

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC

The Intergenerational Church's Role in Family Worship

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Music

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Worship Studies

by

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Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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Of the Requirements for the Degree
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ABSTRACT

Throughout the Scriptures, God calls parents to teach their children to glorify God through worship. The Bible also commands all generations to encourage one another through worship and service. Throughout history, there are many examples of God's people spending time in family worship, but over the past couple of decades, there has been a decline in parents discipling their children. A great number of parents are now expecting the church to provide the biblical training their children need. The lack of parents taking the time to teach their children and lead them in worship daily has led to high school graduates straying away from their faith at alarming rates. Despite a return to intergenerational worship, many worship pastors are not encouraging families to spend time in worship together. This qualitative historical narrative research project examines the biblical context and church history on the purpose of the church, the family, family worship, the intergenerational church body, and the pastoral leadership's responsibility to the family. This study reveals how the intergenerational church can effectively equip families of all ages to either begin or strengthen daily times of family worship. Through the strengthening of daily family worship, the weekly times of corporate worship will be enhanced due to the growing relationship families have with God. This opportunity for the church to work together builds the future outlook of the intergenerational church worship ministry and increases the productivity of the discipleship ministry through mentoring.

Keywords: family worship, intergenerational church, discipleship, worship

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Over the past two decades, the number of church disaffiliations among high school graduates who were raised in a church environment has dramatically increased, and the trend is not improving. Many church leaders and analysts have speculated the reason for this shift, and there are likely many different reasons for this alarming trend. One reason that has not garnered much attention is the lack of family worship taking place in homes today. In God's Word, there are several commands to teach children the ways of God and to share it from generation to generation. Based on the instructions found in the Bible, many examples of parents teaching their children through the act of family worship can be found in church history. In more modern church history dependable evidence of families seeking to worship together in the home are few. Christian parents should be teaching their children to understand that the Lord is God, He is the only God, and He is to be worshiped daily. In Deuteronomy 6:7 Moses exclaims, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."¹ What is it that parents are to teach to their children? Moses records and proclaims God's directions in Deuteronomy 6:4-6, "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 might. And these words that I command you today shall be one your heart." The responsibility of leading their children to the Lord and glorifying Him daily falls to the parents. Parental instruction in the Lord has far greater influence than that of the church. J. Vernon McGee states, "God holds parents responsible to bring up

¹ Unless stated otherwise all Scripture is from the English Standard Version (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”² Passing a love for God from generation to generation is the most basic way the gospel story continues to endure. In Psalm 78:4–6 Asaph seeks to equip the people of God writing:

“We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children.”

Since the Scriptures establish and command the teaching of God’s story from generation to generation, with the father taking the lead, now is the time to return to this practice. According to Darren Williamson’s study on family worship, he writes, “Now is the time to rediscover and implement the old and biblical practice of family worship, a joy producing discipline that will radically blunt the fall away rate, encourage the development of multigenerational disciples, and strengthen the core of Christian families throughout the body of Christ.”³ This is an opportunity for the church to be strengthened and lives forever changed due to God working in the lives of Christian men and fathers.

From the time of the early church to modern-day churches, many aspects of worship have changed, but the truth of God’s Word establishes that parents, or more specifically fathers, are “to train up their children in the way they should go” (Prov. 22:6). While this is well established in the Old Testament, the apostle Paul also makes mention of it to the early Christian church in Ephesians 6:4, saying, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Prior to the Reformation, striving to raise a family

² J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee: vol. 1 Genesis through Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1981), 552.

³ Darren T. Williamson, *The Family Worship Guide: A Handbook for the Christian Home* (Los Angeles: Keledei Publications, 2020), 3–4

according to the truths found in Scripture became difficult as church worship evolved. The clergy created standards so rigorous, such as specific prayers for every hour of the day, that only they could fulfill the demands. Parents conceded to the fact that it was no longer worth trying to lead in family worship. Donald Whitney records, “As individual access to the Bible became increasingly rare and expensive, and with the progressively more hierarchical clergy, family worship declined into the dust.”⁴ Limited access to Bibles and rigorous church standards caused common parents to no longer understand the necessity or importance of discipling their children as directed in the Old and New Testament. James White concurs with the decline of family worship writing, “Ordinary people could not follow such a routine of prayer, and the history of the daily office in the west is a gradual disappearance of the people’s office. Eventually local clergy followed monastic practices but left little prayer of a public nature for the ordinary folk.”⁵ Not all was lost with prayer and worship in the home, however. After the Reformation, the Puritans sought to return family worship to its rightful place. According to White, “The Puritans and the Reformed tradition in general made an important contribution in visualizing the Christian home as a small church and carefully cultivating daily family prayers, a tradition not entirely vanished.”⁶

⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 30.

⁵ James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 55.

⁶ James White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, 120.

The Family

Family worship is a form of discipleship for the parents to take part in raising their children. The church, including parents, is called to pass on the faith and teachings of Jesus Christ. This calling adheres to the Great Commission, in which followers of Christ are to share the good news thereby creating more followers. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus states, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” This command is not just to church leaders, but to all believers. Parents have the opportunity to fulfill this command by leading their own household to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. According to Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, “The biblical imperative is for believing parents to teach their household to obey all that Christ has commanded, principally, to love and follow God above anything else.”⁷ The Great Commission requires the spiritual development of the believer and the responsibility of mentoring new believers to the point of going and doing the same. This form of discipleship is true for family worship. As parents disciple their children, those children will, in turn, grow up to lead their own children in family worship. According to Steve Parr and Tom Crites, “Parents have a greater opportunity to influence their child’s spiritual development, positively or negatively, more than anyone else in their foundational years. Parents cannot take this responsibility lightly.”⁸ The impact parents can have on their children, either positive or negative, is far greater than the church or school. Chandler expounds, “In many ways, culture has convinced parents that it is better to outsource the education and training of their children to

⁷ Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home Through Time, Moments, and Milestones* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 47.

⁸ Steve R. Parr and Tom Crites, *Why They Stay: Helping Parents and Church Leaders Make Investments That Keep Children and Teens Connected to the Church for a Lifetime* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2015), 55.

professionals. We send them to teachers, counselors, tutors, coaches, and churches to learn and develop.”⁹ This wonderful privilege of training and leading children belongs to the parents. Parr and Crites write, “The simplest explanation for why young adults are still active in church could be argued that they are genuine followers of Jesus.”¹⁰ They continue, “One of your most important jobs as a parent is to encourage the spiritual development of your children. They need you to be their godly father or godly mother. Pray for your children’s spiritual health. Provide for their spiritual development by being an active part of a local church where they will be taught God’s Word.”¹¹ Parents have the great responsibility of leading their children to know and love the Lord and follow Him for the rest of their lives. Charles Spurgeon explains the importance of godly parents teaching biblical truth, “The first lesson for a child should be concerning his mother’s God. Teach him what you will, if he learn not the fear of the Lord, he will perish for lack of knowledge. Around the fire-side fathers should repeat not only the Bible records, but the deeds of the martyrs and reformers, and moreover the dealings of the Lord with themselves both in providence and grace.”¹² The instruction of the father and mother should come out of the biblical wisdom they have gained. Young children often look up to their parents, seeking to learn from and live like them. Proverbs 4:1-4 signifies to sons the importance of their father’s teaching stating, “Hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me; ‘Let your heart hold fast my

⁹ Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 51.

¹⁰ Parr and Crites, *Why They Stay*, 26.

¹¹ Parr and Crites, *Why They Stay*, 57.

¹² Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Vol. 3 Psalms 58-87* (New York: Association Press, 1913), 331.

words; keep my commandments, and live.” It is imperative for parents to realize the responsibility of utilizing every available moment to teach their children to love God with all their heart.

Parents should strive to model the actions and behaviors they desire to see. This includes learning and worshiping together within the local church. When children see their parents actively participate in worship, they too will be more likely to be engaged in worship corporately, personally, and with the family. According to Chandler and Griffin, “In order to be a model for your kids you must follow Christ in proximity to your children. Modeling requires a close, loving relationship with those you hope to lead and influence.”¹³ Not only can parents model worship in the church but also in the home. Worshiping through singing is an important part of family worship. Keith and Kristyn Getty strongly advocate for singing in the home and encourage parents, writing, “Taking the commands of Deuteronomy 6 seriously includes singing the songs of our faith in the home. It was a Puritan practice back in the seventeenth century that a man would be refused communion on a Sunday if he was not actively and consistently involved in leading prayer and singing and Bible study with his family during the week.”¹⁴ Yet frequently in today’s culture, fathers no longer lead their families in term of their spiritual direction.

¹³ Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 69.

¹⁴ Keith and Kristyn Getty, *Sing: How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 53–54.

The Intergenerational Church

God has ordained the father and the mother to be the primary teacher of their children, but the church is also a place to gather with other believers for growing in God's Word. According to Chandler and Griffin, "Parents can encourage a child in the development of their faith by offering them opportunities to hear the gospel and learn the stories of the faith. The best place to do that is the home. The second most important place to offer these opportunities is a Bible-teaching church."¹⁵ While family worship is the responsibility of the parents to fulfill, the intergenerational church should come alongside the family to encourage them. Daniel Block advocates for the church ministering to one another through worship, writing, "In communal worship, people should instruct and exhort one another, sing to one another, and intercede on behalf of one another."¹⁶ This coincides with Paul's teaching to the church at Colossae when he writes in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." As the church seeks to train children and encourage families, "everyone is reminded that the church family has a critical role to play in the spiritual growth of children."¹⁷ Bob Kauflin gives the following direction for worship pastors, "Every week those who lead congregational worship have significant opportunities to teach, train, and encourage God's people in praising him rightly and living for His glory. In that sense worship leaders follow in the footsteps of Old Testament Levites who taught the Israelites what God required in worship and

¹⁵ Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 43.

¹⁶ Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 360.

¹⁷ Williamson, *The Family Worship Guide*, 5.

how they could faithfully follow Him.”¹⁸ Holding the position of worship pastor is not to be taken lightly, especially considering the importance of teaching what God requires in corporate, individual, and family worship.

The pastor, as the chief worship leader, as well as the worship pastor, share the responsibility of equipping the body of believers to fulfill God’s command of being diligent in raising the next generation. According to Michael Walters, “The pastor’s commitment to worship is part and parcel of the pastor’s commitment to church health. Nothing renews the church like renewing its worship. Nothing affects the lives of individuals more deeply than regularly encountering God in worship.”¹⁹ Helping the church understand the importance of encouraging one another provides a great step toward church unity and discipleship training. Block continues, “Worship leaders must promote the engagement of the congregation in worship. The role of the worship leader is to develop this kind of community and to promote the genuine participation of all believers in expressions of homage and submission”²⁰ As the church is unified behind God’s mission, together with the Holy Spirit lives are changed. If there is a desire to retain those high school graduates, then the importance of family worship should be restored. According to Jonathan Edwards, “Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by His rules.”²¹ This statement agrees with White’s writings that the Puritans desired for every Christian home to be like a small church that

¹⁸ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 54.

¹⁹ Michael Walters, *Can’t Wait for Sunday: Leading Your Congregation in Authentic Worship* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 211.

²⁰ Block, *For the Glory of God*, 360.

²¹ Jonathan Edwards, “Farewell Sermon,” *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 1* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1974), 206.

continually teaches the next generation to worship God only. According to Page and Gray, “This means the passion of our lives must be the development of a love relationship with the living God through Jesus Christ. This is done first and foremost through our daily walk with Him in pray, the study of His Word, and personal worship.”²² These aspects of personal and corporate worship should spill over in our homes by reclaiming family worship.

Statement of the Problem

Every year for the past two decades there have been sobering reports of more and more high school graduates straying from the faith and turning their back on the church and its teachings. According to research from the Barna Group, “Only 20% of young adults who were active in church as teens were still active in church at the age of twenty-nine.”²³ This trend presents a dim outlook for the church. As church leaders seek to discover why this downward slope continues, Parr and Crites suggest, “Young adults are not seeing much difference in Christians and non-Christians in our culture today. Research indicates that this new wave of believers is not staying to fight for their place in church life; rather, they are moving on.”²⁴ While there is much truth in this statement, the absence of parents discipling their children through daily family worship sets students on a path to walk away from the church. Williamson writes, “The greatest and most important role in shaping a child’s faith has been entrusted to the parents by God. As Christians witnessing a crisis of falling away, we must return and embrace this

²² Frank S. Page and L. Lavon Gray, *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today’s Church* (Birmingham: New Hope Publishers, 2014), 33.

²³ “5 Ways to Connect with Millennials,” *Barna Group*, last modified September 10, 2014, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/Millennials/682-5-ways-to-connect-with-Millennials#.VNDv9E90xMs>.

²⁴ Parr and Crites, *Why They Stay*, 11.

fundamental concept if we are to see the next generation continue in faithfulness.”²⁵ Clearly, there are several factors that have led to students walking away from their faith, but it seems parents are allowing their kids to lead the family. Some parents are willing to give their children whatever they desire and allow them to stay over involved in multiple activities. In this culture of busyness, what has been displaced? Jason Helopoulos asks and answers the question stating, “What is it that was part of the DNA of the Christian family in previous centuries, but seems to have all but vanished in this past century? Family worship. This glorious expression of our Christian faith used to mark Christian homes, but over the past one hundred years, the evangelical church seems to have forgotten about it.”²⁶ Building the family upon the firm foundation of the Christian faith has been pushed to the side. James Emery White contends, “Neil Postman’s thesis is that children are being robbed of their innocence, their naivete, their ability to even be a child.”²⁷ Instead, families often seek fulfillment in other activities for their children, creating a busy lifestyle of growing their children into adults much too soon. This busy lifestyle for many families today has led to only attending church when convenient and rarely spending time discipling their children through family worship. 2 Timothy 3:2-5 explains, “For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, not loving good, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the

²⁵ Williamson, *The Family Worship Guide*, 5.

²⁶ Jason Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013), 13.

²⁷ James Emery White, *The Church in an Age of Crisis: 25 New Realities Facing Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 125.

appearance of godliness, but denying its power.” This lack of true conversion and true family discipleship creates gaps in the faith of students allowing for an easy turn away from their faith.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of the study is to further encourage intergenerational churches to utilize their resources to mentor and disciple parents to lead in daily family worship. If the church is going to be more than just a group of people that worships together, then it should strive to be an intergenerational church that builds up all generations by participating in faith-building activities together. Worship pastors should lead out in helping families reestablish family discipleship through the use of worshipping together as a family in the home.

Significance of the Study

As music styles changed in worship services during the late 1990’s, some churches sought to appease the membership by creating various different worship opportunities based on musical preference. These worship services were often labeled traditional and contemporary. The church members that enjoyed a certain style of worship then attended their choice of worship service. This created division within age groups. Some churches even went so far as to create services directed toward children and youth while the adults attended another service of their preference. These age-segregated worship services seemed for some churches to answer their problems with various styles of music. The outcome has left a large gap of separation in the unity of the body of Christ. Page and Gray state, “Unfortunately, when left to our own preferences we often revert to what C. S. Lewis called chronological snobbery, where older generations only find value in the traditions and heritage of our faith, while younger generations only find

relevance in what is current.”²⁸ Many churches are leaving behind age-segregated worship services and moving back to an intergenerational worship service to stem the tide of many young people leaving the faith. According to Page and Gray, “Involvement in worship that is multigenerational during the high school years is more consistently linked with mature faith in both high school and college than any other form of church participation.”²⁹ This type of worship service supports the family worshiping together every week, but there is still a lack of daily family worship to deeply establish the core elements of the faith.

From biblical writings dating back to Abraham until the twentieth century, Christian parents sought to disciple their children. In 2003 a survey by the Barna Research Group supports the claim that many parents no longer disciple their children in the home. The report states,

Eighty-five percent of parents with children under the age thirteen believe they have primary responsibility for teaching their children about religious beliefs and spiritual matters. However, a majority of parents do not spend any time during a typical week discussing religious matters or studying religious materials with their children ... Parents generally rely upon their church to do all of the religious training their children will receive.³⁰

While this form of discipleship has seen a major decline, some parents still continue this tradition of regularly gathering to sing, pray, and read God’s Word together, often around the dinner table. Williamson writes, “Throughout Christian history, the home has been viewed as a critical and paramount place for passing along faith to the next generation.”³¹ In recent history, people became either too busy or so far out of touch with their relationship with the one true God, family worship became nearly non-existent. According to Donald Whitney, “I am persuaded

²⁸ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 37.

²⁹ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 40.

³⁰ Barna Research Group, “Current Thoughts and Trends,” 19, no. 7 (May 6, 2003).

³¹ Williamson, *The Family Worship Guide*, 38.

from my own ministry experience in hundreds of churches that so little family worship regularly exists in Christian homes today, that even in most of our best churches, most of our best men do not even pray with their wives (and children if they have them) much less lead them in ten minutes or so of worship as a family.”³² Families have drifted from the purpose God has created for all mankind: to worship Him. A. W. Tozer states, “That biblically defined purpose is that we might worship God and enjoy Him forever. Apart from that, man has no other purpose; and short of that, man wanders in a spiritual disorientation taking him further from finding his created purpose.”³³ This purpose is true for personal worship and corporate church worship, and therefore, it is true for family worship. According to Jason Helopoulos, “We realize that our primary reason for engaging in family worship is the glory of God. God is honored and glorified as a Christian family gathers to commune with Him, receive from Him, and give praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to Him.”³⁴

The purpose of the intergenerational church is to bring people of all ages together to minister to one another and allow families to worship unitedly. According to Christine Ross, “Intergenerational ministry occurs when a congregation intentionally brings the generations together in mutual serving, sharing or learning within the core activities of the church in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community.”³⁵ If the church desires to bring families together, then it should also desire to help them worship at home

³² Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship*, 13.

³³ A. W. Tozer, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2009), 28.

³⁴ Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace*, 40.

³⁵ Christine M. Ross, “A Qualitative Study Exploring Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry” (doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO, 2006), 127.

together. Teaching and encouraging family worship is a downfall of many pastors and worship pastors of intergenerational churches, but it requires the entire church family building one another up for the work of the Lord. Stylistic preferences of music should not be what divides the church by age. Rather, the body of Christ should gather for the purpose of worship and growing to do the Lord's work through the use of music. According to Mike Harland, "It takes all generations to foster a healthy disciple-making, legacy-building community of faith. Music becomes a tool that facilitates this process, but it is not, nor could it ever be, the key to holding a community of believers together."³⁶ It also requires strong biblical teaching, so parents feel prepared to teach their own families. This study will research ways intergenerational churches can be more effective in assisting parents to lead out in family worship. Reliance on God is where it all begins. As Elmer Towns and Vernon Whaley state, "God always provides opportunity for people to understand and communicate worship in their own culture. God is in the business of changing people and worshiping Him as sovereign is at the heart of this change."³⁷ The church in partnership with parents have the opportunity to make this type of cultural shift in directing the hearts of children toward the Lord. Encouraging the return of daily family worship through the church's direction could sway the ever-growing number of high school graduates leaving the church.

³⁶ Mike Harland, *Worship Essentials: Growing a Healthy Worship Ministry without Starting a War!* (Nashville: B&H Books Publishing, 2018), 121.

³⁷ Elmer L. Towns and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 371.

Research Questions

Due to the continual decline in church attendance by college students and the lack of participation in corporate worship, there is a need to investigate the role the intergenerational church plays in restoring family worship and increases participation in corporate worship.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What does the Bible declare about the relationship between the church and the family?

RQ2: In what ways can the intergenerational church encourage families to engage in daily family worship?

RQ3: How can the worship pastor and worship ministry effectively strengthen home worship among individual families?

Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses to the research questions being addressed in this study:

H1: The Bible declares the relationship between the church and the family to be one that works together to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples.

H2: Intergenerational churches can encourage families to engage in daily family worship through intergenerational mentoring, parent training, and provided weekly resources.

H3: The worship pastor and worship ministry can effectively strengthen worship among individual families by providing weekly family worship resources, pairing various aged families to meet monthly for family worship, and hosting small group family worship times.

If the intergenerational church is meant to be a body of believers designed to work together for God's glory, then the church should be able to guide all types of families to institute

a time of family worship daily. Churches could do this through generational mentoring and training classes. The role of the worship pastor, which is that of a shepherd, also plays an important part in encouraging the return to family worship. Michael Sharp explains, “As a worship leader, get to know the flock. Your ministry is effective to the degree that you help a diverse group connect with one common objective: attributing worth to God!”³⁸ Preparing the family to do this transforms the worship of God’s people as they return weekly to give thanks and honor to their Lord. The worship pastor must build relationships to make the kind of connections that allow for a change in people’s lives. According to Neale and Whaley, “Our worship and service should be driven by our relationship to God and with the people around us. The dynamic between these two types of relationships enables us to understand the purpose for service and worship, the partnership between worship and serving, and our motive for serving and worship.”³⁹ When the worship pastor seeks to encourage families in worship outside of the church then parents can feel comfortable leading their children in singing the songs of the church. According to the Gettys:

These “at home” experiences are foundational spaces for the singing we do from Sunday to Sunday. It links our personal homes with our church home, training kids to sing and sing well as part of the congregation. It links our homes to our kids’ future homes, training this generation how to one day sign with their children. It helps prepare our kids and us for our eternal home when all the families of the world join in praise of the Savior.⁴⁰

³⁸ Michael Sharp and Argile Smith, *Holy Gatherings: A Leader’s Guide for Engaging the Congregation in Corporate Worship* (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2009), 110.

³⁹ Michael Neale and Vernon M. Whaley. *The Way of Worship: A Guide to Living and Leading Authentic Worship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 184.

⁴⁰ Getty, *Sing*, 62.

Every opportunity of training children for Christ, leads to a greater chance all they are taught will be carried on through the rest of their lives. They may then pass the same love for God on to the next generation from all that they have learned in their own upbringing.

Core Concepts

While a fully comprehensive understanding of why so many families abandoned the practice of family worship remains unknowable, in addition to the justification of “busyness,” there is another explanation related to contemporary worship practices. At one time hymnals were taken home to use for familial worship. Due to the transition to screens, however, hymnals became more and more obsolete. According to Harland, “When we began to get outside the hymnal and introduce new songs in worship, a stirring happened in the church.”⁴¹ This stirring led to a division in worship services which eventually led to age-segregated services. Worship pastors, who should understand the importance of worship, need to become familiar with family worship and how they can lead in this revival. Harland ponders, “Do the parents in our churches understand their role in teaching their children how to worship?”⁴² Further, do fathers realize their role in leading their family in worship? According to Voddie Baucham, “Family shepherds (fathers) ought to be motivated out of gratitude for God’s goodness to bring their families before the Lord in regular family worship.”⁴³ Today, in many Christian families, this is not the case. According to Ken Ham, “One of the greatest travesties in our society today is that many fathers are not transmitting to the next generation the knowledge of God and His commands from the

⁴¹ Harland, *Worship Essentials*, 117.

⁴² Harland, *Worship Essentials*, 117.

⁴³ Voddie Baucham, *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 74.

Word. What is even sadder is that most fathers don't seem to know how to do this. They don't know what it means to be the spiritual head of the house."⁴⁴ This research will explore both the need for fathers to teach the next generation and how they can be engaged in this process.

The core concepts of this study include the biblical and ecclesial foundations of family worship. Passages such as Deuteronomy 6:7 and Psalm 145:4 will be considered within this study. After establishing the background, the concepts of family worship's influence on the family as well as the church worship ministry will be developed. If discipleship takes place at home, the family will come prepared to worship and disciple others. Gathered worship is a time for the intergenerational church to encourage and edify the entire family of God.

Another concept explored is the responsibility of the worship pastor outside of worship service leadership. A worship pastor should equip all people to worship all week long. Thus, educating worship pastors on how to equip and encourage families to establish a time of family worship will also be a concept to be explored. The worship leader position has taken on more of a pastoral role over recent years with the title becoming worship pastor or pastoral musician.

According to Constance Cherry:

He is someone who embraces and lives the Christian faith; has a developing spiritual maturity; has primary responsibilities in worship and music ministry; is accountable to God and to others for excellence; views his duties holistically, with sensitivity to the larger purposes of worship; understand the community of faith and the special nature of music's role within that community; and considers the Christian community and its need to both proclaim the truth and respond to the truth through music.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ken Ham, *Will They Stand: Parenting Kids to Face the Giants*, (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2021), 112–13.

⁴⁵ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 180.

Those who are called to serve as ministers and pastors have a direct responsibility to lead God's people in growing their relationship with Him. Zac Hicks writes, "Central to any disciple-making paradigm is the idea that the church's leaders are called and responsible for equipping the saints for the work of ministry. The worship services you lead are putting tools into the hands of Christians, tools which help them to both love God and love others better."⁴⁶ The work of the worship pastor is no longer leading a few songs for the worship service, it now includes the pastoral duty of discipling families in the church. Hicks continues, "A worship pastor's role is more than oversight of the music and content of the Sunday morning service. He must also take into account the daily worship of the people of God. We have a vested interest, therefore, in making disciples both through the service and beyond the service."⁴⁷ According to Allen Ross, "One of the goals of the corporate worship of the church should be to inspire and instruct private worship."⁴⁸ These times of private worship can flow into the parent's leading in family worship to model for their children private and corporate worship. Ross continues, "It is the responsibility of the leaders of the congregation to try to guide and encourage the devotion of the people through the week."⁴⁹ As daily times of private and family worship take place people are drawing near to God, which leads to enhanced times of corporate worship. Ross writes, "When it is time for the body of believers to assemble, people would begin coming with prayers and praises on their lips and the Word in their hearts, for their thoughts would be directed toward the corporate

⁴⁶ Zac Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 54.

⁴⁷ Hicks, *The Worship Pastor*, 58.

⁴⁸ Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2006), 424.

⁴⁹ Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 425.

worship service.”⁵⁰ A family that spends just a few minutes each day in worship together and individually enter into corporate worship with their hearts prepared to celebrate the love of God with others who have this same joy in their hearts.

Intergenerational church leadership and members should desire to see families regularly spending time in worship. In 1 Timothy 5:1-2 and Titus 2:1-10, Paul teaches that the older men and women are to help teach the younger men and women, while at the same time learning from the younger generations. Page and Gray explain, “Our churches have managed to raise a generation of young Christians with little connections to the body of Christ as a whole. Just as devastating, we patronized older generations with an environment of irrelevancy and self-centeredness by disconnecting them from modern movements of God.”⁵¹ Jillian Ross writes, “The local church shares in the responsibility because each one is a spiritual family.”⁵² This includes teaching children to love God and worship Him only. Ross continues, explaining, “Churches would do well to have some form of catechism for children because to know and love God is to rightly worship Him. Since we live in a ‘post-Christian’ society, venerating God by training young Christians demands a lot of time and energy, especially for those tasked with shepherding a generation, who in the words of Judges ‘do not know God or the works he has done’ (Judges 2:10).”⁵³ As the American church now operates in a societal culture in which Christianity is no longer the dominant religion, many church leaders are sharing stories of children and youth who do not know the basic Bible stories or truths found in God’s Word.

⁵⁰ Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 425.

⁵¹ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 37.

⁵² Benjamin Forrest, Walter Kaiser, and Vernon Whaley, eds. *Biblical Worship: Theology for God’s Glory* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021), 115.

⁵³ Forrest, Kaiser, and Whaley, *Biblical Worship*, 115.

Definition of Terms

Multigenerational and Intergenerational Church

As many churches do away with age-segregated services two descriptive terms are being used to describe them. First, the multigenerational church, or a church that promotes multigenerational worship, is a church that has multiple generations active in the church and the worship service. The multigenerational church seeks to keep all age groups together for worship but does not strive to relationally connect all ages of the church community. According to Allen and Ross, “Multigenerational may simply mean that the church honors all generations and has programming for all generations. Multigenerational resources do not assume increased interaction between the generations.”⁵⁴ The multigenerational church will usually offer ministries for all age groups but there will be very few opportunities for cross-generational contact. Peter Menconi explains, “While many churches are multigenerational and seemingly healthy on the surface, in reality, the generations act like ships in the night that pass by one another but rarely have meaningful contact and interaction.”⁵⁵

The second type of church ministry utilized in churches is the intergenerational church or intergenerational worship. According to Allen and Ross, “Intergenerational ministry occurs when a congregation intentionally brings the generations together in mutual serving, sharing or learning within the core activities of the church in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community.”⁵⁶ Intergenerational ministry requires staff and members

⁵⁴ Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 19.

⁵⁵ Peter Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to www.com* (Littleton, CO: Mt. Sage Publishing, 2010), 13

⁵⁶ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 17.

to be intentional about making connections and building community. Discipleship mentoring by pairing different generations can be one aspect of being intentional in intergenerational ministry among church members. Intergenerational worship is another opportunity to build community and make connections between the various generations represented in the church. According to Allen and Ross, “The unique spiritual benefits of all ages worshiping together are lost when segmented populations worship exclusively; among these spiritual benefits are a deep sense of belonging and the blessing of participating in the spiritual journeys of those across the age spectrum.”⁵⁷ Intergenerational worship is more than just including children in worship. Rather they “will feel welcome and included when the body of Christ gathers together; they will be intentionally received; they will belong.”⁵⁸ All ages should seek to learn from one another and lift one another up through encouragement as a gather community of believers seeking to honor their Lord.

Family Worship

Family worship is the worship of God within the family setting. Williamson explains, “At its most basic level, family worship is the regular gathering of the family to worship God and receive instruction in the Christian faith.”⁵⁹ Family worship has foundations in biblical and historical standards but has become nearly nonexistent over the last century. Helopoulos concurs, “This glorious expression of our Christian faith used to mark Christian homes, but over the past one hundred years, the evangelical church seems to have forgotten about it (family worship).”⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 195.

⁵⁸ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 197–98.

⁵⁹ Williamson, *The Family Worship Guide*, 6.

⁶⁰ Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace*, 13.

Churches have the responsibility to bring about a return to family worship by teaching parents their biblical obligation to disciple their children. Williamson writes, “Family worship is extremely effective for ensuring multigenerational faithfulness. Parents must answer the call to family worship and assume God’s role for the spiritual instruction of their children because they are the most effective teachers their children will ever have.”⁶¹ The basics of family worship could include any or all of the following: reading scripture, prayer, and singing. According to Donald Whitney, “No preparation for family worship is needed other than someone choosing a song and deciding your method for prayer.”⁶²

Family Discipleship

Family worship is a form of discipleship. According to Williamson, “When parents actively impart faith to their children, it is likely to stick for life. Parents are physically with their children more than anyone else.”⁶³ All believers are called to make disciples and for parents that begins with their children. According to Parr, “The ultimate purpose that we share (parents and churches) is to develop and disciple our children in such a way that their faith is strong and their commitment to serve Christ continues into their adult lives.”⁶⁴ When children grow up they are more likely to imitate what their parents did with them. Chandler and Griffin explain, “Family discipleship is leading your home by doing whatever you can whenever you can to help your family become friends and followers of Jesus Christ. Christians not only ought to disciple, but

⁶¹ Williamson, *The Family Worship Guide*, 39.

⁶² Whitney, *Family Worship*, 49.

⁶³ Williamson, *The Family Worship Guide*, 39.

⁶⁴ Parr and Crites, *Why They Stay*, 49.

they must disciple if they are to truly follow Christ.”⁶⁵ Doing “whatever you can whenever you can” echoes Deuteronomy 6:7, where God exclaims, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” Family discipleship is more than just selecting a time to engage the family or children in the Scriptures. It is parents being intentional about sharing their faith and love for God in all that they do.

Summary

At this moment in history, the intergenerational church is poised to see a dramatic return of family worship. As more and more parents desire community in their lives and the lives of their children, the church has the opportunity to lead the way in offering a community of believers, who desire to encourage one another in their walk with God. Encouraging parents to fulfill their calling to disciple through family worship can have a longstanding effect on their children’s families and the future of the church. Through a return to family worship, the body of believers can be encouraged when all come together to glorify God in corporate worship. Crites reminds, “One of your most important jobs as a parent is to encourage the spiritual development of your children. They need you to be their godly father or godly mother. Pray for your children’s spiritual health. Provide for their spiritual development by being an active part of a local church where they will be taught God’s Word.”⁶⁶ When children see their parents actively participate in worship, they too will be more likely to be engaged in worship corporately, personally, and with the family.

⁶⁵ Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 30.

⁶⁶ Parr and Crites, *Why They Stay*, 57.

As culture shifts further and further away from Christian principles and a love for the one true, holy, and worthy God, now more than ever do families need to return to worship and discipleship in the home. As nations slip into moral decline, the fear of many is the failures of the nation of Israel seen in the Bible such as from Judges 2:10 which states, “And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that He had done for Israel.” Now is the time to encourage and strengthen family worship in the Christian home. Donald Whitney states, “We need to accept the fact that in this sinful world, challenges to family worship arise regularly in every home. The blessing of family worship are too dangerous for Satan to let pass unopposed. Nevertheless, we must stand on tis bedrock truth. God deserves to be worshiped daily in our homes by our families. And for that reason, start today.”⁶⁷ The church needs a plan, under united leadership, to utilize the resources God has provided through its various generations of church members to encourage families to worship together in the church and in the home.

⁶⁷ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 57.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Biblical, Historical, and Theological Considerations on the Church (Church as Family)

The church and the individual families of which it consists have a special relationship. While God created the church to fulfill His purposes by building the family of God, the body of Christ, the church was never meant to be a large group of families exclusively. Rather, it is to be an intergenerational community of believers. The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:20, “There are many parts, yet one body.”⁶⁸ This gathering of the church as a family of believers is one that should resemble heaven’s eternal worship. Jonathan Edwards wrote of the united family of God that prays and worships together and even more so when apart:

Union is one of the most amiable things that appertain to human society, yea, it is one of the most beautiful and happy things on earth which, indeed, makes earth most like heaven. God has made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, hereby teaching us this moral lesson, that it becomes mankind all to be united as one family. And this is agreeable to the nature that God has given men, disposing them to society; and the circumstances God has placed them in, so many ways obliging and necessitating them to it... As it is the glory of the Church of Christ that she, in all her members, however dispersed, is thus one holy society, one city, one family, one body, so it is very desirable that this union should be manifested and become visible, and so that here distant members should act as one in those things that concern the common interest of the whole body, and in those duties and exercises wherein they have to do with their common Lord and Head, as seeking of Him the common prosperity.⁶⁹

The church as a united family is healthiest and making a difference in lives when all generations are actively engaged in worship at home and when gathered together.

God’s Word establishes the need for the people of God to gather in order to worship Him. This is found in both the Old and New Testaments. “Gather” in Hebrew is *qahal*, and in Greek it is translated *ekklesia*, which means to summon an assembly. The Old Testament provides many

⁶⁸ Unless stated otherwise all Scripture is from the English Standard Version (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

⁶⁹ James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Grand Rapids: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1998), 89–90.

references to God's chosen people, the Israelites, gathering in worship at various types of feasts and festivals with their families. Some scholars believe that the origins of the church are seen as early as Abraham, while others hold to the day of Pentecost following Jesus' ascension. Wayne Grudem explains, "There are several indications in the Old Testament that God thought of his people as a 'church,' a people assembled for the purpose of worshiping God."⁷⁰ In Deuteronomy 4:10 we read of the instructions given to Moses, "The Lord said to me, 'Gather (*qahal*) the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'"

While God's people are often seen gathering throughout the Old Testament, it is in the New Testament that the church is developed and built upon the foundation of Christ. In Matthew 16:18, Christ states, "I will build my church [*ekklesia*]," through calling people into a saving relationship with Him. Ephesians 5:25 explains this further by stating, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." When Paul writes of Christ's love for the church, Paul is speaking of those for whom Christ gave up His life to redeem. Grudem continues, "So great is God's plan for the church that he has exalted Christ to a position of highest authority for the sake of the church."⁷¹ Grudem's statement is based on Ephesians 1:22–23 which states, "He has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all." Christ is

⁷⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 854.

⁷¹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 853.

the head of the church and full authority rests with Him. Just as fathers are the head of the household, leading and providing, Christ leads and provides for the church.

Not only did Jesus state that the church would be built through Him, but New Testament writers also began using the word “church” regularly following the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Andreas Kostenberger and David Jones hold to the establishment of the church at Pentecost stating, “It is only in the book of Acts and in the New Testament Epistles that we find the bulk of the New Testament teaching regarding the church. Luke also demonstrates support for this view in his gospel, never featuring the term *ekklesia*, while using it twenty-four times in Acts.”⁷² Luke clearly sees the church as having been established after Jesus’s death and resurrection. The Pauline Epistles contain the bulk of directions for the church.

One of those Epistles from Paul is the Letter to the Ephesians, which provides much direction for both the church and the family. In Ephesians 2:20 we read that the household of God, the church, is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.” With Christ as the cornerstone, all believers including families should unify behind the church to fulfill the Great Commission. Jesus Christ came to establish His kingdom through the work of the church. This work requires strong biblical teaching from the pulpit and in all ministry areas. Through divine revelation, the teachings and writings of the apostles provide the sure foundation for church leaders today in discipling the church and family. According to Grudem, “From the beginning, the church was to serve as a confessional body, holding to the truth of Christ as revealed by the prophets and apostles He has chosen.”⁷³ The truths the church holds to is the truth of the divinely inspired Word of God. John Calvin wrote,

⁷² Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd Ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 251–52.

⁷³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 856

“Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists.”⁷⁴

The importance of the church cannot be overstated. Still, the true purpose of building the church is to see the gospel go forth. The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 3:10, “So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” God’s plan from the beginning has been to redeem His people through His son, Jesus Christ. For God’s story, His wisdom, to go forth, He utilizes the testimony of the believers and the work of the church. The building of the church has been God’s plan, but it requires the work of the pastoral staff and elders to equip the church in how to live for Jesus. This type of teaching and equipping is a means by which disciples of Jesus are continually transformed in order to become more like Christ.

Jesus continues as the authority over the church, but God through the Holy Spirit, has provided spiritual gifts to all members of the body of Christ for the building up of the body. Kostenberger and Jones state, “Among these gifts are those who serve the church as pastors-teachers, whose role is to ‘prepare God’s people for works of service.’”⁷⁵ Everyone is to serve in some form of ministry in the church, but for the pastor they carry the responsibility of equipping the saints through teaching. According to Benjamin Merkle’s commentary, “The ultimate goal of Christ’s gifting the church with leaders is for His body, the church, to become spiritually mature.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vol. ed. John T. McNeill, Trans. and indexed by Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4.1.9, 1023.

⁷⁵ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 252.

⁷⁶ Benjamin L. Merkle, “Ephesians,” In Ephesians-Philemon, Vol. 11 of *ESV Expository Commentary*, eds. Iain M Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 75.

Building the body of Christ also takes place through other elements of worship and the spiritual gifts of its members. In Colossians 3:15–16, Paul writes to the church, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Weekly corporate worship for many churches has taken the form of individual prayers, hearing the Word individually, and responding individually rather than being a time of corporate encouragement and worship. The element of gathering as the family of God has been lost through personal preference and focus on one’s individual acts of worship. Constance Cherry states, “Christian worship has been subject to radical individualism. We have been indoctrinated to think that we are individual worshipers who happen to form the constituency of a local congregation.”⁷⁷ The simple fact that a group of believers gathers does not constitute that corporate worship is taking place. Cherry continues, “Rather, corporate worship is what happens when the body of Christ assembles to hear with one heart, and speak with one voice the words, praises, prayers, petitions, and thanks fitting to Christian worship.”⁷⁸ This happens when the body works together through the use of their spiritual gifts to encourage one another while celebrating the sufficiency of Christ.

God created the church to function with many members of the body all working together for the glory of God. These gifts are also for the purpose of building up the members of the body. Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 and 12, “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is

⁷⁷ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 13.

⁷⁸ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 13.

the same God who empowers them all in everyone. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”

The Directory for Family Worship approved at the Presbyterian General Assembly at Edinburgh in 1647 charges the church to follow the Scriptures stating:

The church ought to stir up themselves and one another to the duties of mutual edification by instruction, admonition, and rebuke. The members ought to exhort one another to manifest the grace of God in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and in living goldy, soberly, and righteously in this present world. The covenant nature of the local congregation is also seen in the accountability of believers to one another. The members of a church are responsible to edify one another.⁷⁹

Under pastoral leadership, the church has the responsibility to hold to its purpose, created by God, to teach and encourage one another while advancing the Gospel through the ministry of the church.

The Church and the Family

In the New Testament, we see that the church has various roles in relationship to the family. In 1 Timothy 1:15, Paul describes the church as "a pillar and buttress of the truth." Today the church is meant to stand on that same firm foundation of Jesus Christ and God's Word as a witness to the truth of the Gospel. While the world and culture may change, the truths of God's Word and mission never change. The church cannot be built upon the family but upon the foundation of Jesus. Kostenberger and Jones conclude:

Unlike the church, which is composed only of the regenerate, marriage, while divinely instituted in the beginning, is entered by regenerate and unregenerate alike. For this reason, marriage and family as such cannot serve as sufficient vehicles of God's truth. It is the church, not the family, that is therefore primarily charged with preaching the gospel to a lost world and to fulfill the Great Commission.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ *The Directory for Family Worship*, from the Westminster Standards, ed. Douglas Comin (Greenville: Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1996), XII.

⁸⁰ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 254.

The Great Commission, as given from Jesus before His ascension, called the church to worship God, to evangelize and to disciple the nations (Matthew 28:16–20). Kostenberger and Jones write, “The eleven received this commission as representatives of the church, having temporarily left their natural family ties, which signified that following Jesus took absolute priority even over kinship relations. They received the Great Commission first and foremost as representatives of the nascent church, not as heads of families.”⁸¹ According to God’s Word parents are to play a key role in discipling their children, “but this does not alter the fact that it is the *church* that was given the charge to disciple individuals and to teach them to obey all that the Lord Jesus Christ commanded them to do.”⁸²

Concerning the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, God’s Word is clear that the church is called to administer under the church leadership. According to Kostenberger and Jones, “There is no indication in Scripture that fathers in their role as heads of households are called upon to administer baptism or the Lord’s Supper for their respective families. This is a function of the church and its leaders, not of individual or collective family units.”⁸³ For some scholars, Reformation leaders, and Puritans, any gathering of believers in families that preaches the Word and partakes of the ordinances can be considered a church. Leland Ryken explains the Puritans’ theology on the family as a church, “Beginning with the premise that the purpose of a family is to glorify God, the Puritans attempted to make their families, a ‘little church.’ The family was ideally a place of sanctified relationships and the mutual worship of God.”⁸⁴ While

⁸¹ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 254–255.

⁸² Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 255.

⁸³ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 255.

⁸⁴ Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 87.

some Puritans held to the fact that the Christian family is a church, some believed in the importance of the church in the life of the family. The Puritans believed every Christian family should participate in family worship, but it was not to replace the purpose and roles of the gathering church. Joel Beeke and Mark Jones write:

Family worship was striking example of the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Christian fathers shared in Christ's anointing to function as prophets, priests, and kings, exercised through their divinely appointed authority in the home. While the Puritans taught that God especially visits public worship with His presence, and public worship is the only setting for the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, they also taught that private worship in homes is essential to daily Christian living.⁸⁵

If public worship is where the ordinances are to take place under God-called pastors, then the church has authority over the family concerning the importance of gathering with the church body.

The family and the church are not identical, nor does the family serve as the core structure of the church. As seen earlier from 1 Corinthians 12:12, "The body (the church) is one and has many members," not established on many families. What is the family's role in God's plan for the church? According to Kostenberger and Joes "The family's primary role is to care for the physical, social, and spiritual well-being of its members. This includes the kind of provision, protection, and care with which the familial head was charged in Old Testament times and which is still characteristic of New Testament families (Ephesians 5:25; 1 Timothy 1:18)."⁸⁶ In relation to the spiritual well-being of family members, it is vital for them to lead other family members to Christ. When the family is spiritually healthy and all members following Christ, the church is that much stronger in fulfilling the Great Commission. Joel Beeke explains, "As goes the home,

⁸⁵ Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 865.

⁸⁶ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 255.

so goes the church, so goes the nation.”⁸⁷ Charles Hodge reiterates this statement writing, “The character of the church and of the state depends on the character of the family. If religion dies out in the family, it cannot elsewhere be maintained.”⁸⁸

If the family is important to the life of the church, but is not the authority over it, how can the church support the family and the family support the church? Some churches under-emphasize biblical teachings on marriage and the leadership of fathers within the household. There has been a lack of teaching on biblical marriage and the leadership of fathers within the household. Kostenberger and Jones suggests the following:

What is needed is a church model that strengthens and supports marriages and families and does so on the basis of a robust biblical understanding of the nature of the church. The man's leadership in marriage and the home and the need for wives to submit to their husbands and for children to obey their parents are part of this. The importance of intergenerational or multigenerational ministry which does not unnecessarily segment the church into disjunctive, isolated individual units but builds on natural affinity groups, including flesh-and-blood ties, is vital as well. At the same time, the local church leadership has the right and the authority to devise ways to disciple its members, including young people.⁸⁹

If the expectation is for parents, specifically fathers, to train up the next generation to know and love God, then the church should help prepare the parents to lead their children through this life. Jonathan Williams writes, “The heads of homes must be equipped to teach the Word of God rather than trying to teach the doctrine of salvation before they are able.”⁹⁰ Discipling all members of the church needs to be a priority that will lead to fruition of others coming to a saving relationship with their heavenly Father. This teaching must come from strong

⁸⁷ Joel Beeke, *Family Worship* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), 2.

⁸⁸ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (New York: C. Scribner, 1871), 706.

⁸⁹ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 258.

⁹⁰ Jonathan Williams, *A Practical Theology of Family Worship: Richard Baxter's Timeless Encouragement for Today's Home* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021), 39.

pastoral leadership which teaches that God's Word is the authority for all things in this life. Through Bible-based preaching, Beeke feels the authority of the church "must maintain the divinely ordered role of the family to establish a godly heritage."⁹¹ Williams writes, "It is clear that while Richard Baxter was zealous to see every Christian family practicing family worship and teaching the Word of God in the home, he was not so desperate for it that he lowered the standard for how the Word is taught or how worship takes place in the home. He still advocated for a proper teaching and for a proper order of the church and the home."⁹²

Paul clarifies this in Ephesians 6:4, writing, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." The instruction received from the Lord, through God's Word, should form the basis of instruction provided to both parents and children. Merkle concludes, "These commands to children and parents, as well as those to wives and husbands and slaves and masters, are all a practical application of what it means to walk with wisdom as a follower of Christ and to be filled with the Spirit."⁹³ This verse also singles out fathers as the leader of the family to be trained in and to oversee true biblical instruction taking place in the home. Merkle confirms the shortcoming of many fathers today, "Unfortunately, this responsibility is abandoned by many men today. Fathers should be actively engaged in educating and training their children in the ways of God and modeling what it means to be a follower of Christ."⁹⁴ Moses's vision of Israel's future included strong leaders that followed God. These men were often fathers leading their homes well. Moses, in Deuteronomy

⁹¹ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 2.

⁹² Williams, *A Practical Theology of Family Worship*, 40.

⁹³ Merkle, *ESV Expository Commentary*, 106.

⁹⁴ Merkle, *ESV Expository Commentary*, 106.

16:18, followed the Lord's plan and commanded the towns to appoint righteous officers. Daniel Block describes this as the "heads of households were ultimately responsible for the well-being of the community."⁹⁵ Moses understood that the fathers who were leading their families would make great leaders within their tribes. The work of the father in the home will become evident in the church and community through the striving of family members to live a faithful and righteous life. Grudem writes, "It is inevitable that leadership patterns in the family will reflect leadership patterns in the church, and vice versa. It is very appropriate that, as godly men fulfill their leadership responsibilities in the family, they should also fulfill leadership responsibilities in the church."⁹⁶

In 1 John 3:17–18, we see the need for a community of believers that loves and cares for one another while standing together to face the trials of this life. Ray Van Neste's commentary on 1 John 3 states, "The church envisioned here is not merely a place to go but a family to which to belong."⁹⁷ The family of God works together in fulfilling God's mission by showing God's love to one another so unbelievers can see this same love. Beeke and Jones point out "As God's adopted sons and daughters, we have been placed in a great family. If we rightly understand this, our attitude toward our brothers and sisters in the family of God will be profoundly affected."⁹⁸ As the church and family work together to grow the entire family of God, the mission God has called the church to can be fulfilled. Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin conclude:

⁹⁵ Daniel Block, *Covenant: The Framework of God's Grand Plan of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 216.

⁹⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 940.

⁹⁷ Ray Van Neste, "1 John," In *Hebrews-Revelation*, Vol. 12 of *ESV Expository Commentary*, eds. Iain M Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 450.

⁹⁸ Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 546.

The Lord has called every immediate family as well as every local church to contribute to the spiritual leadership of the next generation. The immediate family: God calls parents to make their home the primary environment for the discipleship of children. The family of God: God calls the local church to equip the saints for the work of ministry, including in their homes, and to share the load of spiritual leadership for the next generation.⁹⁹

God has a plan for both the church and the family, it is the responsibility of each to understand His calling and follow His will.

The Intergenerational Church

As churches gather to worship, there are several different thoughts on what that should look like. For decades, families worshiped together, but over the last ten to fifteen years, more churches have moved to segregated services to reach various generations based on their preferences within worship. While Sunday School or small groups have been fairly consistent based on age, some church worship services have moved that direction as well. For some churches this may be the best plan in order to reach more people. Others feel it best if the family worships together with members from all generations. Collin Hansen and Jonathan Leeman recently wrote, “The church gathering shapes people. It shapes each one of us as individuals and shapes us collectively into a culture, a force, or a movement. It fashions us as the city of God. It tells the world we care citizens of heaven.”¹⁰⁰ Revelation 7:9 describes heavenly worship, which includes people of all nations, tribes, and tongues worshiping the one true God. If worship in heaven consists of everyone together, then worship in our churches should reflect heavenly worship. Today’s typical cultural pattern for families is one that separates parents from children both at home and church. The kids are headed one direction for certain activities and the parents

⁹⁹ Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Time, Moments, and Milestones* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 50.

¹⁰⁰ Collin Hansen and Jonathan Leeman, *Rediscover Church: Why the Body of Christ is Essential* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021), 47.

are headed in another direction. Allen and Ross shed light on the cultural shift concerning age-segregation:

During the last hundred years, steady changes have occurred in society that have separated families and segregated age groups, not only in educational settings but in life in general. There are less regular and structured interactions between old and young than ever before. Not only families but also other institution in modern society have reduced the chance for old and young to share activities in meaningful ways. Faith communities are perhaps the only place where families, singles, couples, children, teens, grandparents—all generations—come together on a regular interacting basis. Yet the societal trend toward generational fragmentation has moved into churches also.¹⁰¹

Intergenerational worship services could very well be one of the few times that families are able to be together. Voddie Baucham states, “The problem is that the family is in the same house, but they never share the same space, they don’t share life.”¹⁰² Understanding this problem is where the intergenerational church and pastoral leadership can support family worship to encourage family growth.

In both the Old and New Testaments, one reads of families gathering with the assembly or with the first church to worship through singing, praying, and the reading and teaching of scripture. Holly Allen and Christine Ross explain, “Throughout Scripture there is a pervasive sense that all generations were typically present when faith communities gathered for worship, for celebration, for feasting, for praise, for encouragement, for reading of Scripture, in times of danger, and for support and service.”¹⁰³ Each of these are important under biblical worship, encouragement and support are both essential in supporting the family when establishing family worship in the home.

¹⁰¹ Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 30.

¹⁰² Voddie Baucham, *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead their Homes* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 41.

¹⁰³ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 84.

Intergenerational churches have the opportunity to affect all age groups, but they must be careful to not elevate the family above the Gospel message or to the point of excluding others. Kostenberger and Jones write, “We strongly urge the church to make families integral to the ministry of the church, supporting and strengthening them, but not in such a way that the New Testament teaching on the church is compromised or the family unduly elevated above the church.”¹⁰⁴ As stated earlier, Ephesians 4:15–16 and Romans 12:4–6 make it clear that Christ came for the church and the church has authority over the family which is all the more reason to gather with other believers. Some feel that the intergenerational church can come together in homes while others feel that family worship is their church worship time. There is a need for all believers to be under authority of those called by to God serve in the pastor/shepherd capacity. RC Sproul maintains, “We all need to be under visible, earthly authority, for our own protection, and for the protection of our families. That protection needs to be publicly affirmed, and measurably administered. That is, I need to be in a place where a specific group of men, called to this critical role, can confront me on my sin, and command me to repent.”¹⁰⁵ Gathering with other believers is essential for growth in Christ, but should be under the direction of pastoral leadership. Hebrews 13:17 commands believers to “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.” Kostenberger and Jones also state, “The church’s central message is not family integration but the gospel of salvation by grace and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁶ With this in mind,

¹⁰⁴ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 259.

¹⁰⁵ R.C. Sproul Jr., “Ask RC—What’s Wrong with House Churches?,” *Jesus Changes Everything*, July 16, 2020, Accessed November 12, 2022, <https://rcsprouljr.com/ask-rc-whats-wrong-with-house-churches/>, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 261.

the church must recognize the critical role it plays in the lives of all people—including the parents seeking to train their children for Christ.

Encouragement, support, and discipleship are elements that should be seen in every intergenerational church. As a family of believers that worships together, they should also help encourage and disciple one another. Grudem explains, “The concept of the church as God’s family should give us a new perspective on the work of the church; it is ‘family work,’ and the various members of the family never should compete with each other or hinder one another in their efforts but should encourage one another and be thankful for all are contributing to the good of the family and the honor of God our Father.”¹⁰⁷ Several New Testament passages teach about encouraging each other within the church setting. Ephesians 5:19–20 speaks of encouraging one another through singing together. Merkle explains, “When singing, believers not only sing to God; there is also a horizontal dimension in which believers encourage and strengthen the faith of one another.”¹⁰⁸ Colossians 3:16 also speaks of encouraging and instructing one another even through singing. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, “Encourage one another and build one another up.” Paul is encouraging the believers through his writing to continue encouraging those of the same mind. Finally, Hebrews 10:24–25 states, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Again, here the believers are to encourage one another, and yet, takes it a step farther saying the members of the church should attend worship services to encourage others and be encouraged, even if the desire to attend is not there. Albert Mohler states, “We cannot have confidence and full assurance of

¹⁰⁷ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 741.

¹⁰⁸ Merkle, *ESV Expository Commentary*, 108.

faith apart from the church. We cannot endure isolation. Each Christian desperately needs the body of believers for encouragement.”¹⁰⁹

Bringing all ages together for worship encourages young and old alike. As these relationships grow, doors are opened for sharing with each other and opportunities for discipleship. Allen and Ross write, “Intergenerational faith communities bring together the young, fresh thinkers with the older, wiser veterans, creating an integrated profusion of resources.”¹¹⁰ A partnership between the church family and individual families opens the door for family worship training as well as many other opportunities. As lives are changed, so is the culture and the best way to do this is to bring people together. Allen and Ross explain, “The best way for people to link to the narratives, communities, mentors, traditions and practices of their faith communities is to participate actively in intentionally age-integrated experiences with others in those faith communities.”¹¹¹ The intergenerational church has the ability to link older men with younger men to disciple them in their role as head of the household. In the same way, older women can help disciple the younger women as is recorded in God’s Word. Baucham writes, “If we’re going to see a generation of young men rise to the occasion and begin to disciple their families, it will be due in large part to the reestablishment of the biblical paradigm of mature believers pouring their lives into younger Christians and demonstrating godliness and maturity to them by their daily lives.”¹¹² As parents are trained through discipleship ministries, they can then share of the biblical truths with their children to bring them up in the Lord.

¹⁰⁹ R. Albert Mohler, “Hebrews,” In *Christ-Centered Exposition*, eds. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 158.

¹¹⁰ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 51.

¹¹¹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 63.

¹¹² Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 30.

Michael Haynes remarks, “The term ‘integrated’ suggests a discipleship plan that links church and home for the purpose of carrying biblical truth learned at church into the home for additional teaching and modeling.”¹¹³

Role of Pastoral Staff in Family Worship

The disciples were called by Jesus, and today’s pastors should only be serving based upon a calling from Christ. Some fathers are called into pastoral ministry, but most are not. Kostenberger and Jones write, “While fathers doubt-less have a God-given responsibility to serve as spiritual leaders in their homes, the familial realm is distinct from the ecclesiastical realm where authority is vested in spiritually mature men who meet the qualification for church leadership.”¹¹⁴ An example of these qualifications is 1 Timothy 3:4–5, where Paul writes to his brother in Christ, “He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?” The call to manage one’s household is compared to managing the church. A church leader’s effectiveness in managing the church and being an example to other fathers is based on his ability to manage and disciple his own household. Williams maintains, “Since overseers and deacons are to have demonstrated these virtues before being asked to serve, the call to manage one’s household is for all Christians.”¹¹⁵ Faithful management will find leaders teaching their children, interceding for their household, and leading through family worship. Since pastors are held to a higher standard, even with their family, they must be careful to keep a

¹¹³ Michael Haynes, “The Integration of Church and Home: A Strategic Partnership” (D.Min. Thesis, Liberty Theological Seminary, 2006), 65.

¹¹⁴ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 252.

¹¹⁵ Williams, *A Practical Theology of Family Worship*, 52.

watchful eye over all that God has entrusted to them. In Acts 20:28–30 we read, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with His own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.” As the shepherd of a church, the pastor must watch over their family but also the flock that God has entrusted to them. The position of pastor is to not be taken lightly. Rather, it is to be held to a high standard. 2 Chronicles 19:9 states, “This you shall do in the fear of the Lord, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart.” This verse emboldens pastors to lead faithfully with all the ability God has given them. Allison maintains, “God opted to govern the church through ministers in order to foster humility, godliness, obedience, teachability, mutual love, and unity.”¹¹⁶ The approach the pastoral staff take when leading the church family can open doors to new ministry concepts such as encouraging the return to family worship.

Pastors should be available to families and fathers to visit in their home if asked to “show how to lead family worship or observe so as to make suggestions.”¹¹⁷ In 1647 at the Church of Scotland’s gathering of the General Assembly, the following statement was approved to be placed in *The Directory for Family Worship* encouraging ministers to support the fathers, stating, “Since the ordinary performance of all the parts of family worship belong properly to the head of the family, the minister is to stir up those who are lazy and train up those who are weak, so that they are fit for these exercises.”¹¹⁸ For pastors and lay leadership, this idea goes back to being

¹¹⁶ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 602.

¹¹⁷ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 38.

¹¹⁸ *The Directory for Family Worship* (Greenville: Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1994), I.

encouraging to the believers in the church. Chandler and Griffin encourage church pastoral leadership “to utilize the opportunity to challenge, resource, and encourage parents to take up the mantle of family discipleship as the Lord has commanded.”¹¹⁹ Part of this encouragement toward family worship is to inform and teach the fathers their responsibility as head of the household. Joel Beeke writes, “Those of us who are pastors, must lovingly inform the heads of families in our churches that they must command their household to worship God as Abraham did.”¹²⁰ *The Directory for Family Worship* also instructed deacons and elders to “search and inquire diligently, in the congregation committed to their charge, whether any family among them is habitually neglecting this necessary duty.”¹²¹ They believed it was important for the family to spend time reading God’s Word, singing, and praying together and desired for the church leadership to make sure it was taking place regularly.

In a culture that has moved far from fathers leading their families in family worship, there is sure to be a lack of understanding of what this should look like and how it is to take place. When a father does not have previous life experience with family worship, it can lead to frustration not knowing where to start. Ken Ham reasons, “Many Christian dads have been given no tools, no blueprint, and no materials with which to build their legacy—and because many know they should be leading, they are left with heavy guilt and feelings of inadequacy.”¹²² It is imperative that pastors seek ways to disciple men in what their role is among their household. Baucham writes of the pastoral focus, “Our focus is on equipping family shepherds and holding

¹¹⁹ Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 161.

¹²⁰ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 14.

¹²¹ *The Directory for Family Worship*, ii.

¹²² Ken Ham, *Will They Stand: Parenting Kids to Face the Giants* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2021), 113.

them accountable for the work to which God has called them.”¹²³ Never does the family emphasis come before the church, but to enable fathers, greater attention must be placed on father and family discipleship. The church can provide materials to empower fathers to lead their family and as mentioned before, provide assistance in the home regarding how to have these times of family worship. Williams suggests, “The pastor would first model how to teach the catechisms, then the head of every family would teach the catechisms to their household followed by prayer and Scripture reading.”¹²⁴ Spurgeon felt fathers should lead their families both at home and at church. He spent time with families and led them to teach and enjoy God’s Word together. He wrote, “The first and most natural responsibility is for Christian parents to train up their own children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”¹²⁵ To train families is a point of discipleship for the church which leads to a continual cycle of making new disciples. Williams writes “Great Commission churches will therefore include family worship as one of their discipleship goals and as an important aspect of ministry within the church.”¹²⁶

Keeping the Great Commission as the focus, the pastoral leadership can make an impact in many lives by seeking to bring the family back together. Williams again writes, “One can only imagine the transformation that could take place if the local church intentionally equipped heads of households to lead in family worship. When these spiritual leaders are trained to lead in teaching the Word of God, praying with their family, and praising the Lord together in the home, one would expect to see a radical revival in both the home and the church.”¹²⁷ Baucham suggests

¹²³ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 13.

¹²⁴ Williams, *A Practical Theology of Family Worship*, 90.

¹²⁵ Williams, *A Practical Theology of Family Worship*, 94.

¹²⁶ Williams, *A Practical Theology of Family Worship*, 104.

¹²⁷ Williams, *A Practical Theology of Family Worship*, 104.

and prays that, “Pastors will take it upon themselves to embrace biblical family religion; instruct their churches as to the importance of the practice; model family shepherding to their flocks; and make a concerted effort to lead the church to examine the home life of all future candidates for leadership.”¹²⁸

Worship pastors are afforded an excellent opportunity to expand on discipleship through worship to encourage parents to lead in family worship. As worship pastors lead the flock in worship, they are discipling the church to love God and magnify Him in their daily lives. Zac Hicks writes:

When worship leaders begin to think pastorally, we develop a heart and concern for how Christ’s precious disciples are following Him beyond the weekly gathering into the other six days of the week. We begin to ask, ‘How is the formative nature of worship evidenced in the way people of God are following Christ throughout their daily lives?’ We are interested in how gathered worship affects and forms people’s worship in their day-to-day living.¹²⁹

Adding these questions to those already utilized in planning worship services, can serve the congregation well. The worship pastor can also provide resources especially in the area of music to help those who may not feel comfortable in leading songs. Strengthening family worship at home can then improve the moments when the family of God returns to worship together. Hicks concludes, “A worship pastor’s role is more than oversight of the music and content of the Sunday morning service. He or she must also take into account the daily worship of the people of God. Worship pastors have a vested interest, therefore, in making disciples both through the service and beyond the service.”¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 33.

¹²⁹ Zac Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 57.

¹³⁰ Hicks, *The Worship Pastor*, 58.

Family Worship

Why is there a need for a return to family worship? “The most foundational understanding of the culture of our Western world and the future that it portends is that it is increasingly post-Christian.”¹³¹ Worship still takes place, just not directed to the one true God. The Christian religion has been replaced by an atheistic religion that is affecting the morals in the hearts and lives of many. James White observes, “The heart of the secular religion is moral relativism, a functional atheism, that holds that how life is to be lived is dictated by a particular situation in light of a particular culture or social location.”¹³² With a continual cultural decline among families, it is time for the church to stand up for the family and seek a return to fathers leading their home with a biblical understanding. Baucham writes, “A true family shepherd must be a man of the Word—a man of theology and doctrine. The man who desires to lead the family he loves must also be a true lover of the Lord’s Word.”¹³³

For some people and churches, children are held back from learning the truth from God’s Word. This was true even during Jesus’ time when the disciples tried to keep the children from drawing near to Him. Jesus rebuked them and welcomed the children with open arms, just as he does for every lost soul coming to Him. Kostenberger and Jones write, “Children, like all people, ought to be considered spiritual individuals who are uniquely created by God and yet fallen sinners, so that the task of parenting is not merely that of behavioral conditioning but spiritual nurture and training.”¹³⁴ Children need the Lord in their lives and the parents along with the

¹³¹ James White, *The Church in an age of Crisis: 25 New Realities Facing Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 19.

¹³² White, *The Church in an Age of Crisis*, 19.

¹³³ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 121.

¹³⁴ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 113.

church have the responsibility of seeking the best way make disciples of them. In Psalms 127:3 and 128:3–4, the psalmist writes of children being a blessing from the Lord. With an understanding that children are gift from God, parents must faithfully train them in godliness. According to Kostenberger and Jones, “Parents ought to consider themselves entrusted with the temporary responsibility and stewardship of nurturing and cultivating a child’s heart and mind in light of the Scriptures and on behalf of God.”¹³⁵ Sending children to Sunday School, Team Kid, and other programs are helpful, but the parents should never delegate the responsibility to others—including the church. Leland Ryken notes, “Puritan attitudes toward children were rooted in the conviction that children belong to God and are entrusted to parents as a stewardship.”¹³⁶ The parent should be brought into a greater understand of God’s Word so they can pass that on to their own children. Kostenberger and Jones state, “As the head of the home, the father ought to assume responsibility for leading his children to Christ and of encouraging them on the path of Christian discipleship.”¹³⁷ There are several scriptures that emphasize teaching the next to glorify God. In Deuteronomy 6:5–9, Moses explains to the people of Israel what God requires:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 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.

¹³⁵ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 114.

¹³⁶ Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 78.

¹³⁷ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 164.

It is the responsibility of each generation to teach the next generation to love God only. Ken Ham writes, “God uses the family unit to transmit His knowledge from one generation to the next and be ‘salt’ and ‘light’ in the world.”¹³⁸ The desire of parents teach what God commands is born out of the love for they have for Him. This great love that God has for the world and in return believers have for Him leads to a desire to share that same love with their children. Williams states, “Family discipleship occurs when this love for Christ is modeled and reproduced in the home.”¹³⁹

Joshua also declares that as the leader of his household, he and his family were going to worship God only. In today’s culture, there are many people that never pray to the one true God. Even some Christians never embrace His vision and do not believe in His promises. White states, “It is as if we have decided on a lesser god, and as a result, we are more likely to accept the list of predictions from a radical pessimist that we are to embrace the promises of Jesus.”¹⁴⁰ Williamson affirms, “Family worship today is rarely practiced, and many dedicated Christians have no understanding or experience of it. The busyness of modern life and breakdown of the family make it difficult for many to even eat a meal in the same place, let alone spend time together in worship.”¹⁴¹ There is a lack of desire to have any type of relationship with God outside of church, yet God desires our utmost worship and affection. Baucham points out the

¹³⁸ Ham, *Will They Stand*, 76.

¹³⁹ Jonathan Williams, *Gospel Family: Cultivating Family Discipleship, Family Worship, and Family Missions* (Houston: Lucid Books, 2015), 15.

¹⁴⁰ White, *The Church in an Age of Crisis*, 201.

¹⁴¹ Williamson, *The Family Worship Guide*, 6.

importance of the title bestowed upon fathers: “The role of men in their families is so important that God honored it by conferring upon us his own title, Father.”¹⁴²

Following the Reformation, the Puritans understood the importance of family worship and have been one of the major proponents for this duty of the parents. Baucham states, “The Puritans saw a direct relation between the spiritual health of the family and that of the church. Usefulness in the church is wedded to godliness in the home”¹⁴³ For the Puritans, family worship was a high priority and considered worthy enough to stress all families to participate. Historian Horton Davies explored its role in Puritan life and noted that the head of the family “was in duty, bound to teach his children the Scriptures and was expected to expound the catechism to his family every day.”¹⁴⁴ Throughout history the church has seen much change based on cultural influences. Some of these influences still affect our perceptions of church, family, and worship.

Williamson writes of early Christian worship:

A brief survey of Christian history reveals that something like family worship has been encouraged and practiced throughout the life of the Church, especially at times when Christianity is successfully making genuine disciples of Christ. Remember, Christians in the early centuries were religious minorities fighting for their new-found faith in a hostile environment. The surrounding culture understood the importance of family for religion. Leaving behind the traditional gods of your ancestors was a form of family treason. The typical family in the Greco-Roman context had a private altar in the home where family members offered small acts of worship to local deities or ancestors in addition to their public religious duties at civic shrines and temples. The same is true of the Jews who came to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Converts to Christianity would find it natural and obvious to worship Christ in both the assembly of believers and their private homes.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 11.

¹⁴³ Williams, *A Practical Theology of Family Worship*, 12.

¹⁴⁴ Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1997), 278–79.

¹⁴⁵ Williamson, *The Family Worship Guide*, 20.

Over recent years gathering for worship has often been the focus of many churches and for parents seeking to lead their children, but it has become clear that worship is more than just the corporate gathering. Worship is a way of life that sets the believer apart from the culture around them. Helopoulos writes, “As a Christian’s life should be marked by setting time apart for secret worship, and just as our gathering together as the Christian community should be centered upon corporate worship, so should the home of a Christian family be marked by family worship.”¹⁴⁶ In this way, parents should be diligent about incorporating family worship in the home to train their children to live a holy life. Samuel Davies which succeeded Jonathan Edwards as president of Princeton said of family worship:

If you love your children; if you would bring down the blessing of heaven upon your families: if you would have your children make their houses the receptacles of religion when they set up in a life for themselves; if you would have religion survive in this place, and be conveyed from age to age; if you would deliver your own souls—I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of your lives... Consider family religion not merely as a duty imposed by authority, but as your greatest privilege granted by divine grace.¹⁴⁷

God has called parents to see that their children grow in the Lord so that His truth goes forward, day after day. Ken Ham encourages parents to fulfill that responsibility, stating, “Parents—particularly fathers as the spiritual head—have a responsibility to ensure that they put the salt of biblical truth in their children,”¹⁴⁸ teaching them all that God has commanded.

¹⁴⁶ Jason Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), 26.

¹⁴⁷ “The Necessity and Excellence of Family Religion,” in *Sermons of the Reverend Samuel Davies* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, n.d.), 2:86.

¹⁴⁸ Ham, *Will They Stand*, 230.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As many churches are returning to intergenerational worship it is time to see the church leadership encourage parents to start leading their families in daily worship at home. The research set out to present the need for both intergenerational corporate worship and family worship based on biblical and historical documentation. The purpose of this study is to help churches understand how to assist families in reincorporating family worship in the home. Due to a growing number of high school graduates leaving their faith behind, it is important for the entire intergenerational church community to aid parents in training their children. Church leaders and worship pastors need to have an accurate understanding of the impact family worship can have on the church and the impact intergenerational worship can have on the family. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology utilized in this qualitative historical narrative study. The information in this chapter will address the research design, gathering of data, source analysis, and data analysis.

Research Design

The qualitative historical narrative research design was used to explore the biblical and historical contexts of the church, family, and family worship. According to John Creswell and David Creswell, “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.”¹⁴⁹ The philosophy of the church and family must be discovered and applied to the rest of the research. Creswell and

¹⁴⁹ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018), 4.

Creswell state, “Although philosophical ideas remain largely hidden in research, they still influence the practice of research and need to be identified.”¹⁵⁰ Understanding the lives of families in biblical times, and of the Puritans who were proponents of family worship, is necessary for the research of this topic. Creswell writes, “Narrative research is a design of inquiry from the humanities in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals.”¹⁵¹ Utilizing the qualitative historical narrative design is useful for intentionally selecting documents relative to the research questions and the aspiration to solve an issue brought up by the questions. Creswell explains, “The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select documents that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question.”¹⁵² In qualitative research, the researcher uses academic knowledge to analyze, interpret the data, and formulate a plan of action. For research striving to make a difference in the life of the church, each of these analytical elements are informed by a biblical worldview to provide a framework for ethical reasoning.

The procedure for research following the qualitative historical narrative plan began with recognizing a need for Christian families and the church. Questions and hypotheses were formed to guide the study. Current and historical sources were gathered, analyzed, and reviewed for study. Creswell writes, “Validity is one of the strengths of the qualitative research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher.”¹⁵³ Many of the sources were cross referenced with other sources and as needed, confirmed with Scriptural

¹⁵⁰ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 5.

¹⁵¹ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 13.

¹⁵² Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 185.

¹⁵³ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 199.

background. After interpreting the data, recommendations and conclusions were formed to call for action.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What does the Bible declare about the relationship between the church and the family?

RQ2: In what ways can the intergenerational church encourage families to engage in daily family worship?

RQ3: How can the worship pastor and worship ministry effectively strengthen home worship among individual families?

Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses to the research questions being addressed in this study:

H1: The Bible declares the relationship between the church and the family to be one that works together to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples.

H2: Intergenerational churches can encourage families to engage in daily family worship through intergenerational mentoring, parent training, and providing weekly resources.

H3: The worship pastor and worship ministry can effectively strengthen worship among individual families by providing weekly family worship resources, pairing various aged families to meet monthly for family worship, and hosting small group family worship times.

Gathering of Data

In preparing to write a literature review, data from various sources was gathered to contribute understanding of current research available. Background data from qualified authors provided insight for new research. Due to the nature of this topic, the first place to begin gathering data was in the Bible. First, the researcher seeks out the purpose of the church and the gathering of its members in the Scriptures. Second, researching what God's Word says about the family, their responsibilities to one another, and parental leadership in the home was collected. After searching the Scriptures and collecting many passages on these two topics, study of various commentaries and Bible dictionaries commenced. Also, data was derived from systematic and historical theology books, topic specific books, and articles. The theological foundation of the church as the Body of Christ and the church as family was defined through this study.

Returning to the Bible, the role of the pastor and ministers in leading the church was considered. Again, after collecting passages relating to this topic, commentaries, dictionaries, and books on theology were researched. Pastoral leadership books and articles were utilized to retrieve data concerning this topic. Also considered were books containing information on the role of worship leaders or worship pastors. Several Puritan writings and research on the Puritans were considered due to the high regard they held the pastor to in both the church and the community. When the researcher understands the role of pastoral leadership, they can provide more accurate advice related to the research problem.

In relation to the topic of family in the Bible, there were further elements on parents leading their family in worship as they live their daily life or while at home. Scripture passages concerning this topic were reviewed and analyzed using commentaries and sources on family worship. Also, books encouraging fathers to lead their families in worship at home were

explored. Several current publications and literature from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries on family worship were utilized in gathering data. The Puritans were outspoken proponents of family worship, therefore, several books on Puritan theology and Puritan life were selected for review.

Finally, the task of gathering data on intergenerational church structure commenced. This began by researching what the Bible says about all age groups being together when the church gathers. Various commentaries were referenced for background information. Several books and articles were studied to assess the characteristics of intergenerational engagement within worship and discipleship strategies in the evangelical church. Statistical data on why high school graduates either stay in the church or leave was considered to form recommendations for the intergenerational church to work together through discipleship and encouragement toward family worship.

Analysis of Sources

For each of these internal topics—church, family, role of pastoral leadership, family worship, and intergenerational worship—the Bible was the foundation for the rest of the study. According to the “Baptist Faith and Message, 2000,” “The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.”¹⁵⁴ Since all Scripture is divinely inspired and inerrant it provides the sure foundation for a study built around God’s Word.

¹⁵⁴ Southern Baptist Convention, “Baptist Faith and Message, 2000,” Statement of Faith, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/> (accessed February 3, 2022).

While going through the process of gathering and reviewing sources the data was evaluated against the Scriptural basis. Sources were also checked for validity by “trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility,” as suggested by Creswell.¹⁵⁵ Commentaries used in this study were written by leading pastors and edited by leading scholars in the theological field. Many of the comments between various commentaries were related to the topic at hand and confirmed the teaching on church and family. Sources, including books, articles, and doctoral dissertations were all written by well-studied authors and experts in their field of study. These sources covered the topics of church, church family, church discipleship, family, family worship, family discipleship, Christian fatherhood, parenting, the first church, the church today, and the intergenerational church. The sources selected covering these topics include recent publications as well as literature from previous centuries that people have studied time and time again. Each source’s data was confirmed by biblical teaching. If it could not be confirmed, then it was eliminated from consideration for this study. Every source used in the gathering of data was deemed credible and trustworthy.

Analysis of Data

Believing that all sources were credible, notes were taken on each of the topics with some sources containing data for more than one topic. This process involved organizing the data gained from the sources into general topics. After organizing data into the main topics, all data was categorized in a logical order. Understanding the general consensus of the research and the directional flow of the topics allowed for all data to be analyzed in a manner consistent with thematic material.

¹⁵⁵ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 200.

Interpretation of Data

After analyzing all the data collected, the specific topics were compared so an appropriate interpretation could be written based on the themes that were brought to light through the research. Consistency with Scripture has been key throughout this research, so all themes were analyzed based on biblical evidence. Finally, the principles of the intergenerational church supporting family worship were applied to the research data in order to make recommendations to the local evangelical church and the family. These recommendations for future engagement by the church were established based upon the historical research themes that were discovered during data analysis and interpretation.

Conclusion

The qualitative historical narrative research design as explained in this chapter was used to explore the biblical and historical contexts of the church, family, and family worship. This shed light on the past traditions of the church and the family while considering a return to some of these traditions in the way of family worship. With the research questions and hypotheses in mind, data was gathered, sources were analyzed, data was analyzed, and finally, the data was interpreted to report on findings and make recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and implications based on the research conducted in an effort to determine the intergenerational church's role in family worship. The findings addressed are guided by the three research questions and hypotheses. First, the research addresses ways the intergenerational church can encourage families to engage in daily family worship through mentoring, parent training, and providing weekly family worship resources. Second, the research addresses ways the worship pastor and worship ministry can effectively strengthen worship in the home among individual families through various provided resources and establishing monthly intergenerational small group family worship opportunities. The following findings and implications based on research are presented to assist the church in preparing parents to develop an authentic faith and biblical worldview in their children through family worship.

Spiritual Formation

As society moves away from a Christian worldview based on biblical truth, family values have deteriorated, and spiritual training by the parents has been deemphasized. According to an article by the Barna Research Group entitled "Americans Agree: Kids Are Not Being Prepared for Life," "The lowest ratings were reserved for moral and spiritual preparation of children. Only 8% of adults said kids get better-than-adequate preparation in the spiritual realm, while 71% said children get inadequate spiritual training. Similarly, 8% said kids get about average more preparation while three-fourths said youngsters get inadequate moral preparation."¹⁵⁶ Clearly, the

¹⁵⁶ Barna Research Group, "Americans Agree: Kids Are Not Being Prepared for Life," *Barna.com* October 26, 2004, <https://www.barna.com/research/americans-agree-kids-are-not-being-prepared-for-life/>.

spiritual formation of children through the teaching of the parents is not taking place in America as directed in God's Word. This signifies the generational breakdown of the family.

Postmodernism, which points people to find their own truth, has become the religion for many rather than the Christian foundation upon which the country was built. James White points out, "The heart of the secular religion is moral relativism, a functional atheism, if you will, that holds that how life is to be lived is dictated by a particular situation in light of a particular culture or social location. Moral values become a matter of personal opinion or private judgement rather than something grounded in objective truth."¹⁵⁷ The definition of marriage and family has drastically changed as the culture drifts from Christian values to one's own personal truth.

Andreas Kostenberger and David Jones share the same concern:

For the first time in its history, Western civilization is confronted with the need to define the meaning of the terms marriage and family. What until now has been considered a "normal" family, made up of a father, a mother, and a number of children, has in recent years increasingly begun to be viewed as one among several options, which can no longer claim to be the only or even superior form of ordering human relationships. The Judeo-Christian view of marriage and the family with its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures has to a significant extent been replaced with a set of values that prizes human rights, self-fulfillment, and pragmatic utility on an individual or societal level.¹⁵⁸

The church in America needs to recognize this crisis affecting the nation and become proactive in seeking to serve families. The mission of the church never changes, but there is a greater urgency for families to return to biblical principles. White states, "It is difficult to think of America as a mission field, having been the exporter of faith for so many generations. But that is precisely what it has become. If the first American Revolution was fought to free ourselves from

¹⁵⁷ James Emery White, *The Church in an Age of Crisis: 25 New Realities Facing Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 19.

¹⁵⁸ Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation, 2nd ed.* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 15.

political tyranny, a second revolution is now needed to liberate ourselves from spiritual lethargy. And that would be an American revolution worth fighting for, even more than the first.”¹⁵⁹ The church can bring about this type of revolution within the family by teaching the biblical basis for marriage and family. Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin write, “In the modern pandemic of absentee parents, especially fathers, kids who need a family should find the family of God ready to spiritually fit the bill.”¹⁶⁰ The church needs to come around the family to prepare them to equip them while building disciple-makers to evangelize the lost.

Spiritual formation of the family must be an intentional ministry of the church. According to Deuteronomy 6:4-7, it is the responsibility of the parents to disciple their children, but due to the lack of parents fulfilling this responsibility, the intergenerational church should seek to inform and instruct parents according to the Bible. Michael Haynes states, “A strategic partnership must be formed between the church and family in order to impact the culture and multiply a legacy.”¹⁶¹ If the church is to expect parents to fulfill their biblical responsibility of spiritually disciplining their children, then the church must come alongside the parents and provide necessary modeling and mentoring for the parents. Darren Williamson states, “Embracing the long-neglected practice of family worship requires rethinking how we view children of the church—that is, children raised in Christian families.”¹⁶² Many parents do not have a plan or feel unprepared to disciple their children. Fathers are encouraged to be the spiritual leader of the

¹⁵⁹ White, *The Church in an Age of Crisis*, 23.

¹⁶⁰ Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home Through Time, Moments, and Milestones* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 26.

¹⁶¹ Michael Haynes, “The Integration of Church and Home: A Strategic Partnership” (D. Min. Thesis, Liberty Theological Seminary, 2006), 2.

¹⁶² Darren Williamson, *The Family Worship Guide: A Handbook for the Christian Home* (Los Angeles: Keledei Publications, 2020), 4.

home, but feel they lack training to take on this role. J. Otis Ledbetter indicates, “About 90% of 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.”¹⁶³ The intergenerational church has the opportunity to pair various aged mentors to encourage parents and families to grow in the Lord. If the church truly desires to see children grow in the Lord, then the importance of preparing parents should not be ignored. Understanding the biblical design for marriage and family stimulates parents to lead their children in the way they should go. Voddie Baucham believes, “A strong marriage is the foundation upon which a strong family is built. And having a strong marriage requires a biblical understanding of the purpose for which God gave us the institution. Moreover, understanding the purpose for which God designed marriage is foundational to shepherding a family.”¹⁶⁴ The church should be teaching sound biblical doctrine concerning the above-mentioned topics in addition to the task of mentoring parents. The church should strive to seek various ways to share the truths of God Word. Kostenberger and Jones write, “An integrative, biblical treatment of marriage and the family is essential to clear up moral confusion and to firm up convictions that, if acted upon, have the potential of returning the church and culture back to God’s intentions for marriages and families.”¹⁶⁵ The American church has come to a critical junction in an ever-increasing post-Christian society in which it should raise the standard and offer a solution for marriage and family based on God’s Word.

¹⁶³ J. Otis Ledbetter, “A Four-fold Church Strategy for Training Parents to Teach Spiritual Formation at Home” (D. Min. dissertation, Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 79.

¹⁶⁴ Voddie Baucham, *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 83.

¹⁶⁵ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 17.

The Role of the Intergenerational Church

Marriage and Family Equipping

Improving spiritual formation is a step that all churches should take to overcome the moral decline in today's culture regarding the family. Parents overwhelmingly do not believe their children are spiritually or morally prepared, as referenced earlier in this chapter, but Christian parents also do not feel confident in their understanding of biblical principles. According to the Barna Research Group, "Of Christian parents, one in five says they do not feel prepared to address 'tough' questions about Christianity, God, or the Bible. One in seven feels unprepared to talk about the foundational beliefs of Christianity."¹⁶⁶ Teaching about the role of the father, mother, and children from the Old and New Testament enhances the gospel message and should be integrated into the life of the church. Kostenberger and Jones write the following, based on 1 Timothy 3:15, "In a godless culture, the church stands as a witness to God's revelation of truth and to God's redemption in Christ."¹⁶⁷ God has called the church to stand upon His firm foundation and to be a guiding light to a dark and dying world. Teaching the biblical foundations for marriage and family strengthens the church body to stand against the culture's attack on these God ordained institutions. Kostenberger and Jones believe,

The church should do everything it can to strengthen the marriage bond and family ties. It should teach young couples the proper biblical roles of husband and wife and God's plan for them to establish a family and should encourage existing marriages and families to witness to God's goodness, wisdom, and faithfulness in Christ to the surrounding culture. It should pattern itself after God's plan for the natural household in which, the older, mature generation trains and disciples the younger members.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Barna Research Group, "Parents and Pastors: Partners in Gen Z Discipleship," *Barna.com* July 17, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/parents-and-pastors-partners-in-gen-z-discipleship/>.

¹⁶⁷ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 254.

¹⁶⁸ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 257.

Equipping God's people to be who He has called them to be is essential to seeing the Great Commission fulfilled. Baucham agrees that the church's focus should be on equipping parents to disciple their children instead of doing it for them.¹⁶⁹ Many churches desire to see their children's ministry area grow, as they should, but if they truly want children to grow in their faith and to walk with the Lord, they cannot ignore the need to equip the parents.

Equipping parents and the entire family of God includes teaching on the biblical model for marriage. God established the very basis of marriage at creation when He created humans as male and female. Marriage was the foundational institution of human society and began through a covenant made before God and witnesses. Furthermore, God has given man and woman charge over the earth as stewards of what God has created. Kostenberger and Jones state:

This stewardship is a joint stewardship shared by the man and woman. Together they are to exercise it according to the will and for the glory of God. Together they are to multiply and be stewards of the children given to them by God. And together they are to subdue the earth by a division of labor that assigns to the man the primary responsibility to provide for his wife and children and to the woman the care for and nurture of her family.¹⁷⁰

This statement based on God's Word clearly supports the husband and wife working together and staying together as one. In the New Testament, Jesus states in Matthew 19:6, "They are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." From this passage, Jesus makes it clear that marriage is a sacred bond between a man and a woman established by God never to be broken. The covenant marriage relationship depicts the covenantal relationship between Christ and the church. Christ is the head of the church as the husband, head of wife and family. Kostenberger and Jones summarize Paul's writing to the

¹⁶⁹ Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 178–79.

¹⁷⁰ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 24.

Ephesians, explaining, “This headship implies both the wife’s submission to her husband’s authority and the husband’s loving, sacrificial devotion to his wife (Ephesians 5:22–24).”¹⁷¹

As the church teaches the biblical view of marriage, there also must be teaching on how children affect the marriage. It is the role of the parents to disciple their children, often causing the growth of the children to take precedent over the marriage. Baucham presents three reasons not to prioritize children while neglecting the marriage, “First, our children will eventually leave home—and if they are the foundation of our family, then their departure will mean our family’s demise. Second, our marriage forms the cornerstone of our children’s security. Finally, one of our primary goals is to prepare our children for marriage.”¹⁷²

In Ephesians 5–6, the Apostle Paul establishes the fact that God has placed husbands and fathers as the head of the household and holds these men accountable for the discipleship of their family. Yet the church failed to maintain the same accountability for the husbands and fathers. Kostenberger and Jones also agree, “The church has frequently failed to affirm the husband’s headship in the home and the father’s central role in the family.”¹⁷³ In the majority of Christian churches, the men have become passive, and the women have stepped up to fill the void. According to R. Kent Hughes, “The reality is that men are much less spiritually inclined and spiritually disciplined than women. Women are more likely to believe in God, find religion important, attend religious services, pray, and attend Bible studies and prayer meetings.”¹⁷⁴ The lack of an ever-deepening faith in Christ is seen in the numbers of men who attend church

¹⁷¹ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 67.

¹⁷² Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 97.

¹⁷³ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 257.

¹⁷⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 23.

regularly. Hughes continues, “The typical evangelical Protestant church service has fifty-five percent females versus forty-five percent male attenders. Furthermore, married women who attend church do so without their husbands twenty-five percent of the time. The fact remains that men today need far more help in building spiritual discipline than women.”¹⁷⁵ The church should seek to equip and encourage fathers to lead their families to worship God. Baucham writes, “I am convinced that holding men accountable for the evangelism and discipleship of their families does more to motivate and engage them than any weekly Bible study ever could.”¹⁷⁶ Just planning a men’s event does not solve the problem. It requires teaching a biblical understanding of fatherhood and preparing the men to fill this role. Baucham states, “A true family shepherd must be a man of the Word—a man of theology and doctrine. The man who desires to lead the family he loves must also be a true lover of the Lord’s Word.”¹⁷⁷ The main way men can be equipped to lead their family and to also love the Lord is through the work of the church leadership and its members.

As the head of the household, fathers are to be the spiritual leader of the family, but mothers also play a critical role in the discipleship of their children. In the first book of the Bible, it is recorded that God made both man and woman in His image (Genesis 1:27), and that the woman was to be the man’s helper (Genesis 2:18). According to God’s Word, woman was given to man as a helper to complement his responsibilities. While the father held an important role in leading the family and providing, the mother also led and provided for the family’s needs. The Ten Commandments declare that both the father and the mother are to be honored by their

¹⁷⁵ Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 24.

¹⁷⁶ Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 196–97.

¹⁷⁷ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 121.

children. Proverbs 31 reaffirms this fact stating, “Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.” This passage also sheds light on all that the wife and mother does for the family, such as providing food, clothing, and education. Kostenberger and Jones write, “Since in ancient Israel the home was the primary place for education, the mother’s example and instruction were vital. Mothers would also train their daughters for their future roles as wives and mothers.” In the New Testament, Paul discusses the role of women as child bearers, managing the home, and overseeing the upbringing of the children (1 Timothy 5:14). 1 Timothy 2:14–15, Paul encourages women to not be deceived, but “have self-control through faith, love, and holiness.” Kostenberger and Jones share the importance of this verse to women:

It speaks a powerful message to our culture where many are seeking to “liberate” women from all encumbrances of family responsibilities in order to unleash them on a quest for self-fulfillment apart from such functions. To the contrary, it is precisely by participating in her role pertaining to the family that women fulfill their central calling. This is not a matter of seeking to restrict women to the home, but of determining the essence of women’s calling from God and of encouraging them to live it out. This will result not only in greater blessing and fulfillment for women themselves but also for their husbands and families, and it will bring honor to the God who created us male and female.¹⁷⁸

God has called mothers to raise their children to know and love God just as much as he has called the fathers to lead and disciple their family.

Children also hold a role within the family. Throughout the Old Testament, there are commands and examples of children respecting or honoring their parents. The most familiar is God’s command in the ten commandments, “Honor your father and mother” (Deuteronomy 5:16). The Bible also provides examples of children assisting their parents with duties around the home as they come of age. The trend of respecting their parents continues later in life, Kostenberger and Jones write, “Children were responsible to provide for their parents in their old

¹⁷⁸ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 109.

age. Beyond this, children were to show respect for older people other than their parents or grandparents as well.”¹⁷⁹ Children are truly a “heritage of the Lord.” The time has come for parents to return to the priority of passing their faith on to the next generation as God’s Word commands in Deuteronomy 6:4-7. The church must rise to its calling in the New Testament to be the necessary support by being an encourager, mentor, and model for families.

Encouraging Worship

Parents need the encouragement of other church members, including those who have disciplined their children before them and those who are currently seeking to disciple their children. Intergenerational churches are presented with a great opportunity for all ages to build one another up. In Ephesians 4:15–16, Paul writes, “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”¹⁸⁰ All believers are called to grow in Christ but are also committed to the church body with which they are joined. The intergenerational members of the church, working together, build and encourage others through the gifts God has given to each believer. Benjamin Merkle’s commentary states, “God gifts believers so that they, having been empowered, may use their gifts for the benefit of others and the common good. The end result is that the body will grow—not just numerically but also in maturity.”¹⁸¹ God has gifted every believer for service in the church so that others may grow in their faith. Senior adults who are active in the church should never be considered too old to serve

¹⁷⁹ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 92.

¹⁸⁰ Unless stated otherwise all Scripture is from the English Standard Version (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

¹⁸¹ Benjamin L. Merkle, “Ephesians,” In *Ephesians-Philemon*, Vol. 11 of *ESV Expository Commentary* 76.

and encourage younger believers. In the same manner, the Christian youth of the church should interact and encourage all ages of adults. Parents who are striving to raise their children according to God's Word, who are diligently trying to disciple through family worship, need the encouragement of like-minded believers.

Scripture establishes the local church as the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22–23). If Christ is the head and the church the body, then its members gather for the purpose of worshiping the Savior while working together in harmony. Matt Merker writes, “The lesson in this image is that in our worship, we should aim at mutual edification that results in unity.”¹⁸² Christians are not to be focused on their own personal worship preferences in corporate worship; rather they are to be unified with the body of believers. Intergenerational worship involves all ages singing and responding together, praying unitedly over burdens, and encouraging and edifying all believers. Will Whittaker explains, “An intergenerational church aims for regular, sustained interaction among persons from all generations. Intergenerational churches should meet the following criteria at a minimum: Two or more adult generations should be present regularly in joint activities; these activities should encompass a broad spectrum of experiences such as worship, fellowship, study, etc.”¹⁸³ Encouragement through churches who incorporate an intergenerational concept should come naturally as the older generations invest in younger generations. The aim of this type of discipleship model is that generations upon generations will seek to share the importance of serving the one true God only. As members seek to encourage the body of Christ, people become more unified behind the mission of the church.

¹⁸² Matt Merker, *Corporate Worship: How the Church Gathers as God's People* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021), 42.

¹⁸³ William Whittaker, “Exploring Characteristics of Choral Ministry within Georgia Southern Baptist Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry” (D.M.A. dissertation, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 3–4.

Corporate worship, designed appropriately, should erode self-centeredness as the members seek to encourage and build up one another. Merker states, “When we recite a creed, or read Scripture aloud together, or sing a Psalm, or vocalize ‘amen’ after a prayer, we’re not just following the service leader’s directions. We are discipling one another and building up the body to maturity.”¹⁸⁴ Hebrews 10:24–25 encourages the church stating, “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” This passage instructs the church to worship God together while encouraging believers to continue in the work God has called them to do. Merker writes, “A church where folks sit back and passively absorb whatever’s happening ‘up front’ is a church that subtly undermines the priority of mutual edification.”¹⁸⁵ God has placed a divine calling on various types of pastoral leaders, but it takes the entire flock to love, encourage, and serve one another. The church gathers to love one another just as Christ loved the church. Merker contributes to this idea, writing, “Exaltation and edification are mutually reinforcing. We cannot separate them. Glorifying God encourages others, and loving our brothers and sisters brings delight to God. The vertical and horizontal belong together, every Sunday.”¹⁸⁶ Intergenerational corporate worship should never be a time for inward focus, rather it is a time to celebrate what God has done in the lives of His people. Merker brings to focus the congregational mentality a church family should possess, stating, “If we hope to encounter God’s presence when we come to church, we ought to expect to find Him in and with one another, rather than primarily in our own personal feelings and intuitions. A

¹⁸⁴ Merker, *Corporate Worship*, 43.

¹⁸⁵ Merker, *Corporate Worship*, 67.

¹⁸⁶ Merker, *Corporate Worship*, 68.

church service is not mainly the place for me to have a souped-up, private ‘quiet time.’ It’s the place for me to meet God by meeting with His Spirit-filled people.”¹⁸⁷

Mentoring

One way the intergenerational church can encourage parents to utilize family worship for discipleship is through mentoring. The Scriptures teach that the older generation is to teach sound doctrine to the younger generations. Titus 2:1–8 instructs leaders:

Teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

The Apostle Paul outlines the type of life one is to live to teach younger generations sound doctrine while at the same time encouraging the older generations to pass the promises of God on to the next generation. This type of mentoring trains the next generation to stand for the Lord based on biblical teaching. In Proverbs 27:17, the wisdom of King Solomon explains the importance of mentoring and holding one another accountable, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” Fathers who have disciplined their children now have the responsibility to mentor new fathers to do the same. Even if the older generation does not feel they were successful in disciplining their children, they have the opportunity to still change the lives of another generation through mentoring and discipleship. H.A. Ironside writes:

He who would be a blessing to his fellows must mingle with them that he may learn to understand their needs and their sorrows, as well as that he may find gain by what in

¹⁸⁷ Merker, *Corporate Worship*, 40.

them is superior to his own knowledge or virtues. Among Christians, fellowship one with another is precious indeed and becomes increasingly sweet as the days grow darker. How profitable to a Timothy the association with a Paul!¹⁸⁸

J. Oswald Sanders writes of Paul mentoring Timothy, “Paul’s exacting standards, high expectations, and heavy demands brought out the best in Timothy, saving him from a life of mediocrity.”¹⁸⁹ Paul mentored Timothy, and while it was not toward family worship, it was for the work of the Lord. Family worship does not have to be the theme, but mentoring parents toward a correct understanding of the Word can convict parents about the need to disciple their children. Mike Harland explains, “It takes all generations to foster a healthy, disciple-making, legacy-building community of faith.”¹⁹⁰ All church members should endeavor to strengthen and mentor various generations to make an impact on lives of those they serve.

Mentoring in the intergenerational church is more than just senior adults mentoring young parents. It is also strong Christian youth serving within the children’s ministry. Those who God has called into a saving relationship with Him need to grow spiritually and serve others. Various generations seeking to serve each other through a mentoring concept can greatly affect the life of the church. Tim Sharp explores the process of mentoring called “generativity”: “This is the process of passing lessons along from one person to another, as well as the process of assisting in the advancement of the life success of another individual.”¹⁹¹ The concept behind

¹⁸⁸ H.A. Ironside, *Notes on the Book of Proverbs* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1967), 388.

¹⁸⁹ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 181.

¹⁹⁰ Mike Harland, *Worship Essentials: Growing a Healthy Worship Ministry without Starting a War!* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 121.

¹⁹¹ Tim Sharp, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts: Helping Others Find Their Voice* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011), 59. Psychologist Erik Erikson coined the term generativity, which is defined as, “a need to nurture and guide younger people and contribute to the next generation.” *Merriam-Webster.com Medical Dictionary*, s.v. “generativity,” accessed March 23, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com.medical/generativity>.

generativity has a biblical foundation that the church should teach all members. God has prepared every believer with gifts that can be used to mentor others. In 1 Peter 4:10–11, God’s Word articulates, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be gloried through Jesus Christ.” These God-given gifts are intended to be used to serve others in a way that brings God glory. What better way to use the gifts God has given than to mentor across generations so God may be glorified. As stated earlier in this study by Baucham, “If we are going to see a generation of young men rise to the occasion and begin to disciple their families, it will be due in large part to the reestablishment of the biblical paradigm of mature believers pouring their lives into younger Christians and demonstrating godliness and maturity to them.”¹⁹² The intergenerational church that employs mentoring can educate parents to see the need and prepare them for family worship and discipleship.

Modeling through Family Connections

The intergenerational church can also make an impact on the return to family worship through modeling expectations. Mentoring can further prepare and provide direction for parents, but modeling provides an example by showing how family worship can take place. Parents need a plan they can follow, and the church should be the one providing the plan. Ledbetter believes, “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

¹⁹² Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 30.

leadership looks like in the home.”¹⁹³ While there are resources available to parents that outline what family worship could look like, for some parents, until they actually see it happen or participate in it, they do not fully comprehend how to lead it.

The church could provide an outlined model for the parents to follow, but the preferred method could be two or three families gathering in one home. Biblical hospitality is a way for families to connect and share life together over food, fellowship, and family worship. This type of gathering contributes to discipleship, accountability, and encouragement for all those involved. Baucham shares his experience with small group gatherings focused on family worship, “This is a tremendous outreach and in-reach tool. The inexperienced family shepherd has an opportunity to visit the home of another member and see how they do hospitality (lifestyle evaluation), interact with their family (marriage enrichment/child training), and conduct family worship (family evangelism/discipleship).”¹⁹⁴ Parents that feel unequipped and inexperienced have the opportunity to see how other parents lead in family worship. The families are able to share life together and encourage one another to press on in leading their families to worship and serve the Lord only.

Family Worship

As discussed throughout this study, family worship is nearly non-existent within Christian homes today. According to Baucham, “There is research suggesting that 9 percent of Southern Baptists do not devote one hour a year to family worship.”¹⁹⁵ Some believe that

¹⁹³ Ledbetter, “A Four-fold Church Strategy for Training Parents to Teach Spiritual Formation at Home,” 87.

¹⁹⁴ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 182.

¹⁹⁵ Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 205.

attending church once or twice a week to worship God is enough for everyone in the family to grow spiritually. Being a dedicated member of a local church is important for the family, but parents need to spend time daily discipling their children into a loving relationship with the Lord.

Donald Whitney believes:

Having your family in a Christ-exalting, gospel-centered, Bible-teaching local church is crucial to Christian parenting. But it is not enough for conveying to your family all you want to teach them about God and your beliefs. Moreover, it is unlikely that exposure to the church once or twice a week will impress your children enough with the greatness and glory of God that they will want to pursue Him once they leave home.¹⁹⁶

Christian parents first need to be taught that individual times of devotion and worship with God are essential. A.W. Tozer sheds light on the purpose of man, “That biblically defined purpose is that we might worship God and enjoy Him forever.”¹⁹⁷ This is a very similar statement to the answer of the first question in the Westminster-Shorter Catechism, “What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”¹⁹⁸ The way an individual grows their relationship with God is through daily times of personal worship. It is essential for the church to teach parents to first spend time alone with God. Mark records Jesus spending time with the heavenly Father, “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.” Parents must first worship the Lord personally before passing that on to the next generation. Second, based on God’s Word, parents need to take up the mantle for family worship. It is the parents’ duty to teach their children personal worship and biblical truth through a gathering of the family for worship in the home. Matt Boswell extends the Westminster-Shorter Catechism to the family stating, “The chief

¹⁹⁶ Donald Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 14.

¹⁹⁷ A.W. Tozer, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*, ed. James L. Snyder (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2009), 28.

¹⁹⁸ *Westminster-Shorter Catechism*, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, <https://www.opc.org/sc.html>.

end of the family is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. God is worthy of the worship of our homes.”¹⁹⁹ God does not need the family to participate in family worship but desires for parents to raise their children in a way that they will glorify and magnify God. Boswell concludes, “We must realize that we don’t pursue the practice of family worship to gain the approval of God. We practice worship in our homes, because, in Christ, we have been given the approval of God. With this in mind, we marvel at the grace of God and desire for Him to be glorified in our homes.”²⁰⁰

Family worship requires diligence and dedication from the parents. Chandler and Griffin write, “You are not just hoping for your kids to know the Lord; you are dedicated and relentless in doing everything it takes to help them know more about their God. Whatever the cost. No matter what. Your child will not escape your house without knowing the life, joy, and freedom that comes with loving and serving God above all others.”²⁰¹ Many families are busier than ever, and while biblical discipleship can happen on the go throughout the day, it is indispensable to carve out time for the entire household to come together for family worship. Joel Beeke believes, “Family worship is a most decisive factor in how the home goes. Family worship is not a substitute for other parental duties, but family worship without parental example is futile. Spontaneous teaching that arises throughout a typical day is crucial yet set times of family worship is the foundation of biblical child-rearing.”²⁰² The church leadership must be diligent in communicating the value of family worship and how this practice can be implemented in the homes of all its church members.

¹⁹⁹ Matt Boswell, *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 155.

²⁰⁰ Boswell, *Doxology and Theology*, 170.

²⁰¹ Chandler and Griffin, *Family Discipleship*, 48.

²⁰² Joel Beeke, *Family Worship* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), 2–3.

As parents gain confidence in their faith and see the need for discipling their children, they may ask what family worship should look like. In the process of training up children Kostenberger and Jones write, “What young people must be taught by their parents, is to trust the Lord with all their heart and the acknowledge Him in all their ways, rather than being self-reliant or following the wrong kinds of role models or influences (Proverbs 3:5–6).”²⁰³ This can be taught by spending time together as a family reading and studying God’s Word. When reading Scripture, families could read selected books chapter by chapter or use a suggested reading guide. When a church member is mentoring a family, encourage the parents to allow their children to take part in reading aloud as well. Whitney reinforces how parents are to lead in relation to Scripture reading, “Read enthusiastically and interpretively. In other words, do not be one of those people who reads the Bible as apathetically as if reading a phone directory out loud. It is the Word of God—read it to the best of your ability.”²⁰⁴ Parents should strive to read in a way that inspires children to ask questions and grow in His Word.

During family worship, the family should spend time praying together. Prayer could be offered by one family member, or everyone could have a turn. Whitney suggests, “Some families always go to the book of Psalms when it is time to pray and turn the words of a few verses there into a prayer.”²⁰⁵ It is also important for children to hear their parents pray over specific requests. This is an opportunity for the family to pray over one another’s requests. Beeke recommends parents, “Pray for things that your children know something about, but don’t allow your prayers

²⁰³ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 95.

²⁰⁴ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 45.

²⁰⁵ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 45.

to become trivial. Don't reduce your prayers to self-centered, shallow petitions."²⁰⁶ Prayers could focus on other families in the church, missionaries, and national leaders.

It is also important to sing praises to the Lord during family worship. Parents could use a hymn or song of the week, so the entire family become familiar with the song and its biblical teaching. Whitney writes, "Some people sing a different song each time; some sing the same song for a week so they can learn it. As to music, some families sing along with recordings, while others use family musicians. My perception is that most families—even when it's only a husband and wife—simply sing without accompaniment."²⁰⁷ Some parents may feel they do not possess a beautiful singing voice, which might cause awkward moments during family worship. However, there are several recorded options parents can utilize to enhance this time of worship. Children hearing their parents lead in song can bring much joy to this precious time. Another option is to sing the Psalms. Colossians 3:16 can be a guide for both corporate worship and family worship as Paul writes, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts." Equipping parents with hymnals and psalters could be beneficial to daily family worship. Jason Helopoulos explains, "As we sing the Psalms in our family worship, we are singing God's Word back to Him. And we have the added benefit of hiding the Word of God in our hearts through song. Music is often the best way to memorize, and over time you will find that by singing the Psalms you and your children memorized entire psalms of the Old

²⁰⁶ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 28.

²⁰⁷ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 46.

Testament.”²⁰⁸ Singing not only glorifies God but unites the family around biblical truth found in the lyrics.

The church must also encourage parents to be consistent in the time selected for family worship. Finding the time to incorporate daily family worship into a family’s busy lifestyle can be difficult. Fathers and mothers will likely need to make tough decisions concerning the prioritization of their children's activities. Beeke ventures, “Family worship should be a non-negotiable event. Business, hobbies, sports and school activities are secondary to family worship.”²⁰⁹ Parents should strive to find the best time for their family. Some may gather in the morning around breakfast, others after the evening meal, and some may only find time for all to gather just before bed. The amount of time spent together for family worship does not have to be very long. Reading a chapter of the Bible, singing a hymn, and praying could all happen in about 10–15 minutes. Whitney recommends to parents, “Be brief, otherwise the experience can become tedious. A good average time to read the Bible, pray and sing is roughly ten minutes, perhaps less if you have very small children. It is usually easy to lengthen the time if the occasion seems to be especially meaningful and family members are asking questions.”²¹⁰ The main goal is to be consistent in time and devotion before the Lord. Jason Helopoulos cautions, “We do not want to give mixed messages to our family members by approaching it lackadaisically one night and seriously the next. Our consistency in emphasis and approach will

²⁰⁸ Jason Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013), 61–62.

²⁰⁹ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 36.

²¹⁰ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 50.

have lasting effect upon the seriousness with which our family attends worship in the home.”²¹¹
 God deserves the family’s adoration and honor as they gather to worship Him.

As the intergenerational church develops a greater understanding of family worship, the members can help encourage parents as they disciple their children. Family worship is not the only way for parents to disciple their children. Several biblical references point to the family gathering to pass from generation to generation the great and glorious works of the Lord (Psalm 78:4). Helopoulos encourages believers, stating:

Our right standing before God is not impacted by whether we lead our families in worship or not. Christ has already accomplished all for our salvation. Rather, family worship, like other spiritual disciplines, becomes something we want to do. As the individual Christian, changed by God’s grace, naturally begins to read the Bible, sing, and pray, so the Christian family impacted by the grace of God will want to gather together to read the Bible, sing, and pray. As all the Christian life is lived in grace, so we enjoy and pursue family worship by that same grace.²¹²

Church Leadership

Reestablishing family worship through the work of the church will require the church pastoral leadership to be the inspiration behind the planning and action steps. In God’s Word the apostle Peter exhorts pastors regarding how they should shepherd the flock, writing, “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2–3). These two powerful verses give guidance to all pastoral staff. God requires church leaders to have the right attitude and respect to teach the flock to worship and serve the Lord. Richard Baxter explains, “If you are ungodly and teach not your families the fear of God, nor contradict the sins of the company you are in, nor

²¹¹ Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace*, 71.

²¹² Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace*, 16.

turn the stream of their vain talking, nor deal with them plainly about their salvation, they will take it as if you preached to them that such things are needless, and that they may boldly do so as well as you.”²¹³ Pastors and ministry leaders should be measuring Bible engagement and faith talks in the home, rather than only measuring attendance and offerings.

Without proper training and equipping, parents do not have the confidence to teach biblical principles. J. Otis Ledbetter suggests church leadership provide the necessary resources to train the parents. He writes, “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.”²¹⁴ The biblical knowledge of the parents must be brought up to a level of confidence so they feel confident in imparting that knowledge to their children. Parents must also understand that according to God’s Word, discipleship is ultimately their responsibility. This “curriculum” Ledbetter speaks of is the study of the Bible and how it shapes us spiritually for a firm foundation. Aaron Keyes declares, “Discipleship is more than working through curriculum, more than learning the intellectual content of the Bible. Discipleship involves us intentionally allowing the Word of God to work through us.”²¹⁵ Through the reading of God’s Word and direction of the Holy Spirit, believers learn of the life of Christ and the example He provides. Keyes states, “Jesus teaches us both how to be and how to build disciples. He models discipleship by doing nothing ‘on His own, but only what He sees the Father doing’ (John 5:19).”²¹⁶ Church leadership

²¹³ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth, 1979), 137.

²¹⁴ Ledbetter, “A Four-fold Church Strategy for Training Parents to Teach Spiritual Formation at Home,” 88.

²¹⁵ Aaron Keyes, “The Worship Leader and Disciple-Making,” in *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, ed. Matt Boswell (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 134.

²¹⁶ Keyes, “The Worship Leader and Disciple-Making,” in Boswell, 134.

should seek to disciple others by following all that Christ has taught us. He set the precedent for pastors to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Keyes concludes, “In every case, discipleship requires imitation, ultimately, of God the Father as seen in the life of Christ.”²¹⁷ Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” Furthermore, church members who are mentoring or discipling others should live a holy and righteous life that imitates Christ. Then, those they are discipling can imitate them because of the example they live out for Christ.

Pastoral care should be practiced by personally leading families and holding them accountable for parental responsibilities. Beeke confirms, “Those of us who are pastors, must lovingly inform the heads of families in our churches that they must command their household to worship God as Abraham did.”²¹⁸ In Genesis 18:19, the Lord says of Abraham, “For I have chosen him that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has promised him.” Historically, pastors and church leadership checked in on fathers to be sure they were leading their families. Direction is given to pastors in the 1647 *Directory for Family Worship*, stating, “Since the ordinary performance of all the parts of family worship belong to the head of the family, the minister is to stir up those who are lazy and train up those who are weak, so that they are fit for these exercises.”²¹⁹ Parents must be diligent when it comes to family worship and pastors must lovingly direct those who are not leading their family. Church leaders can maintain accountability through faithful and intentional guidance.

²¹⁷ Keyes, “The Worship Leader and Disciple-Making,” in Boswell, 134.

²¹⁸ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 14.

²¹⁹ *Directory for Family Worship*, IV.

Pastors need to be prepared and available to serve by leading families and providing direction and instruction to fathers who are seeking to learn. Keyes encourages worship leaders to disciple by, “Creating space in our schedules, living rooms, and hearts to allow our lives to intertwine. To disciple like Paul, like Jesus, we’ll have to step out of the classroom and into the world together.”²²⁰ Questions will abound as families begin the tradition of family worship, and pastors must be ready to respond with support. James Alexander writes, “It is respectfully suggested that pastors and elders may conduce to this end by timely counsels as to the mode of conducting family prayer, and by their own example, when called upon to lead in the prayers of a household.”²²¹ Church leaders can maintain accountability through meetings with parents as well as home visits. Baucham recommends encouragement through phone calls and home visits by church leaders: “Our goal is to contact each family shepherd at least once each month by phone or in person to pray, assess spiritual needs, answer questions, and fellowship with and encourage one another. We attempt to visit each home annually to assess the spiritual condition of the family as well as give them opportunity to ask questions and address any pertinent issues.”²²² Pastors who are willing to step into the home for guidance bring encouragement to the father and the family as they seek to honor God in their home.

One of the primary ways the pastoral staff can lead is by example. Being an example to the flock includes managing their own households well. Those in pastoral leadership who desire to see parents return to leading their families in worship at home should begin by modeling—providing the example through their own family. The heart of a true worship pastor is to see

²²⁰ Keyes, “The Worship Leader and Disciple-Making,” in Boswell, 135.

²²¹ James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, ed. Don Kistler. (Grand Rapids: Solit Deo Gloria Publications, 1998), 87–88.

²²² Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 182.

Christ-honoring, biblical worship among the members of the church. The worship pastor should also be devoted and concerned about worship taking place in the home. God is to be glorified through the work done at the church but should also be glorified in the homes of the church leadership. Keyes comments, “Our task is to lead our home and call our church to the reality and the sufficiency of the gospel. Revisiting the Deuteronomy narrative, Moses stood before the people of God and ascribed greatness to Him. He reinforced to the children of God their identity as a chosen people. He called them to worship in response to the God of their salvation.”²²³ The calling that God has placed on the lives of pastors and worship leaders is a privilege, blessing, and responsibility. The first priority of pastors is to point their own families to Christ followed by the church family. Boswell concludes, “Our ultimate aim is to point people to the true and better Worship Leader. It is Jesus who enables and perfects the worship of His people (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:12).”²²⁴

Equipping the church family to understand what the Bible says about worship and family worship is one of the roles of the worship pastor. Michael Neale and Vernon Whaley encourage worship pastors to be equipped and know how to equip others as God has called us to the mission of leading people to worship:

The worshiper responsible for doing the equipping actually supplies necessities—such as tools, materials, provisions, services, or ability—to accomplish the mission. This involves provision of needed materials to fulfill the mission to which we’ve been called to as worshipers. Those committed to the way of worship should understand that what we do is reproducible. At the end of the day, our goal is to promote and bring into the body of Christ (the church) citizens from every tribe, tongue, culture, nation, or people group. We have been commanded to go into all the world and make fully devoted followers of Christ—worshipers. This is putting feet on the formational, transformational, relational, and missional aspects of worship. When we are either being equipped or involved in the

²²³ Keyes, “The Worship Leader and Disciple-Making,” in Boswell, 134.

²²⁴ Boswell, *Doxology and Theology*, 170.

process of equipping, we are participating in a part of the Christian mission called discipleship!²²⁵

All levels of church ministry are directly related to discipleship and for the worship pastor seeking to help families worship in the home, they must pursue various ways to equip the parents.

The basis of family worship is reading Scripture, praying, and singing, yet some parents do not feel prepared to lead in these areas. Reading Scripture can lead to questions from kids and teens that parents may not know how to answer. The pastoral staff or worship pastor can prepare a Bible reading plan that includes questions and answers parents can use for discussion and answers to questions kids commonly ask of selected passages. Another ingredient churches could provide in the area of scriptural teaching is take-home sheets based on elements of each Sunday's worship service. These sheets could offer questions over the scripture reading, sermon scripture and topic, and a hymn of the week. Included with these two resources for family worship could be a prayer guide. Empowering parents to lead their children in prayer for specific requests can strengthen the prayer life of the entire family. Prayer concerns could include praying for the church family, praying for missionaries, praying for national leaders, and praying for friends who need to hear the gospel. Some men may not feel equipped to lead their family in song due to a lack of musical background. Worship pastors can supply resources to the family shepherd by providing recordings of hymns or worship songs the family can sing along with. Each of these resources could be provided in various forms for parents to take advantage of. Physical copies in the form of paper and CDs could be made available for pick-up, but with today's technology, all resources could also be available digitally. The family worship resources

²²⁵ Michael Neale and Vernon M. Whaley, *The Way of Worship: A Guide to Living and Leading Authentic Worship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 155.

could be linked in an email or accessible through the church website. An online playlist could also be made available for those needing direction for worship songs for family worship.

Baucham states, “Our church provides a number of hand-on tools ranging from books and booklets to CDs and DVDs. However, the key tools are prayer grams and worship guides.”²²⁶

Preparing these various types of resources is not the only way a worship pastor can assist parents. The worship pastor must also be willing to serve, as all pastors should, by coming alongside the family through teaching and training. Neal and Whaley state, “For the worship-trainer, equipping always involves some level of teaching, tutoring, mentoring, developing, and nurturing new worship disciples. It involves coming alongside others in a personal capacity.”²²⁷

Families need to feel they are genuinely cared for as they take on the tradition of family worship.

So that the church may catch the vision of family worship, it is imperative the pastoral staff grasp biblical family worship, teach their churches the importance of family worship, and be an example of what it means to be a family shepherd.²²⁸ Boswell encourages worship leaders to “Open up your life beyond the perfect, polished, public projection and let people see who you really are. It may be difficult and leave you feeling uncomfortably vulnerable, but it will be fruitful. Sometimes it may be exhausting, but God promises a ‘crown of glory’ for those who shepherd well and offer themselves as living examples for the flock (1 Peter 5:4).”²²⁹ Seeing families grow in their faith together through family worship is a blessing to the intergenerational church body and its leadership.

²²⁶ Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 180.

²²⁷ Neale and Whaley, *The Way of Worship*, 155–56.

²²⁸ Baucham, *Family Shepherd*, 33.

²²⁹ Boswell, *Doxology and Theology*, 159.

Worship Ministry

With a focus on biblical worship, the church's worship ministry can embolden families as they pursue family worship. Often the worship ministry is only associated with music, and while that is a large portion of it, that is not the sole purpose. The worship ministry should serve as an extension of the discipleship ministry. From Mike Harland's personal experience, he writes, "We are not called to make music—we are called to make disciples."²³⁰ Discipleship within the worship ministry happens through worship ministry rehearsals and corporate worship. Small group discipleship takes place through the worship pastor's direction and teaching in rehearsals and classes. Corporate worship discipleship takes place through leading by example and utilizing biblically based songs.

The worship ministry can help families with discipleship in the church by affording the family every opportunity to worship together. In the age of churches separating kids and teens from their parents for worship, the intergenerational church can bring the family back together. Frank Page and Lavon Gray share, "Over the past 20 years, our churches have managed to raise a generation of young Christians with little connection to the body of Christ as a whole. Just as devastating, we patronized older generations with an environment of irrelevancy and self-centeredness by disconnecting them from modern movements of God."²³¹ Bringing the body of Christ back together in worship unifies and edifies the family. The worship ministry under the leadership of the worship pastor should pursue leading the entire church body through various styles and elements of worship. Harland believes in shepherding the entire membership of the

²³⁰ Harland, *Worship Essentials*, 69.

²³¹ Frank Page and Lavon Gray, *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today's Church* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2014), 37.

church, “Creating a healthy worship culture means setting the value of worship as a spiritual discipline above any and all music preferences. It means shepherding a group of people in such a way that they genuinely care about each other.”²³² One way the worship ministry can shepherd individual families is involving them in multigenerational choirs. Parents and their children that participate in the worship choir together grow through discipleship. The bond that is created through music enhances the family’s desire to worship together at home. As families spend time worshipping at home together and individually, they come to corporate worship with their hearts prepared to celebrate what God has done. John MacArthur writes of coming prepared to worship, “Acceptable worship does not happen spontaneously. Preparation is essential. In a worship service, for example, the choir prepares, the preacher prepares, and the musicians prepare. But the most important preparation of all is the preparation of the individual worshiper, and that is usually the most neglected.”²³³ Supporting the restoration of family worship in the home leads to a congregation that comes prepared to worship.

A worship ministry that brings people of all ages together builds community and a sense of “family” in the church. When people are able to relate to one another as a family, they are more likely to encourage, mentor, and worship together. Michael Sharp and Argile Smith write, “Helping worshipers experience the dual dimensions of worship is an important facet of the work of worship leaders. Our planning and leading should aim toward ushering people into the throne room of heaven while helping them to relate to others as a part of the community of the redeemed.”²³⁴ A unified worship ministry expresses to the church members the need to be unified

²³² Harland, *Worship Essentials*, 121.

²³³ John MacArthur, *Worship: The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 186.

²³⁴ Michael Sharp and Argile Smith, *Holy Gatherings: A Leaders Guide for Engaging the Congregation in Corporate Worship* (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2009), 116.

in corporate worship. Page and Gray conclude, “We are instructed to be unified, and that must begin with corporate worship. It is when we are together, unified in the worship of our Lord, that we will find the body of Christ is strongest and most effective.”²³⁵ When the church is unified in corporate worship, the family will be more effective in establishing family worship in the home. When corporate worship is fulfilling due to the joy of the Lord in the hearts of the members, that joy spills over into the family’s home worship. As the worship ministry leads each week, all involved should radiate the joy of the Lord and celebrate the goodness of God as we pass His story from generation to generation.

²³⁵ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 54.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter will present a brief summary of the research study covering the biblical and historical role of the relationship between church and family. A brief summary of the findings includes a discussion of how the study encourages family worship. This chapter will also offer implications for intergenerational churches seeking to equip parents in the discipleship of their children. The chapter closes with the limitations of the study and recommendations for future study.

Summary of the Study

The Church Family

The basis of this study revolved around what the Bible says about the church and the family. Each is a separate institution created by God, but they are meant to complement one another for His glory. God established the local church to build the family of God, which is the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul writes of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:24–31:

But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administering, and various kinds of tongues.²³⁶

The church, an intergenerational body of believers, possesses gifts God has given to minister to one another. Furthermore, the family of God is called to fulfill the mission of making disciples according to Christ's command in Matthew 28:19–20. To accomplish God's purpose for the

²³⁶ Unless stated otherwise, all Scripture is from the English Standard Version (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

church, the church family—all generations—gathers for the united goal of worshipping the King of kings.

Not only is Christ the King over all kings, He is the head of the church. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he records, "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkly or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25). Andreas Kostenberger and David Jones explain, "The emphasis in this description is on the relationship between Christ as the 'head' and the church as his 'body,' indicating both Jesus' authority and lordship over the church and his provision for the church."²³⁷ This reason alone is enough for the church to pour out its heart in worship for their Savior, the head of the church (Eph 1:22–23). Throughout the Old Testament, God's Word is clear that His people are to assemble or gather for worship. The same is true for the New Testament as now the church is built on the one true foundation of Jesus Christ. Just as fathers are head of their household, Jesus is the head of the church and full authority rests on Him. Since Christ is the foundational cornerstone, all believers should be unified behind the church for the Great Commission.

Jesus came to establish His kingdom through the work of the church. The gospel is to go forth through the testimony of believers and the work of the church. Corporate worship should encourage the church family to go out and make disciples of all people. This includes parents disciplining their children. God's plan from the beginning has been to redeem His people through His son, Jesus Christ. God's story is told through His Word and passed on generationally. In

²³⁷ Andreas Kostenberger and David Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation 2nd ed.* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 252.

order to accomplish the work of the church, God has established pastoral ministers to lead the body of believers. Pastors are those who have been called and gifted to serve the church. While Jesus has been established as the authority over the church, pastors, through the Holy Spirit's leading, equip the members for the advancement of the gospel. Every believer is called to serve within the church through the gifts they have been given. These gifts are for the purpose of building up the members of the body, all for the glory of God. Through worship in song, the church is able to teach and edify the believers, but through the gifts of teaching, mentoring, and discipleship, the body of Christ can equip and encourage one another. Under pastoral leadership, the church and the gifts each member has been given have the responsibility to hold to the purpose for which they were created by God, to teach and encourage one another while advancing the Gospel through the church's ministry.

The Church and the Family

According to 1 Timothy 1:15, the church is to be "a pillar and buttress of the truth." With the culture around the church continuing to evolve, the family of God must stand upon the firm foundation of Jesus Christ. While the culture around the church and family may change, the truths of God's Word never change. With Christ as the foundation, the church cannot be built upon families worshiping in the home only. Family worship does not qualify the home as being a church, nor does it provide an excuse for not attending church on a weekly basis. Involvement in the local church as a family on a weekly basis is a culture-changing commitment. God's Word explains that parents are to play a key role in discipling their children, but this does not release the church from assisting parents with discipleship. Rather the church should come alongside the family for equipping and encouragement through gathering with the body and supporting parents as they seek to disciple their children through family worship. Even though the Puritans called

for parents to disciple their children through family worship, it was not to replace the purpose and roles of the gathered church. Two of the acts of worship that are to exclusively take place within the church family are the Lord's Supper and baptism. God-called and -ordained pastoral leadership are the ones given the sole authority to administer these ordinances. Although fathers are called to be the head of the household, they are not pastorally called to oversee this responsibility of the church ordinances established by Christ. Therefore, the Christian family is not a church in itself, nor is family worship meant to replace the church's gathered corporate worship.

The family is important to the life of the church, so in this age of moral decline in marriages and families, the church should seek ways to support the family. Some churches under-emphasize biblical teaching on marriage and the leadership of fathers within the household. Biblical teaching on marriage and the role of the parents is essential for the family to grow. Voddie Baucham encourages the church to equip the family:

From Genesis to Revelation, we see a clear picture of the role of the family in the redemptive history, and the role of the father in the family. This is no small matter. The Bible leaves no room for fatherhood that does not take seriously the responsibility of raising children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Whether it's found in the Law, the Prophets, the Gospels, or the Epistles, our calling is clear. We must shepherd our families.²³⁸

The Lord gives clear instructions on marriage and the family. The church should further prepare the parents to pass this on to their children. This begins with training the fathers to be the head of the household. Fathers are to be the leader of the family and should be trained to ensure that true biblical instruction is taking place in the home. The Bible make clear the expectation for parents, specifically fathers, to train the next generation to know and love God. Proof of the father's

²³⁸ Voddie Baucham, *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 25.

leading in the home will be evident in the life of the church through the family's growth in the Lord. As the church and family work together to grow the entire family of God, the mission God has called the church to can be fulfilled.

The Intergenerational Church

For centuries families worshiped together, but over the last several decades, churches have moved to various stylistic services to meet the preferences of the members. Some churches even have separate worship services for the children and youth. It is time for the church to return to intergenerational worship in which the family worships together along with other generations. Revelation 7:9 describes what worship in heaven will look like. People of all nations gather to worship a holy and righteous Lord. The worship of the church needs to reflect the worship of heaven. The gathering of all ages of God's people forms the church to go out and shape the culture. Today's culture keeps families so busy that they are hardly together at home and now the church may also be contributing to this separation.

Throughout Scripture there is proof that families worshiped together for celebrations, festivals, and even during the beginning of the early church gatherings. People of all ages need to experience the gathering of the body of Christ for the purpose of glorifying the Lord and hearing from His Word. Holly Allen and Christine Ross write, "Intergenerational worship and mission activities provide the generations with opportunities to come together under a single purpose to live out scriptural mandates in a way that also enables individual giftedness and generational characteristics to be used to serve others and experience the body of Christ."²³⁹

²³⁹ Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 2012), 231.

As the relationships grow among believers of different generations, opportunities for discipleship are opened. The biblical model of older men discipling younger men and the same with the older women and younger women can be utilized in the intergenerational church. This type of training for parents can prepare them for sharing biblical truth with their children. The Bible provides examples of mentoring such as Paul mentoring Timothy. Paul recognized God's call on Timothy's life and valued mentoring a young minister for the furthering of the gospel. In the same manner, the church body needs to recognize God's calling for parents and value the opportunity to make a difference in lives for generations to come through similar mentoring.

Family Worship

With a continual cultural decline in marriages and families, it is time for the church to encourage the men and fathers to lead their homes through discipleship. Children need to know the Lord and the love He has for them. The church has the responsibility to teach these children, but the ultimate responsibility falls to the parents to disciple their children. Psalm 78:4–7 declares the importance of fathers passing on the works of God, stating:

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.

Teaching the importance of parental discipleship starts with the church teaching what the Bible commands. This includes the reason for discipleship, the importance of living a righteous life, and the biblical foundations for marriage and family. Parents should strive to live their life with Christ which will make their children desire the same relationship with Him. Kostenberger and Jones write, "Parents ought to consider themselves entrusted with the temporary responsibility and stewardship of nurturing and cultivating a child's heart and mind in light of the Scriptures

and on behalf of God.”²⁴⁰ Through the leadership of the church, parents need to be brought to a greater understanding of God’s Word so they can pass that on to their children. Deuteronomy 6:5–9 explains that God requires parents to teach the next generation to love God with all their heart. Ken Ham states, “God uses the family unit to transmit His knowledge from one generation to the next and to be ‘salt’ and ‘light’ in the world.”²⁴¹

The Puritans established the importance of family worship as they saw a connection between the spiritual formation of the family and the church. Some, such as Jonathan Edwards, believed the family to be a “little church,” but many Puritans adhered to the purpose and roles of the gathered church. Ultimately, the Puritans believed it was the duty of the parents to teach their children doctrine based on the Word of God through daily family worship. They sought to teach all God commanded so their children would follow in their footsteps when discipling the next generation.

Summary of Findings

Spiritual Formation

As family values have continually declined and the spiritual training of children deteriorates to a very few, it is time for the church to return to equipping parents to stand on biblical truth and teach the same to their children. The church must come to the realization that this nation’s morals are placing a strain on the family. The church must become proactive and intentional in training fathers and mothers in what their role is within the family. This can be accomplished through mentoring and modeling within the intergenerational church.

²⁴⁰ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 114.

²⁴¹ Ken Ham, *Will They Stand: Parenting Kids to Face the Giants* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2021), 76.

As spiritual formation within the family has declined and most families have become removed from family worship, parents today may not have a plan or may be unprepared to disciple their children. The intergenerational church has the opportunity to pair various aged mentors with parents to help families grow in the Lord through teaching the biblical design for marriage and family. The church and its leadership should raise the standard above the world's standard and offer a solution to parents that prepares them to lead their families to the Lord.

The Role of the Intergenerational Church

The intergenerational church is not a church that seeks to minister to families only, it is a church that seeks to build the body of Christ through teaching, preaching, singing, and serving all generations together. Kostenberger and Jones define the church in light of the family, "The family of God is not a family of nuclear families, but a gathering or body of true regenerate believers organized in a given locale as a local congregation under duly constituted leadership regardless of their family status."²⁴² As a church that equips all believers, this must include a focus on marriages and family. God has called the church to be a light in a dark and dying world. There is a need in churches to teach the biblical foundations for marriage and family to stand against the cultural attacks on the family of God.

The intergenerational church members should serve in a way that encourages the believers. The members of the church should grow in Christ but are also committed to serve and encourage the rest of the family of God. Intergenerational worship involves all ages worshipping together, praying together, and encouraging one another. Hebrews 10:24–25 encourages the church, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to

²⁴² Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 256.

meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” As the church serves and worships together, the body is edified and encouraged. The various generations within the church can pass their faith and love for God to one another, setting a precedent for parents to do the same with their children.

The intergenerational church, with its various aged members, is capable of using its gifts to mentor and model for parents how they can disciple their children. Paul mentored Timothy as an example for churches today. Older adults have the experience to share with young parents the importance of discipling their children. Church leaders and mentors can benefit parents by inviting them into their homes to model how family worship is done. They can also be available to encourage the family through times of family worship in their own home. Parents that feel unequipped and inexperienced have the opportunity to see how other parents lead and disciple their children. Creating intergenerational faith moments within the church can come as an extended type of mentoring. Helping families of all generations to join together for the purpose of sharing life together can form relationships that encourage and hold each other accountable for discipleship within the family. These small generational gatherings could be gathered around a meal with a time of fellowship and family worship. This places a focus on family worship and models how different families conduct their time of discipleship. Parents that feel unequipped and inexperienced have the opportunity to see how others are leading their families. The intergenerational church family is capable of strengthening family discipleship and, in so doing, strengthening the entire body of Christ.

Family Worship

Family worship was once a part of every Christian family's home, but over the past 30–40 years, there has been a steady decline in this discipleship model. The family's foundation continues to break apart, and parents seemingly do little to disciple their children. Recent reports show that one reason twenty-five percent of young adults, ages eighteen to twenty-nine, stayed connected with Christ was due to at least one spiritual experience in the home during the week. Even if, just once a week, families held a time of worship together in the home, it would be worth it for the church to support parents in making it happen. Christian parents need to be taught that spending time alone with God is essential, but that should carry into the desire to lead their children in worshipping the Lord. The church can provide support to families seeking to begin family worship in the home and share the importance of the value of this discipleship method. The parents must be dedicated and diligent to see the process through and will need the church's encouragement. Promoting the restoration of family worship in the home can lead to a congregation of singles, couples, and families who desire to honor God for how He is working in their lives and their homes.

Implications for Practice

The church and the family have a special relationship, but the family of God gathering for worship is designed to reflect eternal worship in heaven. The intergenerational church can stand with the family for support, encouragement, training, and equipping. Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin write of the importance of the intergenerational church to the family:

The Bible makes it clear that parents are not alone on this journey. The Christian community around the family—the church—also plays an important role in the spiritual formation of children. Ideally, Christian parents and Christian churches are collaboratively discipling kids to know and love Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Whether

it is training, resources, mentors, or programs, churches can provide an excellent level of support to families.²⁴³

When children and youth spend time with senior adults serving, praying, and participating in Bible study, they are more likely to join in family worship with their parents. Ken Coley and Blair Robinson state, “The local church is not a place someone ‘goes,’ but a people from different households that covenant together under the authority of Christ.”²⁴⁴ When the body of Christ covenants together, there is a desire to see all generations grow in the Lord. Concerning family worship, utilizing mentoring and modeling is a great place to start for the church in helping parents know how to create family worship in the home. Providing resources such as take-home family worship guides, bible reading plans, prayer guides, and songs to sing can stimulate the family to reestablish this lost tradition. Worship is what God desires, not just on Sunday morning but every day. When the family spends a week of worship in the home, gathered corporate worship will be dynamic when the family of God gathers to celebrate God’s love for His people. John MacArthur writes, “Worship is the church’s ultimate priority—not public relations, not recreation and social activities, not boosting attendance figures—but worshipping God.”²⁴⁵ The church must seek to prepare parents to lead their kids to worship God. Equipping, encouraging, and teaching parents to fulfill this God-given responsibility is to be the work of the church.

Pastoral leadership should provide the example, equipping, and accountable oversight to establish a culture of family worship. Faithfully encouraging church members, both young and

²⁴³ Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home Through Time, Moments, and Milestones* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 49.

²⁴⁴ Ken Coley and Blair Robinson, *Equipping Fathers to Lead Family Worship* (Nashville: Randall House, 2021), 103.

²⁴⁵ John MacArthur, *Worship: The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago, Moody Publishers, 2012), 29.

old, to participate in family worship can lead to lasting impacts for generations to come. For pastors setting the example for the flock to follow is an expectation established in God's Word (1 Peter 5:3). Coley and Robinson write, "Pastors, we set the tone in our local churches for how the home is to function, we are to live out expectations God has given to us, and we are to encourage other fathers to do the very same."²⁴⁶ Members need to see how pastors lead their own families, especially in family worship. Pastoral staff should commit to equipping the saints for the work of the Lord (Ephesians 4:12). Equipping the parents to lead in family worship is more than just providing a resource; it is being intentional to see the process grow over time. It requires prayer, training, and accountability to see more families reestablish this command from God. Finally, it is imperative that pastoral leadership teach the biblical understanding of marriage and family. Kostenberger and Jones conclude, "The cultural crisis that rages concerning the definitions of these terms was seen to be symptomatic of an underlying spiritual crisis that gnaws at the foundations of our once-shared societal values. In this cosmic spiritual conflict, Satan and his minions actively oppose the Creator's design for marriage and the family and seek to distort God's image as it is reflected in God-honoring Christian marriages and family."²⁴⁷ In light of this battle, there is a need, in fact, an obligation of ministers of the gospel to teach the biblical foundations of marriage and family to supplant this cultural attack. Many church members hold their pastoral staff in high regard. For this reason, it is crucial that the pastors teach biblical truth to guide the church body to honor and glorify the Lord in all aspects of life.

²⁴⁶ Coley and Robinson, *Equipping Father to Lead Family Worship*, 103.

²⁴⁷ Kostenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 269.

Limitations

As a qualitative historical narrative research design, there are limits in this study regarding the need for surveying churches. Other than research books and online research, there is a lack of understanding of what churches are truly doing to build a genuinely intergenerational community that builds one another up. The study was also limited in knowing the percentage of church-attending families that strive to have family worship at home on a regular basis. A survey, which was not a part of this study, offered to churches and their members would have provided the necessary data to evaluate the current percentage of homes participating in family worship and church leaders encouraging their members to take ownership of discipleship in the home.

Recommendations

While no research can be fully comprehensive, there are areas of research within this topic that would be recommended for future study. As discussed above, surveys were not included in this research as it was focused more on biblical application to the church and family. Further research in the area of homes that participate in family worship is based on a survey offered to multiple churches and their families. This information could show the need for intergenerational churches to encourage and teach family worship. Another recommendation for further study is research that includes a survey of churches to discover the level of intentional training for men and fathers to lead their homes effectively. With this information, the researcher could further develop the effect that the biblical discipleship of men has on the home. One final recommendation would include researching how the intergenerational church could equip single-parent homes, especially mothers. With the consistent breakdown in marriages and families,

single mothers need to know they are valued in discipling their children. Programs and plans to equip mothers based on biblical content would be useful within this research.

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