in other gods are constantly guessing wrong about the truth and about decisions in life. Some trust in their ability to make money, some in money itself, some trust in other people. But all of these will someday fail. Money can't buy health; material goods can't pay your bills; other peoples' expectations will change. But God promises and delivers. He will never leave us nor forsake us; He knows what is best for us; He has given us eternal life and answers our prayers.* Read Exodus 20:3 and share: *The first of the Ten Commandments reminds us that there is only one true God. All other places we seek truth will end up being empty. Only God can fill our needs and lead us to eternal life.*

Taming the Tongue

Our tongue is powerful and should be used to glorify God. You'll need a squirt gun, pie pan, Pop Rocks candy, and a Bible. Set the squirt gun on a table next to a pie pan spread with some Pop Rocks candy. Ask: *What is the most powerful weapon in the world?* (nuclear bomb, bazooka, big gun.) Have someone squirt the Pop Rocks using the water gun. Then consider: *How is the way this gun is making the candies pop like the way weapons hurt people?* (Guns can hurt people when used wrongly; there are loud noises when guns go off; we can see the effects of guns.) Have each person put a small amount of Pop Rocks onto their tongues. Enjoy the strange feeling of the carbonated candies popping in your mouths, then consider: *What is different about the way the candies popped in your mouth, compared to how they popped when we shot them with the water gun?* (I can feel these; they seem to move more; I can hear the popping more.) Share: *Guns, bombs and missiles are all very powerful weapons. Just as we could see the effects of our water gun on the candies, we can see the powerfully negative effects of weapons on other people. But there is a more powerful weapon: the tongue! Just as the effects of the Pop Rocks seemed greater when in your mouth, the power of your words can be greater than any bullet or bomb.* Read James 3:5-8. Share: *Our tongue is more powerful than any weapon. But while weapons can harm people, our tongue can actually help people.* Have each one share destructive and constructive things people can do with words. Share: *Sometimes we say things that hurt other people. With the Holy Spirit's help, we can control our words and say only things that help people. Before we say something, ask three questions: Is it true? Is it positive? Is it necessary?* Close in prayer, asking God to help each family member make good choices when using our words and talking to others.

A Joyful Noise

It is important to spend time praising God. You'll need plastic straws, scissors, and a Bible. Read Psalms 66:1, 81:1, 95:1, 98:4 and 100:1. Ask kids to identify the four words that are common to all of the verses. ("Make a joyful noise.") Consider: *What does it mean to make a joyful noise unto the Lord?* (Sing, praise God with music, make a loud noise that tells God you love Him.) *Why does the Bible encourage us to make a joyful noise?* (Because God loves us; because we love God; because God saved us.) Share: *We can praise God for all the wonderful things He has done for our family.* Have everyone call out things they'd like to praise God for (family, friends, having shelter, good food, Bible, that He is always near, etc.) Give each family member a straw and scissors. Have them flatten one end of the straw and cut a v-shape into that end. Then have them place their mouths over the flattened ends, barely covering the "v" and blow. They will make a joyful sound together! You may want to experiment cutting various lengths of straws to make different sounds or cutting holes in the top for "fingering" notes. End the activity by asking each person to say one thing he or she praises God for, then close with a rousing straw-orchestra rendition of a favorite praise chorus. Teach the slogan: *"Use your tongue as you should; for God's glory and good."* Close in prayer, thanking God for the gift of praise and asking Him to help each one to be thankful and to praise Him for specific things every day.

One Strong Potato

God is our only source of strength. You'll need straws, fresh baked potatoes, and a Bible. Ask family members to recall Bible stories where God helped overcome situations that seemed hopeless or impossible (God parted the Red Sea for Moses and Israelites, God toppled the walls of Jericho, Jesus fed the 5,000, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.) Hold up a potato and a straw. Ask: *How can I get this straw through the potato without bending it?* Discuss how this might seem impossible, then grip the straw by pinching one end with your thumb and forefinger and plunge it into the potato at a right angle to the surface. (Be sure to practice to get the right angle.) Read Isaiah 40:29-31 and share: *Most people wouldn't think it is possible to poke this straw through a potato. But it is possible as we can see. Sometimes, we face things that are bigger than we are - things that seem impossible like crossing the Red Sea. During those times, we forget to consider God's role in that situation, just as we didn't consider the power of the straw to go through the potato.* Have family members attempt to plunge the straw through the potato. They'll soon discover that the only way it works is when the angle and force are just right. Explain that this is also how it is when it comes to situations we face that seem impossible: when we're in alignment with God's will - when we're trusting Him and accepting His guidance - He can penetrate our situation and help make things work out. Close in prayer, asking God to help in trusting Him with our problems, even when they seem impossible.

Nothing Is Impossible

Nothing is impossible when it is in God's will. You'll need a hard-boiled egg, butter, a glass bottle with a mouth just a little smaller than an egg, paper, matches, and a Bible. Set a hard-boiled egg (shell peeled off) on top of the bottle and ask children to get the egg into the bottle by simply telling it to go in. Obviously, this won't work and kids will find it somewhat ridiculous to attempt it. That's okay. Enjoy the silliness before continuing. Have children share ideas on how the egg could be put into the bottle without breaking either the bottle or the egg. Then lightly grease the jar's mouth using butter, hold the bottle sideways, and slowly slide a lighted piece of paper into it. Rotate the bottle upright and place it on the table. Place the egg vertically on the bottle (so it seals the opening). The fire will create a vacuum as it uses up the oxygen and will suck the egg into the bottle whole! Read Matthew 21:18-22 and ask: *How did the disciples react when He said that the tree would not bear fruit again?* (Surprised; they didn't believe Him.) Share: *When I asked you how to get the egg into the bottle whole, you couldn't do it by telling it. You may have thought it was impossible, just as the disciples thought what Jesus had done was impossible. But with God, all things are possible.* Ask if they think you can remove the egg from the jar whole. Encourage them to believe in the possibility just as they should believe that God can do seemingly impossible things. Then show them how to get the egg out by turning the bottle upside-down so the egg creates a one-way valve sealing the mouth from the inside. Blow into the bottle as long and hard as you can, then firmly (without breaking the bottle) set the bottle right-side up on a table. The egg should pop out of the top. For the next few weeks, each time you enjoy eggs for breakfast, remind family members of this activity and that nothing is impossible with God. Teach the slogan: *"My strength comes from Him; not from within."*

Fiery Darts

We must hold firm to our faith and depend on God for our strength. You'll need balloons, long darts or shish kebab skewers, cooking oil, and a Bible. Blow a balloon up halfway and explain that the balloon represents us. Ask people to share what they think the air would represent, then suggest that just as the balloon holds air, we try to live our lives full of God's love and doing His will. Then hold up a dart or skewer and ask: *What do you think will happen when I poke the balloon with this dart?* (It will pop.) Go ahead and pop the balloon. Read aloud Ephesians 6:16 and share: *Satan is trying to destroy our relationship with Christ by throwing temptations our way. And just as the dart popped the balloon, our relationship is damaged when we give in to those fiery darts from Satan.* Ask: *How does Satan attack us?* (By tempting us; by making us doubt God; by telling lies.) *What are some of the ways your relationship with God has been "popped"?* (I've lied; I have been mean to someone; I haven't prayed.) Now blow up another balloon halfway and ask family members once again what they think will happen when you poke the balloon with the dart or skewer. This time, lightly oil the dart and carefully push it slowly through the nipple end of the balloon. (You may wish to practice ahead of time to assure success.) The balloon should not pop as long as the dart or skewer is left in the balloon during your discussion and explanation. Consider: *What did you think would happen this time?* (The balloon would still pop.) Share: *When I oiled the dart and chose where to poke it on the balloon, it didn't pop the balloon. I prepared the balloon for the sharp dart and kept it from harm. Just as I prepared this balloon, we need to be prepared for the attacks we'll face in life. When we trust God fully, we will become stronger and better able to keep doing God's will, even when Satan shoots his fiery darts our way.* Close in prayer, asking God for guidance in trusting Him to help us become stronger in doing His will, and resisting the fiery darts of Satan.

An Eye for Weakness

We all have weaknesses and will be attacked by Satan. You'll need two pieces of plain white paper, a pencil, and a Bible. Poke a pencil-sized hole through the middle of one piece of paper. In the middle of the other paper, draw and color in a circle the size of a penny. Have family members complete the following: (1) Hold the paper with the colored circle at arm's length, (2) Hold the paper with the hole in front at just the distance where the circle can be seen by both eyes (through the hole), (3) Alternate closing the left and right eye to determine when the circle "disappears," (4) If the circle disappears when the right eye is closed, that means the person is right-eye dominant. After everyone has finished, explain: The reason the dot went away when you closed one of your eyes is because each of us has one eye that is dominant or stronger than the other. We also have strong and weak spots in other areas of our lives. Read I Kings 11:3-4 and share: Even the wisest man who ever lived, Solomon, had weak spots. He could not say no to his wives who led him to do some wrong things. Satan likes to attack our weak spots. Have family members share one or more weak spots in their lives (lying, cheating, gossiping, selfishness, lust, or greed). Share one of your own to illustrate to children that even adults are vulnerable to Satan's attacks. Read II Corinthians 12:9-10. Ask: What does this passage tell us about what to do with our weak spots? (Admit we have them; tell someone what they are; be honest.) How do we overcome our weak spots? (Ask God to help; trust God.) Share: We all have weaknesses and "blind spots" where Satan will attack. If we have a weak spot telling the truth, we'll be given lots of temptation to lie. But with the power of the Holy Spirit in us, we can

overcome our weaknesses and strengthen our lives to be able to do the right thing. Teach the slogan: "I will depend on God for power, each and every hour."

Hair Dryer Science

When we accept Jesus' gift of salvation, we receive the Holy Spirit. You'll need 1/4 full roll of toilet paper, a blow dryer, a dowel rod, and a Bible. Place the 1/4 roll of toilet paper on the dowel rod so the paper is positioned to unroll from the top side facing away from you. Have a volunteer turn on the hair dryer and slowly lower its air stream until it is just above the top of the toilet paper roll. The paper will begin to unroll without a direct flow of air. After enjoying the flying toilet paper, gather family members together and ask: *What caused the paper to unroll?* (The air from the hair dryer.) *How do you know the air caused it? Could you see it?* (I couldn't see it; I just know. I believe that's what did it.) Read aloud John 3:5-8 and then have family members summarize what Jesus said about the wind. Share: *When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we are given an invisible gift - the Holy Spirit! We cannot see the Holy Spirit, just as we can't see the wind and couldn't see the air from the hair dryer. But just as the air unrolled the toilet paper, the Holy Spirit works in ways we don't understand. And just as we saw the effects of the air on the paper roll, we can see the effects of the Holy Spirit in our lives.* Have family members share ways they can tell the Holy Spirit is in someone's life. For example, someone might say, "I know the Holy Spirit is in me because I know how to do the right thing" or "I know the Holy Spirit is in me because I feel God's presence." Close in prayer, thanking God for His gift of the Holy Spirit, that we can feel His presence and His working in our lives.

Light In the Dark

The Holy Spirit helps us to be a light in a dark world. You'll need Wintergreen or Cryst-O-Mint LifeSavers and a Bible. Read together Matthew 5:14-16. Consider: *What does it mean to be a light in the world?* (To do good things that others will see; to act like Jesus.) *How easy or difficult is it to be a light?* (It's hard sometimes when other people pressure us to do something wrong; it's easy, because I want to do the right thing.) Have family members share about when it's been difficult to "let their light shine." Then read aloud I Timothy 2:1-4 and help family members discover that prayer helps us to live lives that are godly and holy - lives that allow us to shine in the darkness. Take time for "popcorn prayers" with your family (brief sentence prayers), asking for God's help with a particular struggle. Then give everyone a LifeSaver and go together into a dark room (such as a closet or bathroom). Have family members face each other and chew their LifeSavers with their mouths open (manners will have to be set aside for this activity!). Watch as the "sparks" come out of their mouths from the crunching of the candies. As you enjoy the spray of sparks, pray for your family to continue to be lights in a dark world - to spark with God's love so others can see. Teach the slogan: *"With God's might, you can be a light."*

The Raisin for Bible Study

We need to feed on God's Word to grow in Christ. You'll need raisins, a clear drinking glass, a 2-liter bottle of clear soft drink like 7-Up or Sprite, and a Bible. Have volunteers look up and read aloud the following: Psalm 119:105; II Chronicles 34:31; Acts 17:11; James 1:22-25.

Consider: *Why is it important to spend time reading God's Word?* (To grow closer to Him; because God wants us to.) *What are some of the things we learn about reading the Bible from these scriptures?* (The Bible helps us know what to do; we should be excited to read the Bible; the Bible can help us in lots of ways.) Pour the clear soft drink into a clear glass, then share: *I'm going to drop these raisins into the glass. What do you think will happen?* (They will float. They will sink.) Pour the raisins into the glass and watch as they sink, gradually rise to the top, and sink back down to the bottom of the glass. Ask: *How are we like these "dancing raisins"?* (We have good days and bad days; sometimes we're up and sometimes we're down.) Share: *When we don't feed on God's Word every day, we sink down and our spiritual life suffers. But God wants our hearts and minds every day! He wants us to be floating at the top of our relationship with Him always.* Close with a time of prayer, asking God to help each family member look to the Bible for guidance every day, so they won't have as many "sinking" days in the future. Teach the slogan: *"The Word and Spirit are our link; without them we would surely sink."*

A Crushing Eggsperience

God loves and protects us. You'll need one or two raw eggs, a bucket, and a Bible. Begin by illustrating the fragile nature of an egg. Take family members to a bucket or sink and carefully crack an egg. Pass the eggshell around and ask: *What do you notice about this shell?* (It's fragile; it's light; there's not much to it.) Ask for a volunteer who thinks he or she can crush the egg with the "raw" power of their hand. Then place another raw egg in a child's hand so that the ends are at the thumb and pinky. Help them carefully wrap their hand around the egg and attempt to crush it. In most cases, it will be impossible as the pressure is distributed equally around the shell. At the very least, it will be a challenge for a child to crush the egg. Have everyone try it. Discuss: *What was it like to try and crush the egg?* (It wasn't easy; I couldn't do it.) *What does this tell you about the eggshell?* (It is stronger than it looks: it protects the growing baby chick.) Read Matthew 6:26-27 and consider: *If God shows us how much He protects His creation, how does God show His love and protection for us?* (By helping us make good choices; by giving us friends who care for us.) *How is the way God protects the chicks with the eggshell like the way He protects us?* (He puts a "shell" around us; He knows just how strong to make the covering.) Share: *God will never leave us and knows what's best for us. He's always there to listen and can meet all our needs. He knows just what kind of protection we need, and cares for us.* Close in prayer, thanking God for His constant protection over us.

God's Strength

God strengthens us and protects us from Satan. You'll need two un-inflated black balloons, water, candle, matches, and a Bible. Begin by asking family members to tell about times they've been worried or scared. Then ask: *What did it feel like to be worried or scared? What were you afraid of? Did you think about God when you were feeling this way? Why or why not?* Read aloud II Thessalonians 3:3 and Psalm 18:2-3. Consider: *What do these passages tell us about God's protection?* (God gives us strength; God cares for us.) Share: *God is the source of our strength - our Rock. He is like a shield who protects us from our enemies and especially from Satan.* (Note: Practice before doing this with family to determine the right distance to hold the candle, and right amount of water to place in the balloon.) Fill one of the black balloons with enough water to cover the bottom of the balloon when blown up. Blow up both balloons to the

same size. Light the candle. Ask family members what they think will happen when you place the balloons above the flame. Then hold the empty balloon over the flame and watch it pop. Ask: *Did anything protect the balloon? Why not?* (The fire was too strong; it was too thin.) Hold the other balloon above the flame. Watch it carefully and it won't pop. After you blow out the candle, toss the balloon around to family members and discuss: *Why didn't the balloon pop?* (It had water in it; it was protected.) *How is this balloon like people who love Jesus?* (They are protected; they have something inside that keeps them safe.) Share: *When we love Jesus, we are protected from Satan. God strengthens us to withstand Satan's attempts to "pop" us. We can be thankful that God lives in us and protects us.* Teach the slogan: *"When with God we connect, He will always protect."*

Giving In to Peer Pressure

Do not give in to those around you. You'll need an empty 2-liter plastic bottle, an eyedropper, water, and a Bible. Read Matthew 14:6-12 and Luke 23:13-25. Discuss: *What are these passages about?* (People who did wrong things.) *What is similar about these two stories?* (Both knew what they were doing was wrong.) *What made them do wrong?* (People forced them to change; friends convinced them to do what was wrong.) Share: *The Bible tells us that King Herod was "distressed" and that Pilate had wanted to release Jesus: both men knew what they were doing was wrong, but they gave in and did it anyway. That's what we call negative peer pressure.* Have family members share about a time they were pressured to do something they knew was wrong. Fill the 2-liter bottle with water. Then take the eyedropper and fill it about half full of water and drop it into the bottle. (If it sinks, let some of the water out of the dropper and try again. You'll want just enough water in the dropper so it floats.) Put the cap on the bottle. Give the bottle a gentle squeeze. As you squeeze and put pressure on the bottle, the eyedropper will sink. (If it doesn't, or if you must squeeze very hard to get it to sink, open the bottle and add just a little more water to the dropper.) Take turns squeezing to watch the dropper sink and float. Consider: *What happens when the bottle is squeezed?* (The dropper sinks.) *How is this like what happens when people are pressured?* (They fall, sink, do wrong.) *How is this like the way you feel when others pressure you?* (I feel down, unhappy.) Share: *People will pressure us to do the wrong thing, but God can give us strength to stay strong and not "sink" to their level.* Close in prayer, asking God for wisdom in making right choices and strength to overcome peer pressure.

Pressure In A Jar

Stand strong in the Lord. You'll need a jar, string, chair, fan, small weight, and a Bible. Set a jar on the floor and place a fan nearby, facing the jar. Set a chair next to the jar as well. Have a volunteer stand on the chair, give them a long string (enough to reach the floor) and have him/her attempt to drop the hanging end of the string into the jar without bending over. Give each one a chance to complete the activity. Ask: *How easy or difficult was it to drop the string into the jar?* Now turn on the fan so it blows toward the string, and repeat the activity. Make sure the fan blows strong enough to keep the string from hanging straight. Afterward, consider: *How was this activity different from the first time? How is the fan's power like the power of friends to sway or change your mind?* (Friends try to tell you what to do; when others try to convince you of something, it's harder to do what's right.) Read Proverbs 1:8-10. Share: *When we try to live our lives by doing the right thing, it's a challenge (just like the first time we tried*

to drop the string.) But when others are trying to distract us or change our minds, it's even more difficult. God wants us to stay away from people who pressure us to do the wrong thing. Attach a weight to the bottom of the string and repeat the activity with the fan blowing. Read or explain Proverbs 12:3, then share: When we trust God to help us, and do our best to do what's right, it's easier to do the right thing, even when others pressure us to do something wrong. The weight is like our faith in God. When we are righteous, we can withstand the winds and pressure to do what's wrong. Ask: What do the Bible passages and these activities tell us about facing peer pressure? (When we trust God, we can beat the pressure; when we allow others to sway us, it's not easy to do the right thing; we need to do what's right, even when others want us to do something wrong.) Teach the slogan: "When you feel the pressure, don't sink; focus on God and think!"

Tricks & Traps

God can guide us away from Satan's traps. You'll need ten or more inexpensive mousetraps, a pencil, a blindfold, and a Bible. Call everyone together and set a mouse trap. Use a pencil to set off the trap and explain: *A bit of food is the bait that draws a mouse to this trap. The mouse focuses on the bait, takes action to get it, and SNAP! The mouse is trapped. In the same way, when we decide to take action and go for the bait Satan puts before us, we're trapped in sin. Let's label the traps with sins we could get trapped in.*(Ex.: gossip, selfishness, greed, lying, etc.) When labeled, place them randomly around the room. Have everyone sit on the couch while you set each trap. Bring out a blindfold and explain: *Now I've got this blindfold here, and I want you all to take off your shoes and socks. I'll blindfold you and have you walk around the room. Hopefully you won't step on any traps.*(Kids will protest.) Share: *Okay, I won't ask you to go alone. I'll guide you.* Blindfold each one and guide them around the room, avoiding every trap. Afterward, spring each trap with a pencil and put away. Discuss: *Why did you let me lead you around the room?* (You knew where the traps were.) *How is this like avoiding Satan's traps?* (We need someone to guide us who sees the traps.) *What kinds of things help us see and avoid Satan's traps?* (Reading the Bible, praying, listening to parents, teachers, pastors, and others God has put in authority over us.) Share: *When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He quoted the Bible. Our relationship with God helps us keep away from traps, too.* Read Psalm 119:9-11 & Proverbs 3:5-6. Ask: *How do we hide God's Word in our hearts?* (Reading it a lot; memorizing.) *How do we acknowledge God?*(Ask Him for guidance; trust God to know what is best for us.) *Just as you depend on me to guide you away from danger, so you can depend on God and His Word to guide you away from Satan's traps.* Teach the slogan: *"If it looks really good, ask God if you should."*

Search for Change

Change helps us grow and mature. Give family members a challenge. Explain: *I'd like each of you to hunt around our house, inside or out, and come up with an example of change that is good. Bring back evidence of this change or be prepared to take us to the spot you've discovered. You have five minutes. Go!* (If they need suggestions: tree in the yard, pictures, used birthday candles, driver's license, gray hair, pacifier, baby blanket, etc.) When everyone has returned, let each one show off what they've found as evidence of change and explain how it's good. Share: *Change is all around us! Some changes are so small that we hardly notice them. Some, like moving to a new home, school, or job are so big that we feel stress about how we'll*

handle the change. The Bible can tell us even more about the good that can come from change. Read Romans 8:28-39 together. Discuss: How would you summarize this passage? (God uses all changes, whether good or bad to us, for His purposes; nothing, not even changes, can separate us from God's love.) How can this scripture encourage you in times of change? (Even if the change is hard, God is still in control and God loves me; even if I don't understand what's happening when things change, God knows what's going on and God still loves me.) Share: Just as we were able to find evidence of good changes in and around our home, so God is putting evidence of good changes in our lives right now. Later, we can look back on our lives and see how God used changes to make us stronger, more mature people. Teach the slogan: "Change will come, we know. Change can help us grow!"

Agony of da' Feet

We can endure persecution when we look to the reward. You'll need a bucket, bag of ice, marbles, and one-dollar bills. Have your kids sit around you. Pour the marbles into the bottom of the bucket. Dump the bag of ice on top, pour a few cups of water in, stir it around so the ice is very cold and melted, and have everyone remove their socks and shoes. Explain: *I'll give you one dollar for each marble you fish out of this bucket with your toes. Any volunteers?* Take turns trying to fish out the marbles with toes, setting a time limit of 2-3 minutes. Have a towel ready for drying off wet feet. When each child has had a turn, discuss: *Why were you willing to endure the pain of putting your feet into ice? (For the money, for the reward.) If you weren't willing to do it, what was your reason? Would you change your mind for more money? Is there anything that could have gotten you to participate? How painful was it? If I hadn't set a time limit, how many more minutes of pain do you think you could have taken? What does this have to do with persecution?* After family members have shared their thoughts on these questions, explain: *You were able to withstand the pain and suffering of this activity because you were looking beyond the pain. You were looking at the reward of the money you would get. In the same way, when others persecute us because of our belief in God and the Bible, we can look past the very real pain, whether physical or emotional, knowing that we have the reward of God's love, the reward of a relationship with God, and the reward of heaven. Teach the slogan: PEG the opposition when faced with persecution (P=Pray / E=Endure / G=Glad - we can be glad because we know God will reward us for our faith). Close in prayer, asking God for endurance and strength in standing up for our faith.*

Faith Fall

Trials test how much we've grown. For this activity, choose a child to stand in the center of the room, facing away from you. Explain: *Keep your eyes closed and your arms folded across your chest. Keep your body straight and stiff. Now fall backward into my arms.* Take turns doing this with each child, then ask: *Was it easy or hard to trust me to catch you? Did it get easier to trust me after you knew I could and would catch you?* Share: *This was like a test, where I tested to see how much you trusted me. What are other tests you have in life? Why do you have tests at school, in sports, at work?* (To see how much is learned, how much we know, to see if we're ready to learn more or take on more responsibility.) Read James 1:12 aloud, then ask: *What is the reason God gives us tests?* (To see if we'll persevere; to know if we really love and trust Him.) *When you have tests at school or work, what's the reward?* (Good grades, certificate, recognition, a promotion.) *What is the reward God gives us for tests?* (Crown of life; a closer

relationship with God; joy.) Share: *When you fell into my arms, you passed a test of showing how much you trusted me. When you pass a test at school or work, you show how much you've learned and that you're ready for the next step of growth. In the same way, when we go through trials God has for us, we pass God's tests and grow stronger and closer to God. This lets God know we're ready to grow more and ready for Him to use us even more for His purposes. Teach the slogan: "Show and grow: Show God our faith when tested, grow through the experience."*

Continuous Change

We need to grow closer to Jesus each day. You'll need a pitcher, lemonade mix (sugarless), sugar, dry ice, and a Bible. Make a pitcher of lemonade without sugar and give a glass to each family member. Have them drink some and share how it tasted. Read aloud Acts 9:1-18. Consider: *Saul was bitter toward Christians. What does it mean to be bitter toward someone? (To not like them.) How did Saul react to people who followed Jesus? (He hated them; he tried to hurt them.)* Add sugar to each cup of lemonade, have children stir it and drink some more. Again, ask how the lemonade tastes. Share: *We had to add something to our lemonade to make it taste good - to take away the bitterness. God took away Saul's bitterness when Saul became a Christian. That's when he became Paul - a man who helped to grow Christian churches for the rest of his life. When we add God's love to our lives, the bitter turns to sweet.* Use gloves or tongs to add dry ice to the drinks. (Do not touch the dry ice with your fingers or allow kids to touch it.) As the dry ice is added, the lemonade will start to give off a vapor. Let it set a couple minutes, then have family members taste the drink again. This time, it will taste like a carbonated drink. Consider: *How does this compare to the lemonade with the sugar? (It's better.) How is the way we added more things to make the lemonade better like the way we need to add to our lives to make them better? (We need to grow in God's love; we need to look for more ways to make life taste better.)* Share: *Once we choose to follow Christ, we begin a journey of faith. We need to look for ways to grow closer to God every day. Just as we added sugar, then carbonation to our lemonade, we need to add friends, prayer, studying the Bible, going to church, and other things to grow more like Jesus.*

Slow Zone

We need to think before we speak. Listening is very important, but we can't just listen in life. We have to talk as well. This game will help teach something important about talking. Think of a rhyme the whole family knows. Tell your family the title of the rhyme you'll be saying together. Sit in a circle and start by saying one word. The next person says the second word, third person third word, etc. Try it again, this time picking up speed and going as fast as you can around the circle. Discuss: *Was it easy or hard for you to recite the rhyme like this? What happens when we're trying to talk fast and not think about the words? Does it ever happen to you in life that you don't think about what you're saying, then realize you've hurt someone? How do you feel when that happens?* Share: *Once words are out of our mouths, we can't take them back. There's a story of a woman who had said mean things about others and then felt sorry. She asked a wise man what she should do. He told her to put a feather on the doorstep of each person she'd said something mean about. She did this. Then he told her to go pick the feathers back up, but when she returned to their homes, the feathers had blown away. He told her, "The feathers are gone and you can never get them back. In the same way, words that have come out of your mouth are gone. You can never get them back, either." How can we avoid*

hurting others? Read James 1:9. What should we first be doing? How are we quick to listen? Then what do we do? What does this mean? Why should we be slow to anger too? Share: God wants us to listen to what people say, and choose carefully what we say to others. Words that hurt others are not honoring to God. We should build others up instead of tearing them down. Teach the slogan: "Slow to speak and quick to listen helps us learn what we've been missin'!"

I'm Puzzled!

God can see the plan for our lives even when we can't. You'll need three 25-50 piece jigsaw puzzles and a Bible. Before your time together, set out three different puzzles. Place these on different tables or on the floor in separate locations so the pieces don't get mixed. Puzzle 1 should be in the correct box. Puzzle 2 should be in a box, but it should be the wrong box. Puzzle 3 should have no box or picture of any kind - just pieces. Gather the family and work on the puzzles, either together or in groups. When the puzzles are completed, discuss: *What challenge was there to the first puzzle? What was difficult about the second puzzle? What about the third? What was tricky about it? Explain: The first puzzle had a picture that is like a plan for us to follow. In life, God has a plan for us. Sometimes we can see that plan by reading the Bible and we can tell how things should fit together in our lives. What can we understand about how the pieces of our lives fit together by reading the Bible? We can know we're to love each other; the Bible tells us how to treat others; the Bible tells us God should be most important in our lives. Share: The second puzzle had the wrong picture. Sometimes we get a picture of how our lives should look in our mind. Maybe we see ourselves with a bigger house, a new computer, a faster bike. Just like we first started trying to put together a puzzle we didn't have the pieces for, when we look after this wrong picture of our lives, we're working on a life that's not in God's plan. We get led astray by Satan and our own desires, and forget God knows what the real picture of our lives looks like. The third puzzle had no picture at all. Sometimes in life we simply don't know what's ahead. God knows, because He can tell what our lives will look like when the pieces are all together, but there are things in our lives God doesn't explain to us. The Bible says in Romans 8:28 that even the difficult experiences of our lives can be used for God's good purposes, even if we don't always know what they are.*

The Great Controller

God cares for us even in hard times. Share: *The Bible tells us about a man who couldn't understand what was going on in his life. Just like a puzzle with a missing picture, this man was very confused about what God was doing. Read Job 1-2 and 42 aloud or summarize the story. Discuss: How would you summarize Job's story? Why do you think God allowed something bad to happen to Job? (To show Satan that people don't love God just because of what God provides; to help Job learn that God is in control of the world.) Why do you think bad things happen to good people? (There is sin in the world; we don't always know why; God allows us to go through tests and difficult times to make us stronger.) Share: We could just as well ask, why do good things happen to bad people? We learn from Job that we can't know everything about life. We don't see everything the way God does. So even when things are out of control, we can know that God is in control and have trust in Him. Have one child stand in front of you with his or her back to you. Instruct the child to keep a stiff body and fall backward toward you. Be sure you catch your child! Take turns with the other kids. Ask: How is falling in my arms a way of showing you trust me? (We know you'll catch us because we trust you.) Would you trust*

a person smaller than you to catch you? How do we show our trust in God? (We keep loving God even when we can't see Him holding us up; we love and obey God even when life seems hard.) Share: It's harder to trust someone small or one who has failed us. But God is bigger than us and knows what's best for our lives. We can trust God to catch us and care for us even in hard times. Teach the slogan: "God the father knows best." Close in prayer, thanking God for caring for us and bringing us through hard times, and asking for His strength and grace to trust Him more.

Gotcha !- Part I

Satan is always looking for ways to trap us. Using a cardboard box, string, and stick, make a simple trap. Tie a length of string at least three feet long to the stick. Prop up one side of the cardboard box. When the string is pulled, the stick should fall down, allowing the box to drop and trap anything underneath it. Give the string to someone, and a small ball to someone else. Have the person with the ball roll it under the trap and see if the person holding the string is quick enough to pull out the stick and trap the ball. Take turns with everyone. Share: There are three kinds of traps: enclosing, arresting, and killing. An enclosing trap catches an animal without hurting it. Arresting traps grip the animal, but don't kill it. Killing traps grip the animal, then kill it with a blow. Discuss: What kind of trap did we make with our box? (Enclosing) What do you think are the most important things to remember when you're setting a trap? (Disguise the trap so the animal can't tell it's there, and put appropriate bait in it to draw the animal to the trap.) Share: People who use traps are careful to put food or other bait into the traps so animals will want to come close enough. They often disguise the traps with leaves or branches, and sometimes put special sprays on or around the traps so the animals can't detect by the smell that humans have been there. People aren't the only ones setting traps. Satan is busy setting his own traps to catch us. They aren't traps where he tries to catch our leg or snag us in a net. Satan is trying to trap us in sin and lead us away from God. Satan even tried to trap Jesus! In the next family night event, we will find out more about Satan's traps. Close in prayer, asking God for strength and guidance in avoiding Satan's traps.

Gotcha! - Part II

Satan is always looking for ways to trap us. Share: As we saw last week, there are three kinds of traps: enclosing, arresting, and killing. An enclosing trap catches an animal without hurting it. Arresting traps grip the animal, but don't kill it. Killing traps grip the animal, then kill it with a blow. People who use traps are careful to put food or other bait into the traps so animals will want to come close enough. People aren't the only ones setting traps. Satan is busy setting his own traps to catch us. They aren't traps where he tries to catch our leg or snag us in a net. Satan is trying to trap us in sin and lead us away from God. Satan even tried to trap Jesus! Read Luke 4:1-13 and discuss: What kind of "bait" did Satan use in trying to trap Jesus in sin? (Hunger, power, riches; trying to get Jesus to prove He was God.) How did Satan disguise his traps? (Looked like he was concerned about Jesus; quoted verses from the Bible; placed temptation right in front of Jesus.) How did Jesus resist the temptation to get ensnared in these traps? (He used verses from the Bible to guide Him.) What can Satan use to tempt us today? (1) Pride, wanting to impress friends by smoking, drinking, using drugs, unhealthy addictions. (2) Power - big promotion at work, more money, more prestige, which takes time away from family, church, God. (3) Physical Desires - too much food or drink, material things, stealing. Share:

Satan looks for ways he can trap us. Sometimes these things start out looking good to us. But Satan can twist even a good thing and make it into something bad. We need God's strength to avoid these traps. Close in prayer, asking God for wisdom, guidance, and strength in avoiding Satan's traps, and thanking God for giving us the victory over Satan in area

Tens – Part I

Share: In this lesson we're going to find out what a tithe is. A clue is, it has something to do with the number 10. Have someone read aloud Genesis 28:10-22. Share: Jacob wanted God to be with him on his journey. As a symbol of his desire to trust God during that journey, Jacob promised to give God one-tenth of all he was given. Giving one-tenth of what we have is called "tithing." "Tithe" is a fancy word for "tenth" and it usually means giving 10% of what we have, just as Jacob promised. Have each family member collect 10 similar items from things they own (books, crayons, shoes, cards, etc.) and lay the items on the floor in neat lines. Have them choose one item and place it in another pile. Consider: What does it feel like to have so many things here on the floor? How does this small pile compare to the larger rows of stuff? If we consider that God provided all of the things here, how easy or difficult would it be to give this smaller pile back to God? Giving 10% (or one out of every \$10 we have) to God is tithing. Tithing is about more than giving God your money - it involves your time, energy, and talents as well. What does this activity tell us about tithing? Share: The word "tithe" means one-tenth or one out of every ten dollars. The Bible teaches that we're to tithe by giving one-tenth of all we get back to God. This is usually done by giving to our local church, which can use the money to help other people to know Christ and help meet other needs. Teach the slogan: "In order to obey, give one in ten away."

Tens - Part II

Continuing from the last activity, share with the family the truth from Part I: The word "tithe" means one-tenth, or one out of every ten dollars. The Bible teaches that we're to tithe by giving one-tenth of all we get back to God. This is usually done by giving to our local church, which can then use the money to help other people to know Christ and to help meet other needs. Another aspect of tithing that you'll want to teach your family is the concept of "first fruits." To illustrate this, give each family member ten pieces of sweetened cereal. Ask them to eat nine pieces and save one. Some family members might forget and eat all ten, others might save the smallest or a broken piece as their last piece of candy. Consider these questions: Is it easy to leave one piece of cereal after you've tasted nine? Why or why not? (No, I want to eat all of it; yes, you asked us to save one; no, I liked it a lot and want one more.) What does this tell us about giving God our tithe after we've spent or used the first nine-tenths of our money or gifts? (It's not easy to save money to give to God after we've used most of it; it's better to give God our money first.) Give everyone another ten pieces of cereal and have them choose one piece to give to you as their tithe. Then have everyone enjoy eating the other nine pieces. Read aloud Psalm 3:9-10 and discuss: Why should we give to God first? (Because God asks us to; because God gave everything to us.) What promise does this passage state about giving to God first? (He will multiply what we receive; we will be blessed; He will care for us.) Review the slogan from last week: "In order to obey, give one in ten away."

Timetable

Budgeting means making a plan for using our money (Judges 6-7). You'll need large sheets of paper and markers. Have everyone sit around a table. Give each person a sheet of paper and marker, then have each one draw a large circle on the paper. Explain that the circle represents one typical week-day, a 24-hour period. Have everyone divide their circle into pie slices and mark them to indicate how each hour of the day is currently being spent: sleeping, eating, school, studying, praying, playing, reading, doing chores, watching TV, etc. When the charts are complete, have each person show what each pie slice represents and consider: *What does your pie chart tell you about how you spend your time? What things would you change about the way you spend your time?* Have everyone turn over the papers and draw another circle. Have them divide the circle this time representing how they'd like to spend their time. When these are complete, have each one share them. Consider: *How easy or difficult was it to find a way to use the time?* Share: *What we did was create a "time budget." If we had all the time in the world, we wouldn't need to be so careful with our time because we could always find more. We don't have all the time in the world, though, so we need to plan how to use our time so we can get everything done that we need to do, as well as things we want to do. In the same way, we all need a "money budget" because we only have so much money. Let's develop these skills now, using them more and more as you get older, learning to budget our time and money, and being good stewards of all that God gives us.*

Focusing On Others

Love is unselfish - it focuses on others. Have family members take turns "mirroring" each other, copying actions and expressions. Then consider: *What was necessary for doing this activity well?* (We had to focus and concentrate.) *How is this activity like love?* (It focuses on other people.) Read I Corinthians 13 and share: *When we think of the word "love," lots of things come to mind. You may say that you love ice cream, or love a particular book or movie. But we're going to talk about the kind of love that God has for us, and how we can share that same kind of love with others. It all begins by doing what we did in this activity - focusing on others rather than ourselves.* Set out snack foods on the table. Tell family members they cannot eat the snack themselves, but they must feed someone else the snack. After everyone has enjoyed a snack, form a circle and consider: *What was it like to not get to eat a snack by yourself? How would you have felt if you fed someone else, but no one fed you?* Share: *In I Corinthians 13 we are given a definition of what true Christian love is all about. One of the characteristics of love is that it isn't self-seeking. That means it isn't selfish. True Christian love is expressed without expecting anything in return. That would be like feeding the delicious snack to someone else but not expecting to have any yourself. That's not an easy thing to do.* Have family members think of times they have said things such as, "If you __, I'll give you __." Then share: *When we ask for something in trade for our love, that's called conditional love. But the Bible tells us that the best kind of love is unconditional, "just because" love. God tells us He loves us - not that we have to do certain things to get His love. It's always there for us to have.* Teach the slogan: *"Unselfish love is from above."*

Love Cards

God teaches us about love through His Son, our families, and friends. Ask children to tell you where they learn about love. (God, parents, Bible, etc.) Then go around and give each family member a big hug. Consider: *What did I just do?* (Give a hug; show love.) *What are other ways people show love?* (Reading a bedtime story, spending time, caring for me, playing with me.) *Who are some other people who show you love?* (Teachers, friends, pastors, neighbors.) Share: *We learn about love from family members and friends who love us. We also learn about love from the story of Jesus in the Bible. On Valentines Day, we send cards to people we care about. Let's do something a little different today. We're going to create three large cards for people who have taught us about love. Of course, we also love these people, so it's a good idea to let them know.* Help the kids create three big cards: one for family, one for a friend, and one for Jesus. Read I Corinthians 13 as you work together on the cards. When the cards are complete, have each family member use an ink pad and mark a thumb print on each of the three cards. Share: *These thumb prints represent the imprint that our families, friends, and most importantly, Jesus, have had in our lives and in our understanding of love.* When the cards are complete, place them on a table for all to see. Ask the kids to think about where they've learned about love each time they see the cards, and to say a little prayer, thanking God for giving us the picture of love in Jesus' life. Teach the slogan: *"Unselfish love is from above."*

Born to Die

God sent the baby Jesus to earth to show us how much He loves us - the greatest gift ever given. Jesus came to die for our sins, so that we could be forgiven and live in heaven someday with Him. You'll need a large piece of cardboard, markers, scissors, tape, and a Bible. Have family members create a large cardboard cross. Then take turns drawing symbols or words on the cross to indicate sins or wrongdoings from the past week. (Ask the question, "Is there anything you have done or thought this past week that would make God sad?") Let the family members know that they don't need to write out the specific sin, but that God will understand the symbols or pictures they draw. When everyone has written or drawn something on the cross, read Romans 5:8. Then share: *God sent His Son Jesus, to die on the cross. But when Jesus died on the cross, He took away all of our sins.* Use a big red marker to write the word "Jesus" across all the images and words on your cardboard cross. Ask: *What does it feel like to know that Jesus died to take away our sins?* (It makes me feel good; I'm sad that He had to die.) Share: *Because Jesus died on the cross, we can be forgiven for all that we do that's wrong. But God doesn't just forgive us, He forgets our sins, too.* End this activity by dreaming big dreams about the wonders of living eternally with Jesus. Close in prayer, thanking God for the gift of His Son Jesus Christ, born so that we could have eternal life.

Not By Chance

Gather in a circle and distribute building toys (Legos, K'nex or Tinkertoys) to each family member. Ask everyone to build something. When finished, have each one explain what they built and why. Then explain that you're going to try an experiment. Take apart your object, put it in a box, shake it around, and pour it out onto the floor. Express surprise that the pieces didn't re-form into the original object. Try the same with other objects. After repeating the shaking and tossing a few times, consider: *How many times would I need to shake the pieces before they*

would fall in the shape of the original object? (It wouldn't work; millions of times.) *Were you surprised that the pieces didn't form correctly when we tossed them on the floor? Why or why not?* (No, we made the toys ourselves; it takes someone's hands to make them.) Share: *Some people believe that our world, and even people were made by chance. That's kind of like believing that we could toss these building blocks onto the floor and they would form our created objects.* Ask: *What would it take to remake the items we built at the beginning?* (We'd have to build them from scratch; we'd have to put them together again.) Have family members attempt to re-create their original objects, then set them in the middle of the circle. Share: *Tossing blocks onto the floor can't re-create what we built, and they can't fix themselves. It requires someone with intelligence to do the work. In a similar way, we know our world and the people in it were not created by accident, but by someone with intelligence. We know from the Bible that God created all things.* Teach the slogan: *Knit together by God's hand; each one special in His plan.*

Who Can You Trust?

Trust isn't easy, but it's important. Have each family member retrieve an item they greatly value (fave toy, blanket, game, book, clothing item, picture, etc.) When everyone returns, discuss: What makes these items valuable to us? How is that like or unlike the way God feels about us? Place the treasured items together in some high place that is visible to all (high kitchen shelf, fireplace mantel). Consider: If we were to give these items back to God, would you trust God to care for them? Would you trust another family member or a friend with them? Which is easier, trusting God with things, or trusting people? Share: Trust isn't easy. As we look at our valued things, we can imagine how we'd feel if they were to be broken, lost or stolen. And even if we let other people take care of them, these items could be accidentally lost or broken. Read aloud Matthew 6:25-34 and consider: What does this scripture tell us about God? (God will take care of us; we don't need to worry about things because God loves us.) Why can we trust God? (Because the Bible says so; because God loves us; because God wants the best for us.) What are some things we should trust God with? (Our family; our problems; our money; our possessions.) If possible, tell family members you'll leave the valued items where they are for a week or so. Ask them to remember each time they see the items that they can trust God, even when trusting seems difficult. Teach the slogan: "In God we must place our trust." Close in prayer, asking God for help in trusting, and knowing He will take care of every aspect of our lives if we trust Him.

Identi-Scam

We can fight the temptation that makes us want more stuff. Gather everyone around the TV for this activity (or use a few magazines instead). Share: *We're going to watch TV but we're going to look for commercials. As we watch the commercials, call out what you think the commercial is trying to sell us as we flip through channels.* Flip channels until you've compiled a large list, then turn off the TV. Hold up your list and read aloud the items written down. Discuss: *When you see things that interest you in commercials, how do you feel? How do commercials make us want more stuff? How is this goal like a "scam" or a way to trick viewers? What does a commercial do or say to get you to believe you need that item?* Read aloud Matthew 4:1-11 and consider: *How is the way Satan tried to trick Jesus like the way the commercials try to trick us? How did Jesus deal with the temptation to have more "stuff"? What can we learn from this story*

about the way we should face temptations? (Remember what God says, not just what we want.) Read aloud Hebrews 13:5. Discuss what this passage means and how it applies to the desire for more things that is prompted and fueled by TV ads. Remind everyone that because God has promised never to leave or forget us that our needs will be taken care of. This knowledge can help us overcome the temptation to have "just one more" thing that we really don't need and learn to be happy or content with what we already have. Ask family members to complete the sentence: "One way I can be content or happy with what I have is to..." Teach the slogan, "Be content with what God sent."

Change Is Good

We can trust that God will take care of us. Read aloud I Kings 17:8-16. Ask: *How did God provide for the widow?* (He provided basic needs of her family because of her obedience to God and putting Him first.) *What does this tell us about how God will provide for us?* (God will give us what we need; if we ask, God will provide.) Have family members decorate a jar with colored paper. Pass the jar around and ask each person to draw on it something that shows how God has provided (ex. house, bed, food, car). Explain that you've just created a "trust fund" jar - a place to put change that can be used to help others, and a reminder that we can trust God to care for us even when times are tough. Share: *Think about something that you really need right now. It could be a new bicycle, a pair of clean socks, or even a hug. Don't tell anyone. We're going to guess what each person is thinking.* Take turns guessing what the others are thinking about. Share: *We can't always know what each other's needs are, but God always knows what we need, and what's best for us. One way to show that we trust God is to set aside some of our money for people who are less fortunate or who have a great need. You may know someone who is going through a tough time.* Talk about how giving up some of what we have to others is a way of saying to God, "I trust that You'll take care of me." Send family members around the house to collect loose change to put into their new "trust fund." Tell them that it may be possible in the future that your own family might be the one in need. Plan to have a weekly trust fund contribution. Over time, you could amass a sum of money to help another family, or to help your own family out of a tight situation. Celebrate each contribution as a reminder of how we can trust God to take care of us. Teach the slogan: *"In God we must place our trust."*

Working Hard!

Being diligent means working hard and working well. Begin by having family members list as many chores as they can that everyone does around the house. Then go through the items and assign a value to each one. (Ex: washing the car - \$5; picking up your room - \$2. You can also use candy pieces instead of money if you choose.) Then have each family member choose one job they can complete during the next half hour, and then dismiss them to go do their jobs. After the jobs are complete, have an inspection time to see if the work was completed and done well. If the job passes inspection, award that person the appropriate pay or food reward. If not, send that person back to the job to complete it correctly. When all jobs are complete, form a circle and discuss: What was it like to do your job? What did it feel like to get your payment or reward after you completed the job? Summarize the story of Joseph from Genesis 39-41: Joseph worked hard even when unjustly sold as a slave since he worked like he was working for God, not for people. Because Joseph worked for God, he worked diligently and did his job with excellence. God was able to bless him and reward him. Joseph's masters saw that Joseph was

not only a great worker, but that everything went well when he was in charge. As a result, they promoted him. After the discussion, ask: What does this story tell us about working hard? (God wants us to work hard; if you work hard, people will notice; working hard gives rewards.) What are ways we can be diligent like Joseph? (Work harder on homework; clean my room more often; spend more time reading the Bible.) Share: Being diligent means working hard. We learn from Joseph's story that hard work usually pays off with rewards. But sometimes those rewards aren't as obvious as a promotion or more money. But when we do everything as if working for God, our best reward is our obedience to Him and His promise to bless us. Teach the slogan: "In all we do, we must give our all."

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September 24, 2014

J. Otis Ledbetter

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Dear Otis,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
 - (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

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