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EQUIPPING PARENTS AT FAIRFOREST BAPTIST CHURCH
IN SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA,
TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

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EQUIPPING PARENTS AT FAIRFOREST BAPTIST CHURCH
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I dedicate this dissertation to the amazing wife God has blessed me with, who stands by me even when I do not deserve it. Thank you, Laura, for your love and support through this project and through ministry. I don't know what I would do without you by my side.

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PREFACE

The Gospel of Matthew records Jesus Christ saying: “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18 ESV).

This project exists because I believe what Jesus said about His church. I believe that the Holy Spirit has empowered the local church to build up His people in the faith as they are transformed into His likeness. I am eternally grateful to my God, who divinely called me to ministry, knowing it would humble and challenge me beyond what I would ever dream was possible. I am grateful to Him for salvation, for grace, and for constant forgiveness, prone to wander as I am.

None of this would be possible without my amazing wife, Laura, whom I have the privilege to love with all I have. She has supported me from day one of this project, even while knowing that it would take much of my time. Laura, thank you for all the times you have said “yes” to me, especially when I asked you to marry me and spend your life with me, but also, on a much smaller scale, when I asked if you would support my efforts toward a doctoral degree. Please, however, tell me ‘no’ if I want to go on to get my Ph.D.

To Micah Clark, our son. I spent many nights working on this project after you went to sleep so I would not miss much time with you, even when you were just three months old. I hope that your first memories of me are *after* I finished this project. I love you and thank you for bringing your mom and me so much joy.

God has placed in my life more formative people than I deserve. Chris Robbins of Richmond, Virginia, who first taught me what it means to be a minister of the gospel. Chad Garmon, who took a chance on this college kid, hired me to work at camp, and helped shape my love for youth ministry. Dane Skelton, who pastored and mentored me

for six and a half years in my first ministry position at Faith Community Church. My parents, Jeff and Kathy Jones, who have been serving in volunteer youth ministry for longer than I have been alive and who raised me to value God and family above all else. Thank you all for your investment in my life!

I am extremely appreciative of the hours of time Dr. Troy Temple spent with me on this project. His leadership challenged me to do my best while giving me confidence at every step. Thank you, Dr. Temple, for being my supervisor! I am also thankful to my course professors in this program: Coleman Ford, Dr. Jeremy Pierre, Dr. Shane Parker, Dr. John David Trentham, Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, Dr. Michael Wilder, and Dr. Danny Bowen. Thank you for helping my passion for family ministry grow!

I did not go through this journey alone. It was such a joy going through this process with my cohort: Brad Boyette, Brad Deetscreek, Jason Salyer, Matt McCauley, Lorinda Roberts, and Adam Williams. Thank you all for your friendship and encouragement!

Many people read this project for grammar and clarity. There are too many of you to count, and I appreciate each one of you! Thank you also to Betsy Fredrick for being my style editor.

It is my prayer that this project would accomplish powerful things for the gospel. I believe in families, and I believe that God's grace and love reach deeply into broken situations and redeem them for His glory.

Kevin Jones

Spartanburg, South Carolina

December 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip parents at Fairforest Baptist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina, to disciple their children.

Goals

As Fairforest Baptist Church (FBC) worked toward a family discipleship model, the following goals were used to assess the project's progress. These goals considered the context of FBC, specifically the families represented by the children and youth ministries.

1. Assess the current discipleship practices of families at Fairforest Baptist Church.
2. Develop a curriculum for parents to disciple their children.
3. Equip parents at Fairforest Baptist Church to disciple their children in the home.
4. Include curriculum for special family circumstances in order to address specific issues.¹

As these goals were met, the families at FBC were equipped to disciple their children. This project addressed the church's weaknesses involving a lack of family discipleship.

Context

This project addressed the need for parents at Fairforest Baptist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina, to be equipped to disciple their children in their homes.

¹Specifically, issues were addressed for any family that fell into the "non-traditional" category as defined in the definitions section. Such families included single parents and families in crisis.

Attention was given to the both the children's and student ministries and their respective families. These families were identified as those that would benefit from discipleship strategies specific to their situations and helping parents learn to be instrumental in the Christian formation of their children.

The ministry context of FBC in Spartanburg, South Carolina, provided both unique opportunities and challenges. Many of the challenges may prove to be the best opportunities in the years ahead; however, the pastors and leaders must mobilize the church to rise to those challenges. Many parents felt inadequate in family discipleship, as many also face challenging circumstances. Those in non-traditional² family situations faced additional challenges, and FBC has many members included in this category.

FBC was established in 1885 as a mission church from another congregation. Despite many hardships and church splits in the past, it proves to have the potential for great impact in the community. Although attendance has fallen since its peak, FBC has drawn many young families because of strong children and youth programs. In the two years leading up to this project's implementation, both ministries more than doubled in regular attendance, attributed to strong community and biblical teaching. In addition, FBC had an excellent worship and music ministry on Sunday morning, comprised of a dedicated group of musicians.

As a church in its second century of existence, there were inevitable weaknesses. Most notably, as stated above, was the lack of personal discipleship in the homes. Parents were not equipped by the church to lead their families in Bible study and

²The term *non-traditional* refers to families that do not fit under the traditional family style of both a mother and father in the home. See E. Mavis Hetherington, Martha Cox, and Roger Cox, "Effects of Divorce on Parents and Children," in *Nontraditional Families: Parenting and Child Development*, ed. Michael E. Lamb (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1982), 1; D. Kelly Weisberg, "Alternative Family Structures and the Law," *The Family Coordinator* 24, no. 4 (October 1975): 549. For more clarification, see the definitions section in this chapter.

worship at home. The church also lacked biblical community among its adult members in which they can find friendship with other believers.

FBC attracted a high percentage of non-traditional families that include single parents, families with children from previous marriages, and children who attend without their parents.³ This led to the need for a single parent ministry, as well as an increased focus on the needs of non-traditional families. In order to address these circumstances, the church taught in-home discipleship models for all types of families.

The FBC pastors participated with a community church partnership organization known as Come Closer Spartanburg (CCS). In addition, the FBC student ministry participated directly with CCS by going into low-income apartment complexes to do ministry with children. CCS has been the focus of several nationally recognized “city-movement” groups, highlighting the partnership of churches and faith-based organizations to accomplish tasks that no single church could accomplish on its own.⁴ This organization focuses on ministries to foster children and single mothers, both of which were close to the heart of what this project addressed.⁵ FBC partnered with CCS to meet these needs and make a greater impact on the community.

Rationale

The lack of personal discipleship and biblical community led to a need to implement an in-home discipleship plan, equipping families to disciple their children.

³These children and students often drive themselves to church or attend with a grandparent or other family member. The parents are either unsaved (do not have faith in Jesus Christ) or are uninterested in church.

⁴CCS Founder Chris Pollard, email to author, July 6, 2015, wrote, “Come Closer Spartanburg will be sharing in the Gospel Movement Track at this year’s Movement Day Conference in NYC. We were identified as an up and coming city movement.” CCS has also been featured in local newspapers and draws hundreds to city-wide worship and prayer gatherings.

⁵In addition, CCS focuses on ministry to the homeless, prisoner reintegration, and ministry to foreigners living in the community.

Through this family-equipping⁶ model, this project also hoped to improve overall church community.

Despite the strength of the children and youth ministries at FBC, very little was done to involve parents. This lack of consistency between what was taught at church and what was taught at home decreased discipleship effectiveness. This project sought to equip parents to disciple their children with topics reinforcing what was taught in church settings. This shifted the focus of the church from age-specific programs to parental discipleship training that complemented those programs.

Because of the high percentage of families without both parents present and actively participating in their children's Christian formation, special attention was given to each family's specific situation. Additionally, parents with children from previous marriages faced unique challenges. The non-traditional families at FBC required special attention.

Research Methodology

The research methodology of this project consisted of an assessment of current discipleship practices, development of discipleship curriculum, implementation of the curriculum to equip the parents, and special attention given to non-traditional families.⁷ The first goal of this project was to assess the current discipleship practices of families at FBC. This goal was measured by administering the Family Discipleship Assessment (FDA)⁸ to ten families with children and/or adolescents in the home. This goal was

⁶Timothy Paul Jones defines Family-Equipping Ministry as a ministry that equips parents to disciple their children. Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 33. For additional clarification, see the definitions section.

⁷All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁸See appendix 1.

considered successfully met when ten families completed the FDA and all responses were analyzed, giving FBC a clearer picture of current discipleship practices in the homes of the participants.

The second goal of this project was to develop a six-week curriculum for parents to disciple their children. The curriculum consisted of six sessions, guiding parents through discipleship models that included worship as a family, biblical teaching, character development, and spiritual guidance. After the six-week course, there were personal conversations that further assisted and trained participants, which spanned the course of four weeks. This goal was measured by the expert panel, consisting of the lead pastor of FBC, a pastor at another church (with expertise in family ministry), and a member of the FBC lay leadership team. They utilized the Family Discipleship Curriculum Evaluation (FDCE)⁹ rubric to evaluate the biblical adherence, theological accuracy, and applicable practicality of the curriculum. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the curriculum met or exceeded the acceptable standards. If the initial feedback yielded less than 90 percent, the curriculum was revised until it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal of this project was to equip parents at FBC to disciple their children in the home via the developed curriculum. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-surveys to the participants that measured the families' level of involvement in family discipleship. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal of this project was to apply the curriculum to special family circumstances in order to address specific issues. The curriculum was evaluated by the expert panel, consisting of the lead pastor of FBC, pastors at partner churches (with

⁹See appendix 3.

expertise in family ministry), and a member of the FBC lay leadership team. This panel utilized the Family Discipleship Curriculum Evaluation (FDCE)¹⁰ rubric to evaluate the biblical adherence, theological accuracy, and applicable practicality of the curriculum, assessing individual family situations, including single-parenthood and stepchildren, and supplementing accordingly. Additional assessment was done in family interviews as necessary. An additional pre-survey and post-survey were provided to assess the specific concerns these families have.¹¹ This goal was considered successfully met when families in these situations felt better equipped to handle non-traditional family circumstances.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following key terms are used in the ministry project:

Family-equipping ministry. A family-equipping ministry is a ministry of the local church that trains parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their children. This ministry focuses on the process of equipping parents to disciple in their homes rather than simply on family-related programs and activities.¹² Practices trained include in-home worship, Bible study, and missions as a family.

Traditional family. The traditional family, also called the “nuclear family,”¹³ may be defined as those families where both the mother and father are present in the home, and the marriage is “marked by monogamy, fidelity . . . complementarity, and durability” as per the design for marriage at creation.¹⁴ For the purposes of this project, in

¹⁰See appendix 3.

¹¹See appendix 2.

¹²Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 33.

¹³Michael J. Anthony, “The Morphing of the Family,” in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michelle D. Anthony and Michael J. Anthony (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 3.

¹⁴Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 270. See also Gen 2:18-24; Matt 19:4-6.

light of the definition of “family-equipping ministry,” this generally also included families where the parents are practicing Christians.¹⁵

Non-traditional family. Secular sources define non-traditional families as any families that differ from the definition of traditional families above.¹⁶ For the purposes of this project, alternative family models not accepted within FBC’s values were not included in the study.¹⁷ The non-traditional family includes any family in which one or more of the following conditions is true: there is one parent in the home due to divorce, spousal death, or other circumstance (single parent), a married couple has a family that includes children from previous marriages, or (in some cases) either the mother, father, or both parents are not Christians or show little to no interest in discipling their children.¹⁸

Family discipleship. Family discipleship refers to times of in-home Bible study and prayer led by parents. Timothy Paul Jones also uses terms such as “family worship,” “faith talks,” “family devotions,” “family faith training,” and “family altar.”¹⁹ Any of these terms may be used to refer to family discipleship.

There were several delimitations related to this project. First, all participants who were FBC church members were expected to be in good standing with the church,

¹⁵Some sources further delimit traditional families to those in which the mother stays at home and the father provides financially; however, for the purposes of this project, this was not included in the criteria. See Michael E. Lamb, “Parental Behavior and Child Development in Nontraditional Families: An Introduction,” in *Nontraditional Families*, 1.

¹⁶Hetherinton, Cox, and Cox, “Effects of Divorce on Parents and Children,” 1; Weisberg, “Alternative Family Structures and the Law,” 549.

¹⁷These sources indicate that alternative families include “unmarried heterosexual cohabiting couples, homosexual cohabiting couples, and communes.” Weisberg, “Alternative Family Structures and the Law,” 550. Homosexual couples and cohabiting couples that are not married (for example) would not be considered in the study. However, for evangelistic purposes, families under these situations were considered for participation on a limited basis. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the project supervisor, and FBC leadership approved all non-member participants before any form of inclusion.

¹⁸A family with non-Christian parents qualifies as “non-traditional” because these families cannot, by nature, follow the traditional sense of family-equipping ministry in which the parents are to disciple their children.

¹⁹Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 155

regularly attending services and participating in worship and other activities. Participation by non-members, members of other churches, or by outsiders was limited and considered on a case-by-case basis. Because of the relatively small size of the church, this project was offered to all FBC member families. Second, a time-delimitation was placed on this project, spanning fifteen weeks.

Conclusion

This project recognized the church's role in family discipleship. Parents are called to be the primary source of their children's discipleship and this project provided training materials and strategies to allow the church to facilitate this. The following chapters address biblical and practical resources and how they relate to the responsibility of parents to disciple their children.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR PARENTS
AS PRIMARY DISCIPLE-MAKERS

Scripture affirms that for children and youth to be fully disciplined, parents must reclaim their role as the primary disciple-makers in the home. Further, the church must support parents' efforts and equip them to disciple their children. Since parents spend more time with their children than any other adult, they cannot expect the church to be the only source of discipleship for their children. Three texts have been selected to support this thesis, and an additional text has been selected to emphasize the church's role in supporting single parents and their children. This chapter will serve as proof that biblical and theological sources support discipleship in the home.

Discipleship as Primary: Matthew 28:18-20

Discipleship is commanded by Jesus as one of his final teachings before ascending into heaven. With the high priority Jesus puts on discipleship, churches must prioritize discipleship in their ministry plan. To fully understand why parents must disciple their children, the general importance of discipleship for Christians must be established.

The Great Commission's command to "make disciples" appeals to Jesus' followers to bring unbelievers all throughout the world to saving faith.¹ This command not only summarizes the whole of the Matthew's gospel² but also reflects on the whole of

¹John MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 341.

²R. T. France, *Matthew, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 411.

Jesus' ministry and teachings while looking forward to the future of the church and its mission.³ While the cross appeared as a defeat, the resurrection transformed that tragedy into a triumph; Jesus' triumph over death gives him the authority to send his disciples on mission.⁴ Jesus' promise to be with his disciples until the end of the age reflects the name proclaimed at his birth in Matthew 1:23: "Immanuel, which means, God with us."⁵

Within these final verses of Matthew, Jesus establishes his authority, sends his disciples to evangelize the world, and offers them the promise of his presence as they go.

In Matthew 28:16, Jesus commands the ἑνδεκά ('eleven') as they are referred to here for the first time.⁶ Following the betrayal of Judas and his subsequent suicide, only eleven disciples remained.⁷ Peter, who also betrayed Jesus by denying him thrice during his trial, has been restored to fellowship at this point and is included within this number.⁸ Verse 10 and previous verses include statements from Jesus of brotherhood with his disciples, where Jesus says "go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee" (Matt 28:10).⁹ This implies the forgiveness of all the eleven remaining disciples following their abandonment during Jesus' trial and execution.¹⁰ Whether those present were only the

³W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 678.

⁴France, *Matthew*, 410.

⁵Ibid., 411.

⁶Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Dallas: Word, 1995), 883.

⁷Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 414.

⁸Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 883.

⁹All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

¹⁰Davies and Allison, *Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 680.

eleven disciples or were the over 500 followers referenced in 1 Corinthians 15:6,¹¹ the scope of the command will remain: the Great Commission applies to every follower of Christ whom the eleven represent.¹²

Verse 17 shows that, even though Jesus' power was evident through his resurrection, some still doubted the truth of his claims. Matthew, by mentioning the doubters, emphasizes that worship must precede service; not even the most skilled Christ follower can truly serve him without worshiping him.¹³ The word for 'worshiped,' προσεκύνησαν, implies paying homage¹⁴ and responding to his identity as God with belief and reverence.¹⁵ This word was also used in Matthew 14:33¹⁶ following Jesus' miracle of walking on the water; however much they believed then, their worship was certainly bolstered following his resurrection.¹⁷

The Greek word translated as "doubted," ἐδίστασαν, comes from the root διστάζω, which indicates hesitation rather than an outright refusal to believe.¹⁸ Had the author wished to explain the disciples' doubt as blatant disbelief, the word ἀπίστευ would have been more appropriate.¹⁹ For this reason, some translate ἐδίστασαν as "hesitated"

¹¹"Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:6).

¹²France, *Matthew*, 412.

¹³MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 337.

¹⁴Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 414.

¹⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 884.

¹⁶"And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (Matt 14:33).

¹⁷MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 337.

¹⁸France, *Matthew*, 412.

¹⁹Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 885.

rather than “doubted.”²⁰ The disciples naturally felt a sense of hesitation as the events that had taken place happened quickly and miraculously.²¹ The very presence of this statement of doubt shows the authentic nature of Matthew’s writing, as he shows the imperfection of the disciples’ faith; rather than writing solely the favorable aspects of this account, Matthew tells what truly happened.²² In response to their doubt, Jesus offers not only the impetus for their mission, but also reassurance that he is who he claimed to be.²³

Jesus surely rebuked his disciples for unbelief on many occasions, but he does not here.²⁴ Instead, Matthew uses the word προσελθῶν to describe Jesus drawing near to his disciples to reestablish his relationship with them.²⁵ This word is used only one other time in Matthew during the transfiguration, when Jesus “came and touched them, saying, ‘Rise, and have no fear’”²⁶ (Matt 17:7). Some uncertainty exists as to whether or not Jesus’ approach erased the disciples’ doubt, as Matthew offers no direct resolution to the indication of doubt in verse 17.²⁷ However, some believe that the eleven disciples could not have continued doubting after Jesus came to them and they heard his voice.²⁸ This seems more likely, as Matthew gives his readers more than a simple “Jesus said.” Jesus came to his disciples in order to alleviate their doubt, reassure them, and restore

²⁰Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 414.

²¹Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 885.

²²MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 337.

²³Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 885.

²⁴France, *Matthew*, 412. See Matt 6:30, 14:31.

²⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 886.

²⁶France, *Matthew*, 413.

²⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 885.

²⁸MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 338.

them.²⁹ Whether or not their doubts were erased the instant they heard Jesus' words in Matthew 28:18-20, further reading in the accounts of the disciples serve to prove they ultimately left behind any hesitation regarding Jesus. In Acts 1:26-2:1, the eleven disciples have chosen Matthias as Judas' successor and are all together praying "in one place" (Acts 2:1). This shows obedience to Jesus' command to "stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Their obedience to Jesus' commands indicates their doubts were assuaged.

Having established the eleven as restored disciples, and after addressing their doubt by coming to them in reassurance, Jesus gives the Great Commission. This command begins with a powerful statement of Jesus' power: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18). Matthew began establishing Jesus' authority through the Davidic line in chapter 1 when listing the genealogy of Jesus Christ and continued to emphasize his kingship through the triumphal entry in chapter 21; however, this final declaration proves his ultimate authority which comes from the Father.³⁰ Jesus rightfully rejects the offer from Satan of all the kingdoms of the world during his temptation in Matthew 4:8-9, knowing God alone gives this authority.³¹ Further, this reflects the prophesy in Daniel 7:13-14, which states,

And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

The authority from the Father that Jesus claimed is consistent with prophetic writings and with the context of the Gospel of Matthew.

²⁹R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 1112.

³⁰Ibid., 1113.

³¹Davies and Allison, *Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 682.

The word for authority used here is ἐξουσία, implying “the freedom and right to speak and act as one pleases.”³² Matthew also described Jesus’ teaching during the Sermon on the Mount with this word in Matthew 7:29.³³ Even then, Jesus spoke with the authority he knew was rightfully his. Jesus also claimed the power (ἐξουσία) to forgive sin in Matthew 9.³⁴ These claims of Jesus authority, while surely powerful in their own right, pale in comparison to this post-resurrection claim.³⁵

Jesus’ primary command μαθητεύσατε (make disciples) implores his followers to engage in discipleship, which “occurs at every place where his power becomes operative among people.”³⁶ Through his disciples, Jesus will bless all peoples of the earth as prophesied to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.³⁷ This command and its root carry multiple meanings, but this context gives an understanding of disciples as people who place their trust in Jesus and continually seek to follow him.³⁸ For today’s Christian, it should be understood that this is an absolute command based on the authority of Christ.³⁹ This cannot be ignored or taken lightly. To make disciples is the primary purpose of every Christ follower’s life.

Regarding the scope of the call, Jesus makes it clear that his disciples must go to all nations. Since the aorist participle πορευθέντες (‘go’ or ‘going’) precedes the command,

³²MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 338.

³³Ulrich Luz et al., *Matthew: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 624.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 887.

³⁶Luz et al., *Matthew*, 625.

³⁷Davies and Allison, *Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 683.

³⁸MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 340.

³⁹Luz et al., *Matthew*, 636.

it is likely that “make disciples” is connected to a phrase resembling “as you go.”⁴⁰ With the object of the main verb being πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (“all the nations”⁴¹) Jesus states that the disciples are to go into all the world to make disciples.⁴² The participles following the command, translated as “baptizing” and “teaching,” are in present form, explaining the process of making disciples.⁴³ According to Jesus, both baptizing and teaching are essential elements of discipleship.

Jesus then directs the disciples to teach others to obey all that he has commanded. Matthew uses the term ἐντειλάμην to refer to the commands of which Jesus speaks.⁴⁴ Previously, this term was used to refer to the Mosaic law, but Jesus gives the disciples a new standard of living: his own commandments.⁴⁵ Matthew rightfully provided ample teachings of Jesus in his gospel, making it clear to his readers what to be obedient to.⁴⁶

Matthew closes his gospel with this beautiful promise from Jesus: “I am with you always” (Matt 28:20). Jesus uses the Greek phrase ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι to say, “I am with you,” a phrase which emphatically assures his followers that he himself is with them

⁴⁰Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 718.

⁴¹Much is written regarding the true meaning of the “nations” to which the disciples are sent, as ἔθνη could be translated as “Gentiles.” Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 414-15. If so, it has been argued that the Jews are excluded from this command. However, even if one were to interpret this term to mean Gentiles only, this would only extend the range of the mission beyond Jews to include Gentiles as well. France, *Matthew*, 413. Matt 10:5 shows Jesus’ command to preach the gospel to the Jews specifically. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 416.

⁴²Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 886.

⁴³Keener, *Matthew*, 718.

⁴⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1118.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 888.

as they go on mission.⁴⁷ As has been previously stated, this reflects Jesus name as the Immanuel, God with us. God, whose presence with his people is echoed throughout the Old Testament, now lives among them as Jesus Christ their Savior.⁴⁸

This command of Jesus establishes the importance of discipleship in the life of the believer. Christ followers must make disciples, baptizing and teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded. The authors of the New Testament believed that Christ followers should always be eager to spread the Gospel.⁴⁹ The modern church requires more than once or twice a week programs to fully encompass all that is required for discipleship.

A Model for Family Discipleship: Deuteronomy 6

Since discipleship is of utmost importance for Christians (and thus for churches), we must consider how to create all-encompassing discipleship strategies. For this to take place, churches must support parents and equip them to disciple their children. For many years the church has portrayed discipleship as something to be handled by the “trained professionals,” thus removing responsibility from the parents and thus avoiding substantive discipleship training.⁵⁰ This must be reversed. Deuteronomy 6 provides a model for family discipleship by presenting the truths of God and commanding his followers to teach them to their children.

In the Gospel of Luke, a religious leader questioned Jesus on how to inherit eternal life, and when prompted by Jesus as to what the Scriptures say, answered with the

⁴⁷MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 346.

⁴⁸Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 888.

⁴⁹Robert L. Plummer, “Bring Them Up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 51.

⁵⁰Danny R. Bowen, “Be a Family By Equipping Parents,” in *Practical Family Ministry*, ed. Timothy P. Jones and John David Trentham (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 72.

Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, saying “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” (Luke 10:27). Jesus replied: “You have answered correctly” (Luke 10:28). In Matthew’s gospel, it is Jesus who quotes this command, showing that at least twice Jesus affirmed that the *Shema* is the greatest commandment.⁵¹ Clearly the *Shema*, written hundreds of years previously, was still on the hearts and minds of the Jews during Jesus’ earthly life. According to Jesus, they were right in keeping it.

The *Shema* of Israel, as written in Deuteronomy, reads “The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:4-5). *Shema* comes from the first word of this declaration, found in verse 4 and translated as “Hear, O Israel”⁵² (Deut 6:4). The *Shema* was often recited by Jews in daily prayer along with Deuteronomy 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41.⁵³ It begins with the Hebrew name for God *yhwh*, and the phrase could literally translate as “the Lord our God the Lord one”⁵⁴ or simply “Yahweh, our God, Yahweh, one.”⁵⁵ Further, it could also be translated as “the Lord our God is one Lord.”⁵⁶ The translation closest to the nature of the original meaning is likely “The Lord our God, the

⁵¹Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 164-65.

⁵²Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary Old Testament Series, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 95.

⁵³J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (London: Inter-Varsity, 1974), 121.

⁵⁴J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Leicester, England: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 140.

⁵⁵Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 121.

⁵⁶Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 163.

Lord is one”⁵⁷ (Deut 6:4). However, the nature of the word “one” is the main point of contention.

“One” could be interpreted many ways. First, it could refer to his incomparability; this idea that God has no rival is generally consistent with the theology of Deuteronomy.⁵⁸ Additionally, it could mean that God is the only true God, thus separate from the false gods of Canaan.⁵⁹ The nature of this phrase in Hebrew gives a “measure of truth in the poetic form” to both of these understandings.⁶⁰ Whatever the literal interpretation, the nature of the phrase “makes the relationship between Yahweh and Israel exclusive.”⁶¹ Yahweh is one God and he alone is God to Israel.

In Deuteronomy, this command follows the affirmation of God’s oneness and requires Israel’s complete allegiance to him.⁶² This allegiance did not come from simple duty to God, but is based on a loving relationship between God and man.⁶³ The command to love God echoes a theme of a father and son relationship found elsewhere in the book.⁶⁴ The author of Deuteronomy commands his readers to love God “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:5). Heart and soul encompass the fullness of one’s self, including choices, feeling, and the “deepest roots of

⁵⁷Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 95.

⁵⁸Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 89.

⁵⁹Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 96.

⁶⁰Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, rev. ed., Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6a (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 142.

⁶¹McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 141.

⁶²Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 98.

⁶³Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 122.

⁶⁴Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 170.

your life.”⁶⁵ The third term, here translated “might,” is much more unique. This Hebrew word, rarely in noun form and normally used as an adverb translated “greatly” or “exceedingly,” has been translated by earlier Jewish texts as “your substance.”⁶⁶ This emphasizes the fullness to which God must be worshipped. Love for God must be single-minded and complete.⁶⁷

Continuing to expand the extent to which God’s followers are to love him, the author of Deuteronomy gives specific instructions on how to keep God’s commands and the whole of the Law of Moses.⁶⁸ God’s commands were to be committed to memory, represented by the phrase “on your heart”⁶⁹ (Deut 6:6). The Old Testament often commands God’s followers to keep the law in their hearts.⁷⁰ The law was not just for the elite, such as kings or priests, but was accessible to all.⁷¹

The author next commands the readers to “teach them [God’s words] diligently to your children” (Deut 6:7). God’s delivery system for his law in the Old Testament was parents to children.⁷² Just as Old Testament era Jewish parents had the responsibility to teach God’s word to their children, so should parents today claim this responsibility. Yes, the priests taught the word of God just as pastors do today, but this was never meant to be the full extent of biblical teaching.⁷³

⁶⁵Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 99.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

⁷⁰Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 100.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 166.

⁷³Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 100.

As this passage continues to verse 9, the imperatives move from keeping the commands in your heart (private) to posting them on the gates (public).⁷⁴ To emphasize the need to incorporate God’s law in everything inward and outward, the author of Deuteronomy qualifies this teaching of children by telling them to “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” (Deut 6:7). Peter Craigie interprets it this way: “The commandments were to be the subject of conversation both inside and outside the home, from the beginning to the end of the day. In summary, the commandments were to permeate every sphere of the life of man.”⁷⁵ These words encompass the whole of human effort, urging the followers of God to keep the covenant truths of God central to everything they do.⁷⁶ In the context of teaching children, parents should not only teach their children the commands of God, but also make them a part of everyday life.⁷⁷

The question and answer in Deuteronomy 6:20-25 provided Israelite parents with a framework for presenting the truths of God to their children. This section begins with a question from a child: “What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?” (Deut 6:20). The question followed by an answer format fits well into the “nature of Deuteronomy as instruction in the commandments for all time.”⁷⁸ The answer includes a historical account of God’s goodness to Israel, which is the foundation for the law.⁷⁹ Put another way, “Israel’s belief in God was thus expressed not in terms of an abstract formulation, but in terms of God’s

⁷⁴Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 91.

⁷⁵Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

⁷⁶Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

⁷⁷McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

⁷⁸Ibid., 144.

⁷⁹Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 94.

dynamic activity.”⁸⁰ The testimonies, statutes, and rules of the Lord (Deut 6:20) are not described by the father as a rigid set of regulations with no purpose, but rather he relates all that God commands to God’s grace and goodness to his people. God’s commands are ultimately for the goodwill of his people.⁸¹

The education of children was, according to this passage, done through story.⁸² The story represented here takes the child through Israel’s slavery in Egypt, their subsequent freedom, and final arrival in the land God had promised them.⁸³ This work of God provides the child with the impetus to obey his commands.⁸⁴ The passage ends with the powerful connection between the commands of God and the blessings he gives.⁸⁵ Obedience is man’s response to God’s saving work, and God’s followers receive his blessings by continuing in obedience.⁸⁶ Lastly, the author discusses the righteousness of those who are obedient, saying “it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us” (Deut 6:25). Although it seems this would promote a works-based righteousness, the context of the passage regarding God’s saving work implies that obedience is simply the correct response to righteousness already received from God.⁸⁷ New Testament theology affirms this as well: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works” (Eph 2:8-9).

⁸⁰Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 126.

⁸¹Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 94.

⁸²Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 126.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, 151.

⁸⁵McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 144.

⁸⁶Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, 151.

⁸⁷Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 104.

This passage was not written to priests, but to the people of Israel regarding their children. This Old Testament writing supports the idea that parents must disciple their children. Since “a disciple maker never outgrows being a disciple,” the church must equip parents by discipling and training them.⁸⁸ The following section will show biblical evidence for home discipleship from the New Testament.

Bring Them Up in the Lord: Ephesians 6:4

If we are to carry out the Apostle’s injunction, therefore, we must sit back for a moment, and consider what we have to do. When the child comes we must say to ourselves, We are the guardians and the custodians of this soul. What a dread responsibility!⁸⁹

These words from D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones reflect on Paul’s command in the Ephesians 6. Indeed, this verse calls fathers (and mothers alike) to raise children as God-fearing individuals, equipped to declare the name of Christ with boldness. Parents must reclaim their role to “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4).

In the section beginning in Ephesians 5, Paul urges his readers to “look carefully . . . how you walk” and to “be filled with the Spirit”⁹⁰ (Eph 5:15, 18). The Christian, he posits, receives a new way of life, far better than anything the natural order can provide.⁹¹ Many of the teachings in this section of Ephesians echo those in Colossians (namely 3:20-4:1), showing Paul’s desire to express the same idea to two different groups of people.⁹² These admonitions should also be considered applicatory to the church today.

⁸⁸Bowen, “Be a Family by Equipping Parents,” 74.

⁸⁹David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home and Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18 to 6:9* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 290.

⁹⁰Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 411.

⁹¹Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 237.

⁹²Arnold, *Ephesians*, 411-12.

Throughout this section, as Paul addresses husbands and wives, parents and children, and slaves and masters, he consistently addresses the subordinate party first and the dominant party second.⁹³ In context, all parties are subject to the authority of God.⁹⁴ Chapter 6 begins with the imperative for children to obey their parents, done so with the Greek words for “obey” and “honor.”⁹⁵ These opening verses will be considered to fully understand the context of verse 4.

The children addressed in verse 1 as Τὰ τέκνα are likely those that remain in the home directly under the leadership of their parents.⁹⁶ The term in Greek implies a close, dependent relationship with parents.⁹⁷ These children most directly need discipleship from their parents as they are still in consistent contact with them, as opposed to those that have grown and left. At the very least, the children Paul writes to here had to be old enough to discern and exercise free will.⁹⁸ The fact that children are even addressed directly counters the cultural trends of the Greco-Roman society.⁹⁹ This shows that the children were present in Christian gatherings and heard teachings directly.¹⁰⁰

Paul uses ὑπακούετε to command the children to obey their parents, utilizing a different word than was used in the previous chapter (ὑποτάσσω) to discuss the

⁹³Arnold, *Ephesians*, 411.

⁹⁴Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 785.

⁹⁵Arnold, *Ephesians*, 413.

⁹⁶Ibid., 415.

⁹⁷Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 786.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 402.

¹⁰⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

husband/wife relationship; Paul’s use of the stronger ὑπακούετε shows he required an “unquestioning compliance” from children toward their parents.¹⁰¹ The term’s root meaning of “to do what one is told” or “to carry out someone’s orders” shows Paul’s desire to express complete obedience.¹⁰² This obedience does not come without the qualifier ἐν κυρίῳ (in the Lord), a phrase which modifies “obey” and not “parents.”¹⁰³ Whether the parents are “in the Lord” or not, children obey their parents because they obey the Lord.¹⁰⁴ Children are compelled to consider their duty to God as well, obeying their parents unless it conflicts with the commands of the Lord.¹⁰⁵

Paul references one of the Ten Commandments, for children to honor their fathers and mothers, in verses 2 and 3. He notes that this fifth commandment is the first with a promise attached to it; indeed, this is also the first of any of the Law to contain a promise.¹⁰⁶ Paul takes this citation from the LXX translation of Exodus 20:12.¹⁰⁷ Deuteronomy 5:16 contains this command as well, although slight wording differences indicate that Paul quotes Exodus.¹⁰⁸ This sentiment was important in Jewish culture, which not only emphasized the need for young children in the home to obey their parents (as stated above) but also for adult children to continue to honor their parents through

¹⁰¹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

¹⁰²Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 786.

¹⁰³Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

¹⁰⁴Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 402.

¹⁰⁵F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1984), 397.

¹⁰⁶Arnold, *Ephesians*, 416.

¹⁰⁷Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 404.

¹⁰⁸Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 788.

respect and care for them in old age.¹⁰⁹ Even Jesus emphasized the importance of this commandment when rebuking the religious leaders in Matthew 15:4-5, saying,

For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God.

After imploring children to obey both parents, Paul turns his attention to fathers. The word used here is *πατέρες*, a term used specifically for fathers, whereas *γονεῦσιν* in verse 1 refers to both parents.¹¹⁰ While *πατέρες* can indeed include mothers, the change from the term used in verse 1 shows Paul’s distinction in accord with cultural trends.¹¹¹ Both Jewish and Roman traditions placed the father at the head of the house with responsibilities to educate and discipline their children.¹¹² Fathers are likely addressed directly based on the patriarchal structure established by Paul in the previous chapter of Ephesians and by Jewish tradition.¹¹³ Whoever *πατέρες* is meant to address, readers must take into account the distinction from verse 1. While Paul’s command could include mothers, he clearly intended to address fathers directly.¹¹⁴

The command to “not provoke your children to anger” was a counter-cultural idea, as both Roman and Jewish societies gave much authority to the father.¹¹⁵ Roman law took this even further by giving fathers authority over their sons for life.¹¹⁶ Thus,

¹⁰⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 416.

¹¹⁰Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 794.

¹¹¹Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 568.

¹¹²Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

¹¹³Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 794.

¹¹⁴Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 406.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 399-400. See Eph 6:4.

¹¹⁶Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 795.

Paul’s readers would likely expect this command to apply to children!¹¹⁷ Paul means that a father’s authority should provoke obedience rather than demand it, causing resentment.¹¹⁸ Paul certainly does not wish to reduce the authority fathers have (as shown in the opening verses of chapter 6) but rather teaches that fathers must be sensitive and caring in their assertion of that authority.¹¹⁹ The phrase “provoke to anger” is represented by one Greek word, *παροργίζετε*, and is also found in noun form earlier in Ephesians when Paul says “do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph 4:26). Both instances denote an anger that has been incited.¹²⁰

Paul contrasts his prohibitory command with a positive exhortation: “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). He urges the fathers to which he writes to “bring up” (*ἐκτρέφετε*) their children, a Greek term that relates to the education as well as the upbringing of children.¹²¹ This term does refer to nurturing care, but goes further to include the full upbringing of children to maturity.¹²² Christian upbringing extends beyond basic cultural expectations and must be done with discipline and instruction in the Lord.¹²³

The first of two nouns following this, *παιδεία*, was commonly used culturally to describe the training of children, as it includes the root word *παις*, meaning “child.”¹²⁴ The context gives this word the idea of “instruction in connection with the correction and

¹¹⁷Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

¹¹⁸Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 398.

¹¹⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

¹²⁰Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 406.

¹²¹Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 569.

¹²²Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

discipline of the Lord.”¹²⁵ This does seem redundant, as both the command ἐκτρέφετε and the παιδεία relate directly to “upbringing” of children.¹²⁶ Paul seems to emphasize the importance of education linked with upbringing. The second noun, νοουθεσία, combines the word νοῦς (mind) and the verb τίθημι (to put).¹²⁷ This is narrower than παιδεία and includes rebukes and instructions for proper behavior.¹²⁸ This term is also used in Colossians and 1 Peter, always being translated as instruction, admonition, or warning.¹²⁹ The final word of this verse, κυρίου, modifies the two nouns and states that the teaching and instruction must be in view of the Lord.¹³⁰ In all this, fathers must keep Paul’s context from Ephesians 5:18 in sight: the Holy Spirit enables them to instruct their children in wisdom.¹³¹

In light of Paul’s command, it is clear fathers must make disciples of their children. Discipleship, as prescribed by Jesus in Matthew 28, includes teaching all that Jesus commanded, much the way Paul commands fathers to bring their children up in the instruction of the Lord. Parents’ main concern for their children should be that they grow up to know Jesus as Lord and Savior.¹³² They should certainly not trust any other entity, not even the church, to fully disciple their children; discipleship should “be done in the

¹²⁵Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 797.

¹²⁶Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 407.

¹²⁷Arnold, *Ephesians*, 419.

¹²⁸Ibid., 418.

¹²⁹Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 797.

¹³⁰Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 569.

¹³¹Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 799.

¹³²Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 292.

home and by the parents.”¹³³ The church certainly has a role, but parents must take primary responsibility to uphold Paul’s command.

What about Single Parents? James 1:27

Beyond the basic tenant that parents must disciple their children, single parents must prioritize discipleship in their families even more so. The challenges faced by both parents and children in these situations are far beyond the normal challenges involved with child discipleship and family life. Children need parental leadership even more when facing difficult family situations, and family worship and discipleship can provide these children with much needed stability. Single parent families became that way either by circumstances beyond anyone’s control (such as death of one parent) or because of the sin of one or more persons involved; no matter how families become broken, the church must serve them.¹³⁴ Because of the immense pressure on single parents, the church has a responsibility to support their efforts to disciple their children.

James 1:27 references an Old Testament theme to care for widows and orphans and show concern for their well-being.¹³⁵ James 1:27a reads, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.”¹³⁶ The word for “orphan” (ὀρφανός) has also been shown to refer to children who have lost only one parent, thus translated “fatherless” or “motherless.”¹³⁷ A widow is left behind by a deceased spouse, thus an orphan would be left behind by one deceased

¹³³Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 293.

¹³⁴Joshua A. Remy, “Be a Family for Blended Families,” in *Practical Family Ministry*, 93.

¹³⁵See Exod 22:22; Deut 10:18, 24:17, 27:19; Pss 10:14, 146:9; Isa 1:23. Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2011), 169.

¹³⁶Jas 1:27 continues, “. . . and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” This portion will not be considered in this exegesis.

¹³⁷McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 170.

parent.¹³⁸ The Old Testament declares God as the “Father to the fatherless and protector of widows” (Ps 68:5). As suggested in James, those who are “religious” and seek to reflect the nature of God should do this as well.¹³⁹ Whatever the case may be, the orphan and widow “become types of those who find themselves helpless in the world.”¹⁴⁰ Single parents and their children are indeed frequently helpless and have effectively been orphaned and widowed. This section will show that James 1:27 commands Christians to care for them.

James 1:26-27 serves as a summary statement for the ethical position of James’ letter, emphasizing the requirement for Christians to be “doers” of their faith.¹⁴¹ James 1:22 urges readers not to deceive themselves by reading the word and ignoring it; verses 26 and 27 give specific examples of what this looks like.¹⁴² Verse 26 specifically offers a sobering reminder that religious practices can be honorable, but an ethical, compassionate heart must accompany them or religion is useless and self-deceptive.¹⁴³ James’ condemnation of false religion echoes that of the prophet Jeremiah in verses such as this: “Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them. They are worthless, a work of delusion; at the time of their punishment they shall perish”¹⁴⁴ (Jer 51:17b-18).

¹³⁸McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 170.

¹³⁹Dan McCartney, *James*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 129.

¹⁴⁰Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2000), 86.

¹⁴¹McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 162.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Peter H. Davids, *James*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 15 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 42.

¹⁴⁴McCartney, *James*, 128.

Despite the negative connotation sometimes given to religion, James presents a religion before God that is pure and undefiled. To fully understand the command to help orphans and widows, the definition of religion in James 1:27 must be established. The word for religion, θρήσκος appears only four times in the New Testament, with two of those occurring in James.¹⁴⁵ Here, the author has borrowed the term from secular sources to refer to Christianity’s practices.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, James does not use the more common word for God-honoring worship in the New Testament, εὐσεβεια.¹⁴⁷ However, James qualifies the θρήσκος to which he refers as “pure and undefiled” to separate his meaning from its derogatory connotation of meaningless formalism.¹⁴⁸ With the common understanding of θρήσκος to refer to outward worship, James’ distinction makes it clear that true religion is much more than rituals and involves obedience to God.¹⁴⁹

The word επισκέπτεσθε in Greek means “to visit” and connotes oversight, caring, and assistance rather than simple visitation.¹⁵⁰ Often, this word is used in connection with the visitation of God to save his people, such as in Acts 20:28, where a variation of this word is translated as “overseer.”¹⁵¹ Genesis 50:24 provides an example of God’s saving visitation, saying, “And Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob’” (Gen 50:24). Here, “visit” is the translation of ἑπίσκεψαι

¹⁴⁵McCartney, *James*, 127. See also Acts 26:5 and Col 2:18.

¹⁴⁶McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 163.

¹⁴⁷John MacArthur, *James, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1998), 88.

¹⁴⁸McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 164.

¹⁴⁹Moo, *The Letter of James*, 86.

¹⁵⁰MacArthur, *James*, 89.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.* See Acts 20:28. See 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:7 for Paul’s usage of this root word.

(*paqad*).¹⁵² The LXX uses *επισκέπτεσθε* to translate *paqad*, which carries the same connotation of oversight or bringing justice to someone.¹⁵³ Thus, used in James 1:27, *επισκέπτεσθε* highlights the covenantal obligation people have to care for others and “oversee” the needs of the afflicted.¹⁵⁴ Even if these family members are afflicted due to their own sin, the church can assist and “visit” them without endorsing their sin, valuing the people formed in God’s image and pointing them toward the healing gospel.¹⁵⁵

What does James mean when he says “affliction”? The word *θλίψει* is normally used to anticipate the eschatological woes that many will face in the end times.¹⁵⁶ However, it could simply refer to the bereavement and poverty orphans and widows experience; given the context of James, this is the best understanding of *θλίψει* in this passage.¹⁵⁷ Luke T. Johnson comments, “There is no need to look beyond the chronic condition of the orphans and widows for a suitable definition . . .” of *θλίψει* as used here.¹⁵⁸ This is a chronic condition that “those whose faith is real are called to alleviate.”¹⁵⁹

The orphan and widow were included among the “traditional poor” in early Israel, along with foreigners and Levites.¹⁶⁰ Douglas Moo reflects on the helplessness of orphans and widows and extends affliction to others who are helpless:

¹⁵²Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries, vol. 37a (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 212.

¹⁵³McCartney, *James*, 129.

¹⁵⁴Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 212.

¹⁵⁵Remy, "Be a Family for Blended Families," 93.

¹⁵⁶Ralph P. Martin, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 48 (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 53.

¹⁵⁷McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 171.

¹⁵⁸Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 212.

¹⁵⁹McCartney, *James*, 129.

¹⁶⁰Dauids, *James*, 43.

Christians whose religion is pure will imitate their Father by intervening to help the helpless. Those who suffer from want in the third world, in the inner city; those who are unemployed and penniless; those who are inadequately represented in government or in law – these are the people who should see abundant evidence of Christians’ pure religion.¹⁶¹

The ultimate truth Christians learn from this passage is that truly following Jesus means serving those who are hurting and in need. Single parents and their children, especially single mothers, are often the neediest people in our churches. Christ followers must address these needs and serve them as God commanded through James.

Conclusion

Surely not all people are equipped to teach and shepherd entire congregations, but all fathers are called to shepherd their families.¹⁶² Both parents must desire for their children to know Jesus as Savior. Since discipleship is commanded by Jesus himself, Christians cannot ignore it. Churches must promote discipleship for all and equip parents to disciple their children. This project has focused on these four texts, but Scripture contains at least seven additional references to family discipleship.¹⁶³ The church must teach parents to guide children “toward conformity to the character of Christ.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹Moo, *The Letter of James*, 86.

¹⁶²Plummer, “Bring Them Up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord,” 54

¹⁶³See Prov 3-4; Gen 18:19; Josh 24:15; Exod 12:26-27, 13:14; Ps 78:4; 2 Tim 3:15.

¹⁶⁴Jay Strother, “Making the Transition to Family-Equipping,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 257.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED
TO PARENTS AS PRIMARY DISCIPLE-MAKERS

Age-specific programs exist commonly within churches. Although these programs can be effective means for discipleship, complete separation of children and adults in the church inadvertently gives parents the impression that discipleship should be done by the trained professionals within these contexts.¹ With this view of discipleship, parents miss the opportunity to provide faith training and teaching in the home. While churches have likely not purposefully taken the responsibility of discipleship from parents, the programmatic separation of age groups has effectively taught them this.

The purpose of this chapter is to show that age-specific church programs must be complemented by a biblical vision for parents to disciple their children. A family-equipping model of church ministry will be presented and advocated. First, a brief history of youth ministry and family discipleship will be presented. While youth ministry certainly does not represent the entirety of the rise of age-specific ministries, it will serve as an archetype of age-separated ministries in the church. Second, the age-specific model of complete separation of age groups will be challenged, arguing instead for a cohesive church model. Third, it will be advocated that churches should provide training for parents to be able to effectively disciple their children. Fourth, special attention will be given to the challenges faced by single parents and their children.

¹Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 83.

Youth Ministry in History

Youth ministry and specialized youth pastors are a new phenomenon in the course of church history. Beginning in the 1800s, young people's societies emerged as a result of the rise of industry and the revivals of the nineteenth century.² By the 1880s, Christian Endeavor societies, loosely connected to churches, began emerging.³ These societies are the precursor to the youth ministries of today.⁴ Young people's societies emerged in large part because "young folks were real Christians and, seeking an expression for their new experience, naturally chose the form sanctioned in their church."⁵ Additionally, the industrial revolution moved society from mostly rural areas into the urban environment, decreasing the percentage of the population involved in farming.⁶

The move into the cities and the economic growth affected churches and created a culture from which Christian parents wished to protect their children.⁷ Before compulsory high schools, youth as young as fifteen were engaging in business, considering Sunday school and church services childish compared to other activities in which they wished to be involved.⁸ The societies that formed within churches addressed this "youth problem" and provided young people with opportunities for accountability and leadership.⁹ While geared toward youth, few official age limits existed, meaning

²Frank Otis Erb, *Development of the Young People's Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1917), 1, 19.

³Ibid., 52.

⁴Mark Senter, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, Youth, Family, and Culture Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 4.

⁵Erb, *Development of the Young People's Movement*, 54.

⁶Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 152.

⁷Ibid., 153.

⁸Ibid., 155.

⁹Ibid., 155-57.

leaders could remain in place well into adulthood; this kept younger members from holding leadership roles.¹⁰ These societies spread throughout the nation and encouraged the growth of new societies within denominations.¹¹ Christian Endeavor societies gave “young men and women a direct and vital approach to religion, an opportunity to which they responded.”¹²

Into the mid-twentieth century, societies became more popular than church activities, disengaging youth from the church.¹³ Sunday evening youth fellowships emerged as well in an attempt to tie together church programs and youth societies, a model which changed the way churches sought to reach youth.¹⁴ These youth fellowships differed from societies in two ways: “they were under the complete control of the local church” and they “were open to every person in the church between the ages of twelve and twenty-four.”¹⁵ Regarding membership, Mark Senter notes,

Attendance for three consecutive weeks qualified a person for membership. Youth fellowships were further divided into intermediates (twelve to fourteen), seniors (fifteen to seventeen), and older youth (eighteen to twenty-four). The primary focus, however, was on the high school age group.¹⁶

The youth society culture of this time also led to the rise of parachurch ministries.¹⁷ World War II created a “crusade spirit” with victories on both fronts, and young adults returned with a similar attitude of “spiritual crusade” to lead others in

¹⁰Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 199.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 158, 169.

¹²Erb, *Development of the Young People’s Movement*, 61.

¹³Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 190.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 199-200.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 190.

evangelistic efforts.¹⁸ Youth for Christ International, Young Life, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes were organized as a means to reach youth through methods outside the church.¹⁹ “Relational evangelism” strategies emerged as well, as adults sought to reach students in their high schools.²⁰

Life in youth societies had shifted from simple focuses on “prayer and encountering God” to a type of social gospel that “focused on institutional change rather than the personal holiness emphasized by local pastors.”²¹ The church knew there was a youth problem to address, and much of what emerged in the early to mid-twentieth century dealt with specific social issues.²² The parachurch organizations discussed above sought to help the church reach youth, but church youth programs in mainline denominations kept with this socially progressive agenda.²³ Senter believes that churches utilized parachurch technological and programmatic models without their emphasis on evangelism:

The church copied . . . parachurch agencies . . . and employed their methods to maintain youth ministries of Christian adolescents in church settings while practically ignoring the vast majority of young people who had not made a commitment to the Christian faith.²⁴

The birth of Youth Specialties (an organization that created curriculum and ideas for youth ministries) in the 1960s highlights a period of attractional, program based ministry within the church, and was heavily influenced by parachurch organizations,

¹⁸Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 214, 218, 225.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 214.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*, 237.

²²*Ibid.*, 238.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*, 249.

Youth for Christ specifically.²⁵ Wayne Rice and Mike Yaconelli, both out of Youth for Christ, founded Youth Specialties with a specific belief: “Modern programming techniques open the way to new dimensions of youth ministry.”²⁶ Out of four initial goals for the organization, one of them included reaching “unreachable” kids; they believed that, since Campus Life and other parachurch organizations used exciting and attractive programs to draw them in, that the church based youth ministry should as well.²⁷ Youth Specialties sought to help the church “do better youth ministry” and to provide access to ideas on how to do so.²⁸

Since this style of youth ministry was so new, specialized youth pastors were just beginning to emerge; at this point, “no one seemed to be aware of how many there were and what their needs happened to be.”²⁹ The first National Youth Workers Convention took place in 1970, drawing in three hundred youth workers.³⁰ Rice, reflecting on this time, has this to say about programs: “Eventually I learned-after plenty of programming disasters-that youth ministry is not about me, nor is it about the success or failure of the programs I lead.”³¹ Families and communities had become fragmented by the end of the 1980s, and raising children came with the new challenges associated with

²⁵Wayne Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again): From Bells and Whistles to Flesh and Blood* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010), 88-89.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 88.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 89.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 250.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again)*, 96.

the “loss of authority in American culture.”³² Changing times called for a change in youth ministry strategy.

Parachurch organizations that began in this twentieth century context discovered that their strategies to reach youth needed renewal.³³ Even so, they often sought to reach students by bypassing parents and churches.³⁴ Church youth ministries, with some degree of success, had created communities for youth, but they were often only loosely connected to the church.³⁵ The result is a current church model that has separate ministries for each age group with very little cohesion between them.³⁶

The family-equipping ministry model can best challenge this complete separation of the age groups. Family-equipping ministry does not eliminate age-based programs, but coordinates “every aspect of your present ministry so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable as primary disciples-makers in their children’s’ lives.”³⁷ Equipping parents bridges a gap in discipleship that attractional youth ministries and parachurch organizations fail to address. Reggie Joiner of the reThink Group says this:

If you’re a church leader, your purpose is not to equip parents to have exceptional parenting skills. . . . It is important to help parents understand that their role is not to impress their children or anyone else with their ability to parent. Their role is to impress on their children the love and character of God.³⁸

³²Senter notes, “Young people, more than ever before, challenged everything, as did the media, educators, political leaders, and church leaders.” Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 253.

³³*Ibid.*, 289.

³⁴Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 127.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*, 132.

³⁸Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 48.

The State of Family Worship and Discipleship

“God never gave youth workers the responsibility for making disciples of other people’s kids.”³⁹ Wayne Rice reflects on years of thinking on youth ministry as a means to separate students from parents and other adults and engage their culture. Youth ministry may have begun with the Christian Endeavor Societies, with Youth for Christ rallies in the 1940s, or with the founding of Youth Specialties; in any case, Rice posits that youth ministry is a modern invention not present in the Bible or even in church history.⁴⁰ Even so, he celebrates youth ministry as the necessary reaction to the culture’s isolation of teenagers.⁴¹ However, the current model of youth ministry is not working the way it should.⁴² Rice’s vast experience in youth ministry has led him to this conclusion:

What we now know is that teenagers pretty much follow in the faith footsteps of their parents. If parents are following Jesus, there’s a good to excellent chance their kids will follow Jesus too. If they aren’t, they won’t. There are no guarantees, of course, but parents function as the spiritual leaders in their home whether they want to or not. That’s their role, given to them by God.⁴³

He has realized that parents love and care for their kids more than anyone else, and have more time with them than anyone else.⁴⁴

H. F. Cope commented, “Homes are wrecked because families refuse to take home-living in religious terms, in social terms of sacrifice and service.”⁴⁵ One might expect these words to be written recently, within the current context of the church, but Cope wrote these words in 1915! Even over 100 years ago, Cope believed that church

³⁹Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again)*, 25.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 9.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 11.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 10.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁴⁵Henry F. Cope, *Religious Education in the Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1915), 1.

and family must be connected in order to give children a proper relationship to the church.⁴⁶ Currently, family discipleship is just as lacking.⁴⁷ Timothy Paul Jones indicates, through the Family Needs Survey conducted from 2007-2008, that half of parents never or rarely hold family devotionals and one-fourth of parents never or rarely pray with their children. Additionally, the more recent Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey revealed similar results, and found that one in five parents have never studied the Bible with their children.⁴⁸ Parents must reclaim their role as primary disciple-makers of their children, and the current segmented church model is not properly equipping them.

Age-Specific Programs Are Not Enough

Rationale

Over the last fifty years, churches have been utilizing age-specific ministries to accomplish ministry to youth and children especially; as stated above, the effectiveness of these ministries has recently been questioned.⁴⁹ Much of the motivator for these questions revolves around supposed research into the “dropout” rate among youth after they leave high school.⁵⁰ This statistic, which purports that as many as 88 percent of students in evangelical homes leave church when they graduate high school, has largely been based on inadequate research.⁵¹ Even if the research is true and students are leaving

⁴⁶Cope, *Religious Education in the Family*, 200.

⁴⁷Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 27-28.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁴⁹Brandon Shields, “Family-Based Ministry: Separated Contexts, Shared Focus,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 100.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 101-2.

⁵¹Shields, “Family-Based Ministry,” 102-5. Shields cites research done by the Council for Family Life and LifeWay Research, both of which are “inconclusive when it comes to the question of whether present youth ministry paradigms are broken.”

the church, there is no reason to believe that age-specific ministries are the cause.⁵² Age-specific ministries need not be eliminated, but they are surely not enough to disciple children and students. The discipleship problem in the church today may not be caused by age-specific programming, but simply adding new family-orientated programs is not the solution either.⁵³ Christian households must be equipped to “function as outposts of God’s mission in the world.”⁵⁴

Ultimately, programming for children and youth should never be prioritized over the centrality and preeminence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁵⁵ All programs for any age group or even for the church as a whole must be considered in light of this gospel centrality. As stated in chapter 2, Jesus commanded his followers to spread the gospel by making disciples of all nations. Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6:4 show that the responsibility of training and instruction of children falls to the parents. The gospel is best proclaimed to children through the family. Family discipleship may not guarantee godly households, but parents can certainly not hope to raise children who follow Christ without engaging in family worship and discipleship.⁵⁶

Position

In order to create a church culture with a biblical view of discipleship, age-specific models of complete segmentation must be challenged. These programs need not be eliminated, but parents and families must not depend on them as the primary means of discipleship for children and youth. Churches do not need family ministry programs to

⁵²Shields, “Family-Based Ministry,” 105.

⁵³Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 59.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again)*, 77.

⁵⁶Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 29.

add to families' already busy schedules, but rather must coordinate families "around a shared, Spirit motivated perspective on parents and children."⁵⁷ Family ministry is not the answer to the church's problems nor will it transform lives; the gospel of Jesus alone transforms lives, and families must be considered within this context.⁵⁸ Family-equipping ministry must be viewed as a means to proclaim the gospel within the home.

Age-specific ministries become dangerous when the separation is so radical that "different generations rarely interact with one another."⁵⁹ Surely programs that address the specific needs of different age groups have a place in churches, but this complete separation can create a collection of ministries that have no means of cohesion toward biblical discipleship or any other mission of the church.⁶⁰

This lack of cohesion and lack of intergenerational fellowship makes the church, a place where children and students should be able to positively interact with adults, one of the places where they are most separated from them.⁶¹ This disconnect of children from adults within the church has given parents the impression that the spiritual development of their children need not extend beyond church programs.⁶² Additionally, the less time spent dialoguing with adults, the more children and students are influenced by outside sources and by each other, effectively causing them to become "morally

⁵⁷Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 29, 59.

⁵⁸Bryan Nelson and Timothy P. Jones, "Introduction: The Problem with Family Ministry," in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 28.

⁵⁹Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 126.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry: Reaching the Been-There, Done-That Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 41.

⁶²Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 128.

handicapped.”⁶³ Regarding the lack of adult influences in teenagers’ lives, Mark DeVries says, “The horizontal peer culture is not enough. When the vertical structure connecting children and adults has eroded, should we be surprised that our children grow up having difficulty establishing any firm values of their own?”⁶⁴ Students need interaction with adults for proper moral development. The church must bring the generations together despite their differences. Christ followers are defined not by “social or generational similarities,” but by Christ who unites all believers.⁶⁵

Youth ministries throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century have generally focused on creating mature Christian teenagers, but they fail at discipleship when they do not seek to put those teenagers on track to become mature Christian adults.⁶⁶ Youth programming in the past has been considered successful when teenagers are drawn to the group and maintained as members, but programming ultimately “may keep kids coming, but [it] won’t keep them connected.”⁶⁷ A “fun” environment that attracts students through exciting activities may be well attended, but ultimately misses the point. Failing to teach students that the Christian life requires discipline at times may hinder their ability to become mature Christian adults.⁶⁸ If students are taught that faith in God is always “fun,” they may become frustrated when it is not (due to hardship or simply consistent practice of spiritual disciplines). Programs must be consistently evaluated based on the philosophy and theology of youth ministry grounded in the truths of the gospel,

⁶³DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 51, 53.

⁶⁴Ibid., 53.

⁶⁵Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 129.

⁶⁶DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 24.

⁶⁷Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again)*, 101.

⁶⁸DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 27.

not based simply on attendance and attractional value.⁶⁹ Viewed properly, age-specific ministries and programs can reinforce family life and worship, as well as provide opportunities to reach and disciple lost students.⁷⁰

Family Ministry with a Purpose

Family-equipping ministry provides the “best of both worlds,” maintaining age-specific ministries, but focusing them on a shared goal of discipleship and gospel-centrality. Family-equipping ministry is not an organizational model, but rather a matter of identity; this type of ministry must flow out of “who you are, beginning with the ministry leaders.”⁷¹ The particulars of family-equipping ministry will be different in every context.⁷² This section will provide practices that can lead churches toward effective family ministry.

Family ministry cannot be enacted through normal organizational means, but begins with pastors and church leaders discipling their children.⁷³ Those who wish to move their church to a family-equipping model must first create a context where church leaders can contemplate their roles in their families, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts and move them toward the desire to disciple their children.⁷⁴ The initial goal of church leaders must be to “work together to view your own families and the families around you in light of God’s story line.”⁷⁵

⁶⁹Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again)*, 102.

⁷⁰Shields, “Family-Based Ministry,” 106-7.

⁷¹Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 137.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 152.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 138.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 147.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 148.

The church must prioritize families and give parents the necessary means to continue their legacy of faith in Christ.⁷⁶ Whether or not they realize it, parents are the primary teachers in the lives of their children.⁷⁷ Family discipleship (or other variations of this same idea)⁷⁸ provides parents with a time to purposefully be this teacher, presenting biblical truths in their homes.⁷⁹ Family discipleship times must be intentional, specific times (at least once a week) where parents can share in Scripture-based conversation with their children.⁸⁰

Part of a church's family-equipping model must be training parents to be teachers at home.⁸¹ Ministers must equip the people of God for the work of ministry (see Eph 4:12); this includes discipleship training for parents.⁸² It is important for church leaders to note that a vast biblical knowledge is not required to accomplish this. Voddie Baucham, citing Christian Smith's National Study of Youth and Religion, states that simply reading the Bible as a family greatly impacts the children involved.⁸³ When the church provides parental training in this way, they actively show that the church should not be the primary disciple-makers of their children and intentionally promote parental responsibility.

⁷⁶Jim Burns, *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2003), 16.

⁷⁷Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 153.

⁷⁸See "Definitions" section in chap. 1

⁷⁹Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 153.

⁸⁰Brian Haynes, *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2009), 43.

⁸¹Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 155.

⁸²Danny R. Bowen "Be a Family by Equipping Parents," in *Practical Family Ministry*, ed. Timothy P. Jones and John David Trentham (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 71.

⁸³Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 92.

More important and effective than providing new training programs is giving parents the tools they need within current programs.⁸⁴ This could come in the form of a family discipleship guide provided by the church, including “a fun activity for the whole family, followed by a Scripture, a few discussion questions, and a closing prayer.”⁸⁵ Conversely, new programs on top of existing church programs may take away from time families need to spend in family discipleship together! The reshaping and refocusing of existing programs is a more effective means of instilling the need for family discipleship.⁸⁶ This is a difficult transition, and churches must encourage parents to trust in the Spirit’s transforming power to help them disciple their children.⁸⁷ Promoting discipleship in the home is far too important to avoid just because it is not easy.

Even secular sources, such as *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters* by medical doctor Meg Meeker, recognize that God must be presented primarily at home:

You need to have someone behind you, someone your daughter can turn to when you’re not there. You both need a bigger, better father on your side. . . . I don’t make statements like these lightly. I make them as a doctor, based on what I have observed, studied, and know from experience, and I make them as someone who relies on the evidence of scientific studies with reproducible facts and correlations.⁸⁸

Continuing to cite the positive affect religion has on children, Meeker provides an extensive list of desirable moral traits attributed to a focus on religious beliefs.⁸⁹

Additionally, she challenges the belief of some that religion should not be forced on

⁸⁴Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 156.

⁸⁵Ibid., 157.

⁸⁶Ibid., 157-58.

⁸⁷Ibid., 159.

⁸⁸Margaret J. Meeker, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters: 10 Secrets Every Father Should Know* (New York: Ballantine, 2007), 179.

⁸⁹Ibid., 178-79.

children, arguing instead that beliefs about God are too important to avoid teaching.⁹⁰ Interestingly enough, likely knowing very little of family ministry research, she believes that parents avoid teaching their children about God because “many of us weren’t schooled in religion ourselves; we simply don’t know enough about God and faith to say anything.”⁹¹ This statement, from a source outside the church, must motivate the church to train and equip parents.

In addition to intentional family discipleship times, families must be equipped to have conversations about God and faith in the course of daily life.⁹² These “faith walk” moments should serve to “remind us that because God is working all things together for the good of those who love him, even the most mundane events of life can call attention to God’s glory and his story.”⁹³ The church can equip parents to take part in these by providing examples and testimonies of prayers and faith talks, as well helping them see their children’s questions as opportunities to help them view life in light of God’s story line (see Deut 6:20-25).⁹⁴ In addition, recognizing milestones in the life of believers offers a chance to honor their spiritual development and emphasizes growing faith.⁹⁵

Deuteronomy includes the phrase “lest you forget” at least seven times, demonstrating Moses’ recognition that all believers are prone to forget the works of God in and for them.⁹⁶ In order to fully equip parents to disciple their children, the church cannot only occasionally mention it; the church must continuously celebrate the role of

⁹⁰Meeker, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*, 180.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 161.

⁹³Ibid., 162.

⁹⁴Ibid., 162-63.

⁹⁵Haynes, *Shift*, 42. See also Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 164-65.

⁹⁶Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 171-72.

parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children.⁹⁷ Continuously acknowledging the role of parents may be taxing, but it is absolutely necessary. The inefficiency of this model need not hinder the church; indeed, it may be simpler for the church to handle discipleship without acknowledge and equipping parents.⁹⁸ Timothy Paul Jones, speaking on this inefficiency, says this:

If your sole goal is organizational efficiency, constantly acknowledging the role of parents is probably an inefficient use of your time, and turning over children's spiritual lives to professionals at church would make perfect sense. But efficiency is not the goal of gospel-centered ministry. The crucified and risen Lord Jesus determines the shape and establishes the goal for his church. . . . The Spirit does not give gifts for the purpose of making the church efficient; he arranges the gifts in the body according to his will to make us holy.⁹⁹

The role of parents cannot be diminished, nor can it be mentioned too much. The church must consistently recognize the role parents have in the discipleship of their children.

The equipping of parents must ultimately be inundated in the life of the church. A new program or separate meeting for training is not enough. Parents must be given specific goals, especially ones related to events in which their children are involved.¹⁰⁰ Often times, providing events where parental presence is a necessity gives parents the chance to be directly involved in the purpose of an event rather than simply in support of it logistically.¹⁰¹

“The Christian home should be a training ground that sparks zeal for God's global mission in the world.”¹⁰² Family-equipping ministry must focus first and foremost on those who are within the church, but this should lead the church and its families to

⁹⁷Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 171-72.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 177.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 177-78.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁰²Bowen, “Be a Family by Equipping Parents,” 72.

those who are beyond the church whose lives may be messy.¹⁰³ Broken families are present not only outside of the church, but often times within it. All people, no matter how much they have suffered because of the sinful brokenness of the world, must be viewed as “potential or actual brothers and sisters in Christ”; family-equipping churches must instill this belief in their families.¹⁰⁴ This can be done by leading parents to create family mission statements with their children, aiming to seek “a missional passion for the expansion of God’s kingdom.”¹⁰⁵

Family-equipping ministry is not simple. It is not the addition of a new program. However, it must be sought after in spite of the difficulties involved. For the minister, selfishness must be laid aside, as fruits of this type of ministry take time and may not come to fruition in one’s lifetime.¹⁰⁶ The goal of family ministry is a long-term effect, and “multi-generational faithfulness matters far more than momentary success.”¹⁰⁷

Single Parents: How They Can Disciple Their Children and How the Church Can Help Them

To bypass the orphan in favor of a focus on whole and healthy families is to neglect a heartbeat that has long marked the rhythms of God’s redemptive plan. . . . There are, after all, no natural-born children of God among us; there are only ex-orphans who have been brought into God’s family through divine adoption.¹⁰⁸

As stated in chapter 2, the widow and the orphan are of special interest to God and thus to the people of God. God commanded his people to care for the fatherless seven

¹⁰³Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 140-41.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁰⁵Michael S. Wilder, “Building and Equipping Missional Families,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 249.

¹⁰⁶Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 191.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 143.

times in the giving of the Law.¹⁰⁹ Family-equipping ministry must focus not on the “earthly heritage” of sinful brokenness that especially effects single parents and their children, but on divine adoption into sonship and daughtership in the kingdom of God.¹¹⁰ The simple and profound truth of the gospel compels Christian families around the orphan and widow to become family to them.¹¹¹ Nontraditional families must fit into a church’s family-equipping ministry. These families often need additional equipping and support beyond what would be provided to traditional families.

Harley Atkinson states, “The quality or lack of quality in family life today is a key contributor to the critical condition of our current youth generation.”¹¹² She cites empirical studies showing that between 40 and 60 percent of children will live with only one parent for some amount of time before reaching the age of eighteen.¹¹³ This section does not seek to provide a comprehensive look at the many issues families face that lead to fragmentation or crisis, but will instead focus on single parents who have suffered abandonment from divorce. This group will serve as an archetype for families needing supplemental focus from churches when it comes to family-equipping ministry.

For single parents, discipling their children often means more than simply sharing the truths of God and reading the Bible. Single parents must navigate their children’s feelings of abandonment and portray God as a loving father when even the idea of a loving father may be a concept entirely foreign to them. Les Parrott notes, “The emotional trauma and pain of losing your parents through the dissolution of their marriage

¹⁰⁹Jones lists those seven times as follows: Exod 22:22-24; Deut 10:18, 14:29, 16:11-14, 24:17-21, 26:12-13, and 27:19. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 168.

¹¹⁰Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 169.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Harley Atkinson, *Ministry with Youth in Crisis* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education, 1997), 15.

¹¹³Ibid.

is, without question, one of the most significant factors contributing to the struggles teens cope with in the aftermath of parental divorce.”¹¹⁴

In divorce, children lose the completeness of their family and experience loss of relationships with both parents due to the changing family structure.¹¹⁵ The loss of familiarity in relationships often effects children long term and must be grieved and worked through with care.¹¹⁶ This is accentuated when a parent leaves and either breaks all ties with the children or detaches emotionally from them.¹¹⁷ Some studies have shown that, even if a parent initially attempts to remain in contact with the children, the contact he or she maintains decreases two years after the divorce.¹¹⁸

Without support from the church, children are often left without answers to the difficult questions these circumstances initiate, and parents need to be equipped to help their children through it. Parents face the difficult challenge of attempting to help their children face divorce while themselves experiencing the same or more intense negative emotions. The church needs a plan to counsel and equip single parents in the midst of their own personal hardship. Single parents are often suddenly on their own and face fear involving how to parent alone, how to cope with loss, how to manage finances, and how to trust God in the midst of tragedy.¹¹⁹ Doubt and uncertainty flood the minds of parents

¹¹⁴Les Parrott, *Helping the Struggling Adolescent: A Guide to Thirty-Six Common Problems for Counselors, Pastors, and Youth Workers*, updated and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 293.

¹¹⁵Tamar Granot, *Without You: Children and Young People Growing Up with Loss and Its Effects* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2005), 123.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 124.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 127-28.

¹¹⁸E. Mavis Hetherinton, Martha Cox, and Roger Cox, “Effects of Divorce on Parents and Children,” in *Nontraditional Families: Parenting and Child Development*, ed. Michael E. Lamb (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1982), 251, referencing their University of Virginia study.

¹¹⁹David R. Miller, *Counseling Families after Divorce*, *Contemporary Christian Counseling* 8 (Dallas: Word, 1994), 212-13.

right after divorce as coping with new family situations becomes a reality.¹²⁰ Single mothers may face economic issues that affect decisions about work and childcare, as well as issues of time.¹²¹ Single fathers may feel inadequate to sustain new parental roles.¹²² Both, especially single mothers, may “have no other adult to turn to for help.”¹²³ The church can provide single parents with help in these areas, supporting them simply by being available to help.

Much of a single parent’s role in discipling their children, beyond the basic tenants of faith, is to help them cope properly with the loss caused by divorce.¹²⁴ Children and adolescents who experience parental divorce “mourn the death of that marriage, just as they would mourn the death of a parent.”¹²⁵ Parents can help their children through this by walking them through the stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) and the church can equip them to do so.¹²⁶ Parents must understand that the rhythms of grief experienced by their children will be much different than their own; while adults (and some adolescents) dwell on grief for months or even years, some children and adolescents dwell on grief for shorter periods and may seem to block out the traumatic event at times.¹²⁷ Reflecting on this, Tamar Granot writes,

Just as much as the child needs the support and encouragement of the adult to express his distress, he also needs him as a model at the stage of emotional acceptance and adjustment. The child needs the example of the coping parent. He

¹²⁰Miller, *Counseling Families after Divorce*, 228.

¹²¹Ibid., 218.

¹²²Ibid., 216.

¹²³Ibid., 218.

¹²⁴Granot, *Without You*, 150.

¹²⁵Parrott, *Helping the Struggling Adolescent*, 294.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Granot, *Without You*, 150.

needs to get the message that it is okay to resume life. He draws strength from the ‘permission’ given by his parent to go on with his life.¹²⁸

The reduction of fear in a child’s life depends on his or her parent’s reaction to anxiety caused by divorce; single parents must aim to assuage fear.¹²⁹

Children of divorce will likely distrust all adults after parental separation, wondering on whom they can rely.¹³⁰ This is where the church must step in. Church leaders must be present in the lives of children of divorce, giving them reliable adults in which to confide.¹³¹ A reliable friend and mentor in the church can provide much needed stability for the child.¹³² As churches consider family-equipping ministry that involves single parents, they must create an environment that encourages others to mentor children of single parents. Ninety percent of single parents are women, and half of the children living with their mothers have not had any contact with their fathers in at least a year.¹³³ Since the children of single mothers likely lack positive father figures in their lives, male leadership in the church must strive to mentor them.

For parents, especially the parent remaining in the life of the child, rebuilding trust means making children the priority, taking time to talk with him or her about “life, hopes, struggles, ambitions, and relationships.”¹³⁴ When engaging in family-equipping ministry with single parents, churches must encourage parents to be open and honest with their children regarding plans involving living arrangements and other aspects of life after

¹²⁸Granot, *Without You*, 152.

¹²⁹Ibid., 156-57.

¹³⁰Rich Van Pelt and Jim Hancock, *The Youth Worker’s Guide to Helping Teenagers in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 146.

¹³¹Ibid., 147.

¹³²Timothy E. Clinton, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Counseling Teenagers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 209.

¹³³Parrott, *Helping the Struggling Adolescent*, 292.

¹³⁴Clinton, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Counseling Teenagers*, 209.

divorce.¹³⁵ Helping single parents communicate successfully with their children can help begin to repair broken relationships.¹³⁶

Single parents cannot be ignored in a gospel-centered church. Those who have suffered from divorce and been wounded by it must not be marginalized despite any church's specific beliefs on divorce; churches must "yearn to see the gospel bring new life to broken people."¹³⁷ In spite of anyone's sinful choices, the church is called to reach the vulnerable.¹³⁸ Family-equipping ministry must intentionally include single-parents and the church must support them and care for them.

Conclusion

The church does not need more programs. It does not need more events to take up the time of already busy families. Family-equipping ministry must be accomplished through existing programs, continuously recognizing families and the parents' role with them. Intact families in the church must be led toward a missional mindset, reaching out to those families who do not yet know Christ and may be fractured. All parents are fallen, and most, if not all, will feel inadequate to disciple their children. However, the gospel provides hope and strength from Christ:

As parents, we are not alone with our feeling of inadequacy. Our hopes do not lie within our own desire that our children are saved or in our own strength. Our hope is in the promise of the gospel: 'For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call' (Acts 2:39)¹³⁹

¹³⁵Wade Rowatt, *Pastoral Care with Adolescents in Crisis* (Louisville: Westminster/J. Knox, 1989), 87.

¹³⁶Joshua Ehrlich, *Divorce and Loss: Helping Adults and Children Mourn When a Marriage Comes Apart* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 139.

¹³⁷Joshua A. Remy, "Be a Family for Blended Families," In *Practical Family Ministry*, 91.

¹³⁸Ibid., 93. See Exod 22:22, Deut 14:29, Isa 1:17, 1 Tim 5:7-14, Jas 1:27.

¹³⁹Steve Wright, "Family, a Context for Evangelism," in *Practical Family Ministry*, ed. Timothy P. Jones and John David Trentham (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 37.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Previous chapters have shown that the Bible supports the notion of parents as primary disciple-makers and that historical and theological sources show this is the best means for faith transference. This chapter outlines the methodology for implementing a family-equipping ministry in a local church, training parents to lead family worship and discipleship in their homes.

The purpose of this project was to train parents, represented by the children and youth ministries at Fairforest Baptist Church (FBC) in Spartanburg, South Carolina, to disciple their children. In order to accomplish this objective, a six-week family discipleship course was created and implemented. This project began September 12, 2016, and continued for sixteen weeks. This consisted of three phases. During the first phase (weeks 1-3), the curriculum for the six-week course was written, evaluated by an expert panel, and revised for implementation at FBC. At the beginning of the second phase, the Family Discipleship Assessment (FDA) and the Specific Family Needs Assessment (SFNA) were administered as a pre-course survey.¹ During this phase (weeks 4-13), the course was taught at FBC on Sunday afternoons at 4:00 PM from October 2, 2016, through November 6, 2016. For the remaining four weeks of phase two, personal attention was given to specific families for post-course evaluation, coaching, and assistance. In the third and final phase, both the FDA and the SFNA were administered again as a post-course survey. A t-test for dependent samples was conducted to determine if there was a

¹See appendices 1 and 2.

positive, statistically significant difference between the pre-course survey answers and the post-course survey answers.

Target Population

The target population for this project was the families represented by the children and youth ministries at Fairforest Baptist Church. After receiving approval from the Ethics Committee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to use human subjects in research, this project was implemented. Because of the relatively small size of FBC, this course was open to all parents who wished to be involved. I originally asked twelve families to be involved in the project. By the time the course began, ten families in total participated, and each was required to sign a participation agreement and either attend each session or view a video recording of the session.

Phase 1: Initial Preparation

Expert Panel

Before beginning this project, it was necessary to assemble an expert panel to evaluate and provide direction for the curriculum. Three people were recruited to this expert panel; they were selected because of their expertise in church ministry and the educational training they had received. Five lessons were prepared initially and the expert panel provided feedback on the focus of the sixth and final lesson (see next section for additional details). The lessons were evaluated on four criteria, and each of the six lessons was evaluated separately. Each criterion was centered around a statement to which each expert panel member would respond with either (1) Insufficient, (2) Needs Work, (3) Sufficient, or (4) Exemplary. The four criteria each had two related questions. The statements were as follows:

1. Biblical Adherence
 - a. The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.
 - b. The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.
2. Scope
 - a. The purpose of the curriculum is clearly presented.
 - b. The curriculum sufficiently covers the basics of family discipleship.
3. Methodology
 - a. The curriculum sufficiently addresses family discipleship methodology.
 - b. The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, case studies, and homework.
4. Practicality
 - a. The curriculum includes opportunities to practice family discipleship.
 - b. At the end of the course, participants will be equipped to disciple their children.

Two members of the expert panel were a part of FBC and were thus provided paper copies of both the curriculum and the rubrics.² The third expert panel member lived out of town and thus provided feedback remotely using electronic copies.

Initial Draft of the Course Curriculum

Since the goal of this project was to train parents to disciple their children, the curriculum had to be focused solely on this goal. Research on family ministry and family discipleship training showed that a six-week course was not adequate on its own to create a family discipleship culture.³ With this in mind, the course was not presented as the final solution to the lack of family discipleship, but rather as a launching point for a family-equipping ministry. I designed this course to show the importance of family discipleship and provide practical means for FBC families to disciple their children.

²See rubric in appendix 3.

³Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 26-29.

Week 1. During the first week, I wrote five of the six intended lessons using research from this project.⁴ The first lesson was written to show the need for family discipleship. This lesson, titled “Why Family Discipleship?,” focused on showing parents the importance of family discipleship. Deuteronomy 6 was used as the biblical basis of this lesson, and the rise of youth ministry and age-specific ministry was presented. The second lesson, titled “What is Family Discipleship and Worship?,” provided biblical examples of God’s command to parents to disciple their children and gave a general framework of family ministry. Family discipleship and worship were defined and Ephesians 6 was used as the biblical basis. The third lesson utilized biblical sources to present the values of a family-equipping church, which I wrote based on research done for this project. The fourth lesson provided practical family discipleship tools to the participants. These tools included family ministry books as well as ideas for facilitating family worship at home.⁵ Additionally, each participant was given a copy of *Family Worship* by Don Whitney. The fifth lesson focused on single parents and families in crisis, citing the importance of family discipleship for these families, as well as presenting the need for churches to care for these families. James 1:27 was the biblical basis, presenting the heartbeat of God for the orphan and widow. The sixth lesson was to be developed after receiving feedback from the expert panel.

Week 2. After writing the curriculum, I presented the lessons to the expert panel. I initially gave each member of the expert panel five lessons. The expert panel completed a rubric (see appendix 3) for each lesson. The expert panel was presented with two options for the sixth lesson:

⁴See session outlines in appendix 6.

⁵See session 4 in appendix 6.

1. Provide an additional week of tools for family discipleship as well as practical examples.
2. Provide a final lesson on the importance of prioritizing family discipleship.

After receiving feedback from the expert panel, the sixth session, titled “Keep It Going: Maintaining Family Worship When Life Gets Busy,” was developed.

Week 3. After receiving feedback from the expert panel, I spent the third week revising the initial five lessons. Based on feedback from the expert panel, I improved the clarity of the course’s purpose in session 1 and took greater care to define terms related to family discipleship. Grammatical mistakes were addressed, and biblical aspects of certain sessions were edited for theological and practical clarity as needed. Also during this week, I completed the sixth lesson and requested an evaluation rubric from the expert panel for this lesson as well. This sixth lesson encouraged parents to continuously make family discipleship a priority and reviewed previous lessons briefly. I also asked the expert panel to evaluate my revisions and grant final approval or disapproval. Each member of the expert panel approved all six lessons.

Phase 2: Implementation of the Course

Recruiting Families

In order to properly determine the effectiveness of this curriculum, at least ten families needed to be involved in this project. This number was reasonable based on attendance at FBC at the time; this also necessitated opening the course to all families with children from birth to 18 years old. I approached twelve families personally to request their involvement. One of the goals of this project also required that single parents or families in crisis be involved, so I made sure to include both traditional and non-traditional families.⁶ I was able to recruit the necessary ten families, which included

⁶See “Definitions” section in chap. 1.

six traditional and four non-traditional families. I also recruited students from my ministry and adults with no children in the home to provide childcare to the children of the parents involved.

Execution of the Pre-Course Survey

Prior to the course, each participant was given both a copy of the Family Discipleship Assessment (FDA) and the Specific Family Needs Assessment (SFNA).⁷ The FDA was administered to evaluate the current family discipleship practices (or lack thereof) of each participant. These practices include time prioritization of family discipleship, parental responsibility vs. church responsibility, frequency of prayer and Bible reading together in the home, and evangelism. The FDA, written by Timothy Paul Jones, was copied from *Family Ministry Field Guide* and was used by permission.⁸ The SFNA was administered to assess the effect of non-traditional family situations on family discipleship. This survey focused on difficult family situations and the church's assistance helping with those situations. Although this survey was focused specifically on non-traditional families, it was administered to each participating family. The SFNA was developed based on observation and personal conversations with single parents at my church, as well as research from chapter 3.

In order to properly keep track of each family's responses, a spreadsheet was created that associated each family with a letter A-J. After writing the letter on the top of the survey, the cover page containing the participant's name was removed to maintain anonymity. The results of the pre-surveys were entered in the spreadsheet, and the original copies were placed in a secure location in my office.

⁷See appendices 1 and 2.

⁸Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 215-18.

Six-Week Family Discipleship Course

Each week, participating families met in a classroom at FBC for the family discipleship training course. Each session was recorded so it would be available to any family that could not attend, although they were told that their physical presence was strongly preferred. Each meeting generally flowed in the following way:

1. I arrived early for each meeting and set up my laptop for recording. I used a digital camera for the recording of the first session, but it proved inadequate. My laptop was used for sessions two thru six.
2. I played some music as participants entered and created a friendly and inviting atmosphere. I greeted everyone individually as they came in.
3. The video recording was made available on a private YouTube channel. All participants were given access, and those who did not attend were required to watch the session at a later date. This allowed me to say, with confidence, that every family fully participated in the course.
4. I presented the curriculum to the group using PowerPoint presentations I had prepared. This portion generally lasted 45 minutes with time allotted for questions and discussion.
5. Each meeting ended with a time for final discussion, and I ended each meeting with prayer.

In general, the course weeks of this phase (weeks 4-9) included a presentation of the appropriate session, a review of the video from the previous week, and an adjustment of the next session as necessary. For four weeks following the course (weeks 10-13), I made myself available to participating families for additional resourcing and training. A weekly breakdown of this phase of the project is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Weekly breakdown of project implementation phase 2

Week	Tasks Completed	Objectives Completed
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collected pre-course surveys Taught session 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined ‘outsourcing’ and encouraged parents not to outsource their children’s discipleship. Taught Deuteronomy 6 as a basis for family discipleship Instilled the need for parents to discipleship their children
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed session one video Finalized session 2 curriculum Taught session 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined key terms related to family discipleship Showed secular sources that affirmed the importance of transference of faith from parents to children Taught Ephesians 6 as a basis for family discipleship Explained the concept of “learn, practice, and impart and equip” based on Ezra 7
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed session 2 video Finalized session 3 curriculum Taught session 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented the framework for a church-based family-equipping ministry
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed session 3 video Finalized session 4 curriculum Taught session 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented books and resources useful in family discipleship Modelled the use of catechesis⁹ in family discipleship
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed session 4 video Finalized session 5 curriculum Taught session 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showed the need for the church to care for single parents and families in crisis based on James 1:27 Provided practical tools for the church to utilize in helping single parents and their children.
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed session 5 video Finalized session 6 curriculum Taught session 6 Distributed post-course surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed important items from sessions 1-5 Encouraged parents to prioritize family discipleship
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spoke personally with one family regarding the course content and family discipleship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided personal support to course participants as requested
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spoke personally with two families regarding the course content and family discipleship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided personal support to course participants as requested
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spoke personally with one family regarding the course content and family discipleship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided personal support to course participants as requested
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spoke personally with one family regarding the course content and family discipleship Collected post-course surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided personal support to course participants as requested Received nine of the ten requested post-course surveys

⁹Catechesis is a series of questions and answers that teaches biblical truth. In this lesson, the North Star Catechism was used. Daniel Montgomery and Jared Kennedy, *North Star Catechism Introduction* (Louisville: Sojourn Community Church, 2013), 3.

In session 1, my goal was to show parents the need for family discipleship. The participants responded positively to the first session, recognizing that outsourcing discipleship to the church is not a biblical model. In session 2, I presented a family-equipping model of ministry that does not reject age-specific ministries, but instead complements them with parental training and involvement. I continued to show the need for family discipleship, and participants left session 2 eager to learn how to disciple their children. After expanding on the definition of a *family-equipping church* in session 3, parents were given the tools to make disciples of their children in session 4. I received many questions on catechesis and its application, which led to a positive discussion regarding its use in family discipleship. Session 5, discussing single parents, evoked emotional responses from participants. Other participants were quick to encourage and comfort them, making this session one of the most memorable. From this session, the participants planned a men's retreat with the overt purpose to mentor children of single mothers. Finally, in session 6, I presented a humorous, satirical article regarding intermittent church attendance, highlighting the necessity for parents to take seriously the discipleship of their children. I closed this session and the course by encouraging parents to see their children in light of eternity.

Phase 3: Evaluating Results

Calculating Results

In order to complete this project, the pre-course and post-course surveys were compiled in a spreadsheet for calculation. The collection of all post-course surveys took two weeks to receive. Below is the process used to identify a statistically significant difference from the pre-course and post-course surveys.

Week 14. In week fourteen, the first nine surveys were examined and results from the 6-point Likert scales were entered into the spreadsheet used to calculate results.

Week 15. In week fifteen, I received the final survey and entered the data into the spreadsheet. A t-test for dependent samples was administered in order to identify whether or not the course led to a statistically significant difference from the pre-course survey to the post-course survey. The questions from both the FDA and the SFNA were compiled. In order to get more specific results based on different family situations, the results from the SFNA were divided into those from traditional families and those from non-traditional families. The results were analyzed in two ways. First, the total results for each survey were calculated, one for the FDA, one for the SFNA results from traditional families, and one for the SFNA results from non-traditional families. The results from this t-test are as follows:

The Family Discipleship Assessment (FDA) sought to determine general family discipleship practices by participating parents. There was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 5.26, p = .0003$). This demonstrates that there was an overall increase in family discipleship practices among the participants throughout the course.

The Specific Family Needs Assessment (SFNA) sought to determine the course's effect on specific family circumstances for both traditional and non-traditional families. For traditional families, there was no significant difference ($t(5) = 2.33, p = .9665$). For non-traditional families, there was no significant difference. ($t(3) = .09, p = .5336$).

Next, the results for each question were examined for a statistically significant difference. The questions for the FDA were examined, and the questions for the SFNA were examined separately for traditional and non-traditional families. The results from the FDA questions are as follows:

Question 1 sought to determine if families prioritized family discipleship times in their schedules. There was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 3.343, p = .009$). This demonstrates that there was an overall increase in the prioritization of family discipleship times over the course of the project.

Question 2 asked parents if their busy schedules hindered their desire to engage in family discipleship and sought to determine their prioritization relative to other activities. There was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 2.475, p = .035$). This demonstrated that parents began to prioritize family discipleship despite busy schedules.

Question 3 asked parents if they believed children should receive most Bible teaching at church. There was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 1.309, p = .223$). Survey results indicated that parents already knew that church should not be the primary source of Bible teaching.

Question 4 asked if parents would rather their children ask someone else biblical or theological questions. There was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0.668, p = .509$). Survey results indicated that parents were previously willing to answer these questions from their children.

Question 5 sought to determine if parents would make sacrifices, including family meals, to ensure their children's success in sports and other activities. There was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0.635, p = .541$). Results indicated that most parents were previously unwilling to make such sacrifices.

Question 6 sought to determine if parents believed they personally held responsibility for the discipleship of their children. There was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 1.809, p = .104$). Results indicated that parents were previously aware of this responsibility.

Question 7 asked if parents believed their children should be discipled by church leaders primarily. There was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0.264, p = .798$). Results indicated that parents were previously of the opinion that church leaders were not to be the primary source of discipleship.

Question 8 asked if parents believed their church had helped them develop a plan for spiritual growth for their children. There was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 2.875, p = .018$). This shows that parents believed the course was

adequate in helping them develop a clear discipleship plan for their children.

Question 9 asked how many times the families prayed together each week. There was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0.667, p = .522$). This demonstrated that the course did not improve the frequency of prayers in the home.

Question 10 asked how many times families had eaten a technology-free meal together in the previous week. There was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 3.498, p = .007$). This showed that, throughout the course, families increased the frequency of distraction-free meal times together.

Question 11 asked parents how many times they read or discussed the Bible with their children in the previous month. There was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0.338, p = .743$). This showed that the course did not improve Bible reading times among families.

Question 12 asked parents how many times they discussed spiritual matters during day-to-day activities. There was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 1.627, p = .138$). Results indicated that many parents already discussed such things with their children.

Question 13 asked parents how many times in the previous two months they had engaged in family discipleship. There was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 2.623, p = .028$). This shows that parents increased the frequency of family discipleship times throughout the course.

Question 14 asked how many times parents discussed their children's spiritual development with someone else over the previous two months. There was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0, p = 1$). This indicates that there was little improvement in the frequency of such discussions among the participants.

Question 15 asked parents how many times in the previous year they had witnessed to a non-Christian with their children. There was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 1.964, p = .081$). This indicates that there was little increase in the frequency of evangelism as a family.

Question 16 asked parents how many times in the previous year a church leader had reached out to them to discuss their children’s spiritual development. There was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 3.038, p = .014$). This shows that parents believed the church was more engaged with them regarding their children after the course was completed.

The results from the Family Discipleship Assessment are displayed in figure 1. Clear positive results are visible on several questions, with the right column (post-course survey results) higher than the left column (pre-course survey results). Particularly, questions 1, 8, 13, and 16 show the most positive change. This information is also displayed in table A1 in appendix 4.

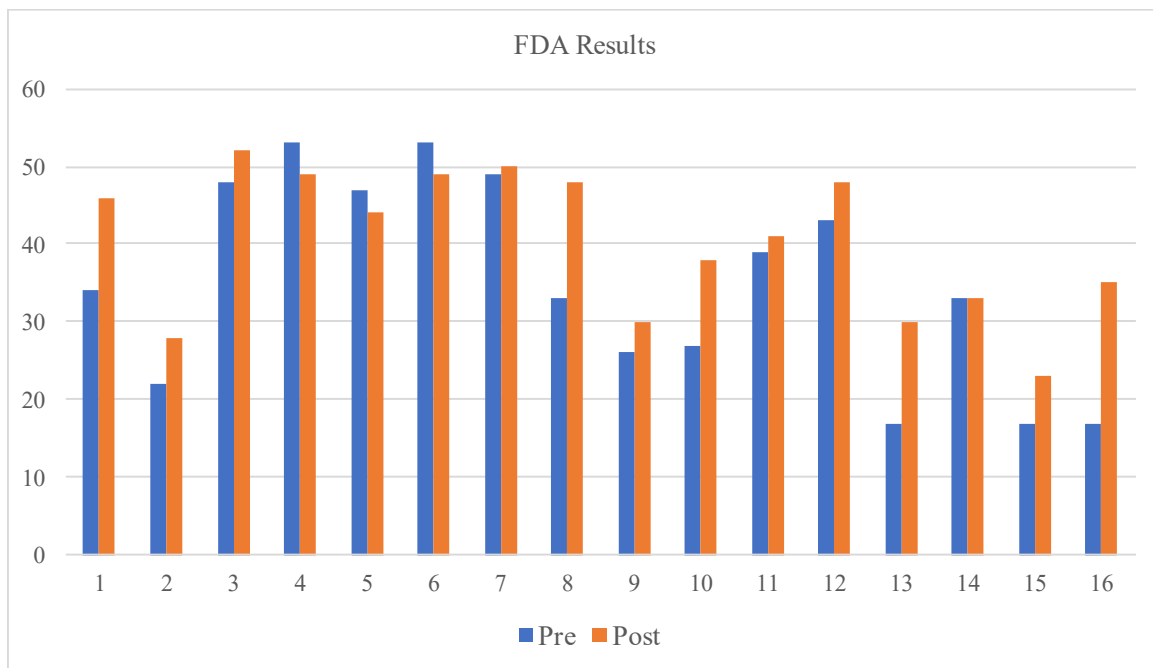


Figure 1. FDA results (per question)

Below are the results of the SFNA for both traditional and non-traditional families. Questions 1-3 were simply for identification and internal analysis and were not included in the results. Survey results are as follows:

Question 4 asked if parents felt guilt regarding their marital decisions and how they affected their children. Among traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = 1.451, p = .206$). Among non-traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(3) = 1, p = .391$). This showed that the course did not decrease guilt felt about parental decisions.

Question 5 asked parents if someone else's decisions had negatively affected their children. Among traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = .933, p = .394$). Results indicated that parents from traditional families did not feel others' decisions had negatively affected their children. Among non-traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(3) = 0, p = 1$). Results indicated that this course did not reduce the feeling that someone else's decisions had negatively affected their children.

Question 6 asked if parents felt adequately equipped to navigate difficult family situations. Among traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = .415, p = .695$). Among non-traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(3) = .225, p = .836$). This shows that the course was inadequate in helping parents with difficult family situations.

Question 7 asked parents if their children knew they were loved by their parents. Among traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = 1, p = .363$). Among non-traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(3) = 1.321, p = .278$). Results indicated that most parents previously believed their children felt loved.

Question 8 asked if parents believed their children had mentors other than their parents. Among traditional parents, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = .542, p = .611$). Among non-traditional families, there was a statistically significant improvement ($t(3) = 4.333, p = .023$). Results indicated that parents of traditional families believed

their children previously had Godly mentors, while parents of non-traditional families felt an increase of Godly mentors for their children throughout the course.

Question 9 asked parents if the church adequately addressed the needs of their families. Among traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = .237, p = .822$). Among non-traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(3) = .293, p = .789$). Results indicated that, in general, parents believed the church did a fair job of addressing the needs of their families

Question 10 asked parents if the church addressed their needs equally with the needs of other families in the church. Among traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = .745, p = .49$). Among non-traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(3) = 0, p = 1$). Results indicated that parents previously felt that the church provided equal treatment to all families.

Question 11 asked if parents felt isolated from other families in the church. Among traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = .591, p = .58$). Among non-traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(3) = 1.127, p = .342$). This shows that there was no significant improvement in feelings of isolation among the participants.

Question 12 asked parents if other members of the church made them and their families feel loved. Among traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = 1.168, p = .296$). Among non-traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(3) = .293, p = .789$). Results indicated that all parents felt loved by their church both before and after the course.

Question 13 asked if parents believed the church should be the primary place for their families to find peace and acceptance. Among traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = .83, p = .444$). Among non-traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(3) = 1, p = .391$). Results indicated that the participants previously believed this to be true.

Question 14 asked if parents believed consistent fellowship with other families would benefit them. Among traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(5) = 0, p = 1$). Among non-traditional families, there was no significant improvement ($t(3) = 1, p = .391$). Results indicated that the participants previously believed this to be true.

The results from the Specific Family Needs Assessment are displayed in figure 2 and figure 3 below. As indicated in figure 2, no questions show significant positive results, and only question 8 in figure 3 shows positive results. This information is also displayed in tables A2 and A3 in appendix 4.

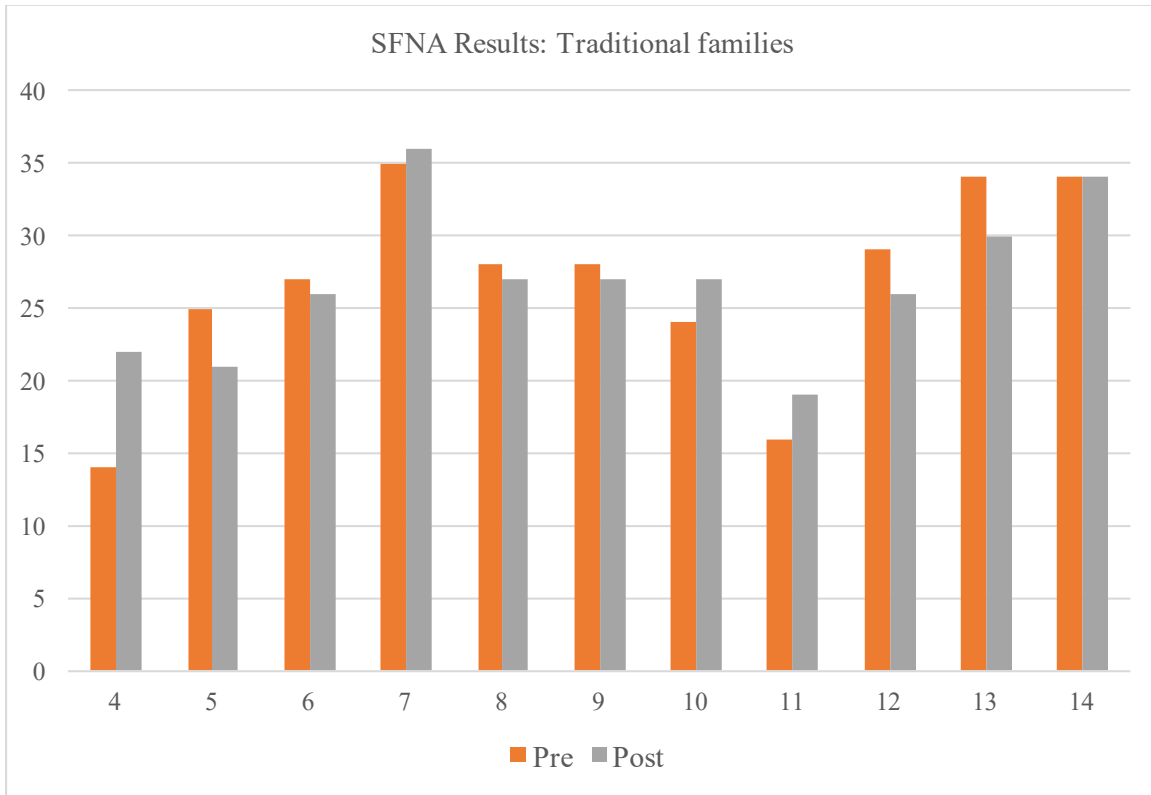


Figure 2. SFNA results: Traditional families (per question)

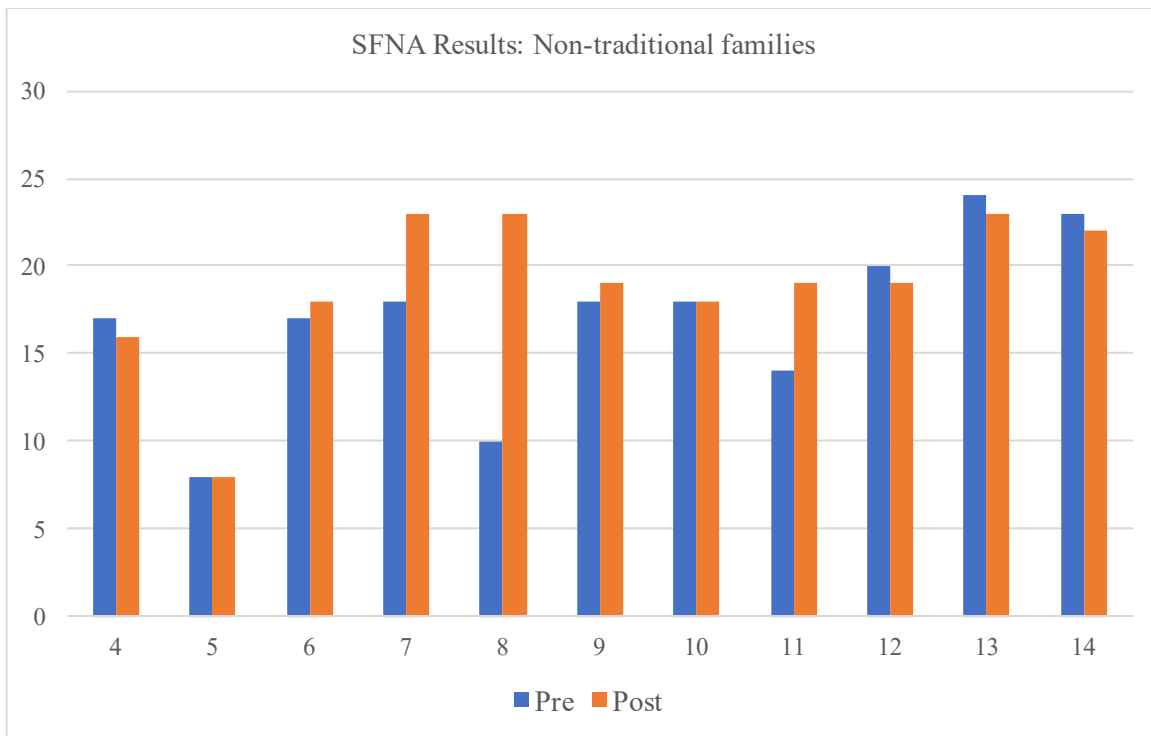


Figure 3. SFNA results: Non-traditional families (per question)

Conclusion

My intent for this project was to see improvement in the family discipleship practices of the participants. As parents learned what it means to disciple their children and were given the tools to do so effectively, both families and the church benefited. The course provided at the church sought to be a catalyst for family discipleship. While general family discipleship practices improved, the specific family needs were not adequately addressed. This reflected that while the course exposed the need for parents to disciple their children and provided resources for them to do so, their specific needs could not be fully met by this course.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

The purpose of this project was to train parents at Fairforest Baptist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina, to disciple their children. The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the methods used to accomplish this goal and whether or not the project was successful in training parents for family discipleship. The chapter contains seven sections. First, the purpose of the project will be evaluated to determine whether or not this training course made a difference in the family discipleship practices of the participants. Second, the goals of the project will be evaluated to determine if they were successfully met. Third, the strengths of this project will be examined. Fourth, the weaknesses of this project will be examined. Fifth, a section will be presented that focuses on what I would do differently were I to complete this project again. Sixth, theological reflections on the project will be presented. Lastly, my own personal reflections on the project will be presented.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

This project intended to improve the family discipleship practices in the homes of the participants through a six-week curriculum taught at the church. Many showed eagerness to participate because they sensed something was lacking in their children's spiritual growth, and a course of this nature was highly appealing. Many wanted more for their children, but did not realize their parental responsibility and did not have the necessary resources to properly disciple their children. Parents were encouraged not to outsource their children's spiritual growth and discipleship, seeking to partner with the church rather than rely on it completely to disciple their children.

Throughout this project, parents were reminded of the biblical commands for parents to disciple their children. They heard the command from Moses in Deuteronomy 6, where parents were commanded as such regarding the Lord's commandments: "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" (Deut 6:7-9). Parents also heard a similar command in Ephesians: "do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). Parents were shown that both the Old Testament and the New Testament include commands to disciple their children, and thus should consider these commands relevant today as well.

This project was born from the desire to see spiritual growth not only in the children and youth of the church, but also in the parents. This project sought to be practical and relevant to their lives, addressing real issues and providing realistic solutions to insufficiencies in their home discipleship. This purpose was accomplished by meeting four goals.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

A project of this scope required measurable indicators to determine its effectiveness. In order to successfully train parents to disciple their children through this six-week course, four goals needed to be met. The four goals of this project will be evaluated below.

Goal 1

The first goal of this project was to assess the current discipleship practices of families at Fairforest Baptist Church. In order to determine the level of home discipleship among the participants, two surveys were administered. The first evaluation was the Family

Discipleship Assessment (FDA).¹ The second evaluation was the Specific Family Needs Assessment (SFNA).² The FDA and the SFNA were administered to ten families. The goal stated that these surveys must be administered to at least ten families. Twelve families were contacted to participate, but only ten actually participated. This goal was to be considered successfully met when at least ten families completed the FDA and SFNA. Since ten families completed both the pre-surveys and post-surveys, goal 1 was successfully completed.

Goal 2

The second goal of this project was to develop a curriculum to equip parents to disciple their children. I determined that a six-week curriculum would be most effective, because it would be enough time to provide sufficient training without requiring an extensive time commitment. The aim was to engage families in conversation regarding family discipleship and to show the Biblical mandate for family discipleship.

The curriculum was developed over the course of three weeks using research from the project. During the second week of development, five of the six sessions were submitted to the expert panel for review. During the third week of development, revisions were made based on feedback from the expert panel and the sixth session was developed and submitted. Each session was evaluated using eight criteria:

1. The content of the curriculum is biblically sound.
2. The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.
3. The purpose of the curriculum is clearly presented.
4. The curriculum sufficiently covers the basics of family discipleship.
5. The curriculum sufficiently addresses family discipleship methodology.
6. The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, case studies, and homework.

¹See appendix 1.

²See appendix 2.

7. The curriculum includes opportunities to practice family discipleship.
8. At the end of the course, participants will be equipped to disciple their children.

The evaluation rubric for each session was as follows: 1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary. There were no insufficient responses (0 percent), 9 requires attention responses (6.3 percent), 68 sufficient responses (47.2 percent), and 67 exemplary responses (46.5 percent). Suggestions from the expert panel were considered with great care and included as much as possible. Before proceeding with the course, I received verification from the expert panel based on any edits made during this process. This goal was considered successfully met because a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level.³

Goal 3

The third goal of this project was to equip parents at Fairforest Baptist Church to disciple their children in the home. This was accomplished through a six-week training course offered at the church on Sunday afternoons. The time was chosen because Fairforest Baptist Church does not have regular Sunday evening activities, and an afternoon session seemed more feasible to the parents who wished to be involved. The original intent of the timing was also to allow people from other churches to take part, although this did not materialize. In these meetings, I taught from the developed curriculum, facilitated discussions, and answered any questions that arose. Families were asked to attend or watch a video recording of each session.

The measurement used to determine the success or failure of this goal was a comparison of the pre- and post-course scores, seeing if there was any positive significant difference. A paired *t*-test was applied to the pre- and post-course scores to determine if there was a difference. The results of the FDA indicated there was a positive significant difference. Overall, the FDA made a statistically significant difference ($t(9) = 5.26, p =$

³See table in appendix 5.

.0003). Questions 1, 2, 8, 10, 13, and 16 showed positive significant difference. Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 15 showed no significant difference, although responses to questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 12 indicated that the desired response was previously held by most participants.

Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the FDA sought to determine the participants level of commitment to family discipleship and their desire to discuss the Bible and spiritual matters with their children. For question 1, there was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 3.343, p = .009$). This demonstrates that there was an overall increase in the prioritization of family discipleship times during the course. For question 2, there was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 2.475, p = .035$). This demonstrated that parents began to prioritize family discipleship throughout the course. For question 3, there was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 1.309, p = .223$), with survey results indicating that parents already knew that church should not be the primary source of Bible teaching for their children. For question 4, there was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0.668, p = .509$), with survey results indicating that parents were previously willing to answer Biblical and theological questions from their children. In these areas, the course demonstrated the importance of family discipleship, encouraged parents to prioritize it, and challenged the idea that the church should be the primary source of discipleship. Parents were encouraged with practical means to take part in family discipleship, including providing resources.

Questions 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the FDA discussed the responsibility of both church leaders and parents as it concerns discipleship of children and youth. For question 5, there was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0.635, p = .541$), with results indicating that most parents were previously unwilling to sacrifice family meals in favor of sports or other activities. For question 6, there was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 1.809, p = .104$). Results indicated that parents were previously aware of this responsibility to discipleship their children. For question 7, there was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0.264, p =$

.798), with results indicating that parents were previously of the opinion that church leaders were not to be the primary source of discipleship. For question 8, there was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 2.875, p = .018$), indicating that the course was adequate in helping parents develop a clear discipleship plan for their children. Churches must provide parents with a plan, showing that discipleship happens best when church and home partner together.

Questions 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 sought to determine the frequency of certain family discipleship practices, including meal times, prayer, Bible reading, spiritual discussions, and family discipleship times. For question 9, there was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0.667, p = .522$), indicating that the course did not improve the frequency of prayers in the home. For question 10, there was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 3.498, p = .007$), showing that families increased the frequency of distraction-free meal times together throughout the course. For question 11, there was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0.338, p = .743$), showing that the course did not improve Bible reading times among families. For question 12, there was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 1.627, p = .138$), with results indicating that many parents already discussed spiritual matters with their children. For question 13, there was a statistically significant improvement ($t(9) = 2.623, p = .028$), showing that parents increased the frequency of family discipleship times throughout the course.

Questions 14, 15, and 16 of the FDA sought to determine the frequency of more long-term family discipleship practices, including discussion of spiritual development with other parents, family outreach and evangelism, and church involvement in discipleship. For question 14, there was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 0, p = 1$), indicating that there was little increase among participants in the frequency of discussions regarding their children's spiritual development. For question 15, there was no significant improvement ($t(9) = 1.964, p = .081$), indicating little increase in the frequency of family outreach and evangelism among participants. For question 16, there was a statistically

significant improvement ($t(9) = 3.038, p = .014$), showing that parents believed the church was more engaged with them regarding their children after the course was completed.

Overall, the results of the t -test indicated a positive significant difference. Because this goal would be considered successfully met with such positive results from the pre- and post-course survey results, this goal was indeed successfully met. This project made a statistically significant difference in the family discipleship practices among participants and succeeded in equipping parents to disciple their children.

Goal 4

The fourth goal of this project was to include curriculum for special family circumstances in order to address specific issues. This goal was measured by administering the SFNA as a pre- and post-course survey and separating the results by traditional and non-traditional families. This family status was determined using questions 1-3 on the SFNA, which sought demographic information as well as short answers to open ended questions. The responses to these questions were for internal use only and were not included in the results.

The measurement used to determine the success or failure of this goal was the SFNA. The overall results of the SFNA indicated that, among traditional families, there was no statistically significant difference ($t(5) = 2.33, p = .9665$) and among non-traditional families, there was no statistically significant difference ($t(3) = .09, p = .5336$). Among traditional families, no answers yielded positive results. Among non-traditional families, only question 8 yielded positive results. Responses to questions 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 14 indicated that the desired response was previously held by most participants.

Questions 4 and 5 of the SFNA sought to determine how guilt over decisions had affected the participants' children. For question 4, there was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = 1.451, p = .206$) and no significant improvement among non-traditional families ($t(3) = 1, p = .391$), indicating that the course did not decrease guilt felt about personal parental decisions. For question 5, there

was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = .933, p = .394$) and no significant improvement among non-traditional families ($t(3) = 0, p = 1$). Results indicated that parents from traditional families did not feel others' decisions had negatively affected their children, while parents from non-traditional families felt that this course did not reduce the feeling that someone else's decisions had negatively affected their children.

Questions 6, 7, and 8 of the SFNA asked about potentially difficult family situations. For question 6, there was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = .415, p = .695$) and no significant improvement among non-traditional families ($t(3) = .225, p = .836$), showing that the course was inadequate in helping parents with difficult family situations. For question 7, there was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = 1, p = .363$) and no significant improvement among non-traditional families ($t(3) = 1.321, p = .278$). Results indicated that most parents believed their children felt loved by them both before and after the course. For question 8, there was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = .542, p = .611$), indicating that parents of traditional families believed their children had Godly mentors both before and after the course. However, among non-traditional families, there was a statistically significant improvement ($t(3) = 4.333, p = .023$), showing that these parents felt an increase of Godly mentors for their children throughout the course.

Questions 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 sought to determine parents' feelings regarding difficult family situations as they relate to the church. For question 9, there was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = .237, p = .822$) and no significant improvement among non-traditional families ($t(3) = .293, p = .789$) with results indicating that parents believed the church did a fair job of addressing the needs of their families both before and after the course. For question 10, there was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = .745, p = .49$) and no significant improvement among non-traditional families ($t(3) = 0, p = 1$). Results indicated that parents felt that the church provided equal treatment to all families both before and after

the course. For question 11, there was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = .591, p = .58$) and no significant improvement among non-traditional families ($t(3) = 1.127, p = .342$), indicating that there was no significant improvement in feelings of isolation among the participants. For question 12, there was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = 1.168, p = .296$) and no significant improvement among non-traditional families ($t(3) = .293, p = .789$) with results indicating that all parents felt loved by their church both before and after the course. For question 13, there was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = .83, p = .444$) and no significant improvement among non-traditional families ($t(3) = 1, p = .391$). Results indicated that the participants previously believed the church should be the primary place for their families to find peace and acceptance. For question 14, there was no significant improvement among traditional families ($t(5) = 0, p = 1$) and no significant improvement among non-traditional families ($t(3) = 1, p = .391$) with results indicating that all parents felt they would benefit from consistent fellowship with other believers both before and after the course.

This goal would be considered successfully met when curriculum was included to address issues faced by non-traditional families. The goal could be considered successfully met because the curriculum addressed those issues. However, since the results of the SFNA seem to show very little positive significant difference, this curriculum was not adequate in helping families address specific issues. Therefore, this goal cannot be considered successfully met since families did not feel better equipped to handle non-traditional family circumstances after the course.

Strengths of the Project

This project had many strengths throughout the six-week course and the four weeks of personal attention given to participants. First, it was shown (through the pre- and post-course surveys) that families increased both general family discipleship practices and family worship times in their homes throughout the course of the project. The initial

session was designed to show parents the need for family discipleship, and survey results indicated that parents began to not only understand that need, but also began to do something about it. This project provided parents with both a presentation of the importance of family discipleship and the tools necessary to help them begin discipling their children in their homes.

Secondly, and in line with the previous paragraph, parents began to prioritize family discipleship in their weekly schedules. This was important because most parents felt too busy to engage their children in family discipleship before the course. Having shown the need and being given the tools, parents moved family discipleship up their priority lists. Without this commitment, it would be difficult for the course's content to continue its effectiveness following the course. Conversations following the course have proven the course's continued positive effect.

Thirdly, the participants felt, more than before, that the church had truly helped them develop a discipleship plan for their children. This plan was presented throughout the course, focusing on the partnership between parents and the church. The positive effect this course had on families is of utmost importance, but the positive effect on the church cannot be ignored or downplayed. As parents attended this course, they gained an understanding of the church's role in training them to disciple their children and believed the church had given them practical means to do so.

Fourth, single parents and other non-traditional families felt as though their children had more mentors and adults in the church that cared about them following the course. During many of the discussions during sessions, parents confided in one another regarding their children. Single parents especially revealed their struggles to lead their children. In all cases, the participating parents pledged their support for each other. Out of this course, a men's camping trip was planned with the intentional goal to mentor the young men of the church. Parents from traditional families responded extremely positively to the call to help mentor children of single parents.

Lastly, the church provided resources for parents to disciple their children. During the course, the church agreed to purchase a copy of *Family Worship* by Don Whitney for each participating family. Additionally, I began listing family discipleship resources on my personal website and provided the link to the participants.⁴ These resources included the previously mentioned book by Don Whitney, *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family* by Paul David Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Tedd Tripp, *Faith Conversations for Families* by Jim Burns, and a link to family discipleship resources created by Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, KY. These resources were provided to meet the realized need that arose from the first session of this course. Without providing these resources, the church would not succeed in equipping parents to disciple their children. The continued availability of these resources provides the practical means to meet the Biblical mandate for parents to disciple their children.

Weaknesses of the Project

Inevitably, this project had many weaknesses as well. Although the project had many strengths, it fell short in several key areas. First, and most notably, there was little to no significant positive change in the specific family needs of non-traditional families. As noted above, single parents and other parents from non-traditional families did feel their children had more mentors and adults that cared about them, but this was the full extent of the positive change in the needs of non-traditional families seen throughout this course. Survey results indicated several areas where desired improvement was not shown. Parents did not feel less guilt regarding their decisions and how they affected their children and continued to feel as though other people's decisions had negatively affected their children; it was hoped that this course would provide parents with a sense of peace in these areas. Additionally, the course did not help parents feel more confident to

⁴Kevin Clark Jones, accessed July 1, 2017, www.kevinclarkjones.com.

navigate difficult family situations, nor did it reduce their feelings of isolation from other parents and church members. These and other shortcomings did not meet the desired outcomes of this project, although it should be considered that a six-week course may not be adequate to address these issues.

Second, this course in itself cannot create a culture of family-equipping ministry. Family discipleship training cannot simply be relegated to a program or temporary course, but rather must inundate the entire culture of a church.⁵ While the intent of this course was overall successful, it cannot be the only means of family discipleship training. The church must continue to teach these things, promote family discipleship, and celebrate the role of parents in the lives of their children.

Third, the amount of time parents spent praying and reading the Bible with their children did not increase. While family discipleship practices increased in general, results seemed to indicate that prayer and Bible study were designating to family discipleship times only and were not continuous throughout the daily lives of participants. While the general increase in family discipleship practices showed a positive change, I had hoped that parents would make prayer a part of their daily lives with their children.

Last, this course failed to focus on the importance of evangelism and service as a family. Results showed little increase from all families in this area. Family ministry must focus not only on those who are in the church, but those who are outside the church and need the grace of Jesus in their families.⁶ This course did very little to highlight this importance and encourage families to reach out to others.

⁵Timothy P. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 26.

⁶Ibid., 168-69.

Recommended Changes

Having completed this project from preparation, to teaching, to evaluation, there are several ways I would do things differently given the chance to complete this project again. First, I would provide a way for both participants and the expert panel to complete surveys and evaluations online. Much of the difficulty I had in retrieving surveys was due to the fact that paper copies were the only option to complete the requested documents. Additionally, an online means of response collection would provide a simpler way to retain and analyze results.

Second, I would rewrite the SFNA, perhaps providing separate survey questions for traditional and non-traditional families. The survey also included items that were not directly addressed by the course; therefore, I would rewrite the survey based on the course content. I would also conduct additional interviews with non-traditional families to determine their greatest needs and consider their responses in the creation of the SFNA. In general, the SFNA showed the need to minister to non-traditional families and exposed the needs they have, but did very little to provide data that would help improve their situations. Similarly, true improvement would likely only come from an ongoing ministry to single parents. I would provide a plan to implement such a ministry should I do this project again.

Third, I would create a plan to revisit the truths of family-equipping ministry every few months to cultivate a culture of family discipleship. I would provide consistent resources to remind parents of the importance of family discipleship. This recognizes that a six-week course is not adequate to shift the identity of a church to family-equipping.

Fourth, I would assign participants more directed home activities related to the course. Aside from providing a book to all participants, nothing was sent home for additional study. Given another chance, I would give participants home study guides, sample family discipleship plans, and other materials. For example, after the session where I exhibited tools for family discipleship, I would send a sample lesson home, ask participants to do the lesson with their families before the next session, and ask for a

report. This would increase discussion among the participants as well as allow them to share successes and struggles involving family discipleship. Additionally, weekly emails with summaries and reminders would increase retention. While I did provide a synopsis of one session on my website, this was the only time I provided such a resource.

Fifth, I would include the children in at least half of one session. Toward the end of the course, I would ask parents to invite their children and present material intended for both parents and their children. I would also have parents lead their children in a short devotion during this session and take time afterward to discuss the experience. The goal of this would be to increase participation in family discipleship as children see the need to be disciplined.

Last, I would make a greater effort to provide an evangelistic aspect to this course. People and families need Jesus, and at least one session could be added to which participants within the church could invite their unchurched friends. The goal in this area would be (as noted above) to give greater emphasis to evangelism and missions as a family, culminating in a final course in which participants invite others to hear what they have learned and how God can be a part of their families.

Theological Reflections

Through this project, I was given the opportunity to study God's word at a deep level, especially as it relates to the spiritual relationship between parents and children. Parents were encouraged to see their children not only as gifts for this life, but as potential or actual brothers and sisters in Christ. The first theological reflection is the importance of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In this passage, Moses commands the Israelites to love the Lord fully, and to teach God's truths to their children. Moses tells them, "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” (Duet 6:4-9). This project rests on this truth. The sessions created for this training consistently found their foundations in this passage, as I emphasized the need to talk about spiritual matters not just at church or even at designated family worship times, but at every possible opportunity. The commands of God must be the foundation of every household, and thus the Word of God was the foundation of this project.

The second theological reflection from this project related to the importance of the church in the life of the believer. Paul writes in Ephesians: “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph 4:11-13). Pastors and church leaders must equip the people to do the work of ministry, challenging the idea that only ministers can teach and disciple. Parents have a responsibility to teach their children the commands of God, and the church has a responsibility to train them to do so. I realized the importance of the church more than ever throughout this project, but not just as a place to worship God and serve each other, but as a place for parents and families to be equipped and encouraged to seek God together.

The third theological reflection from this project relates to single parents and families in crisis. I focused this project on all families, but took special interest in the single parents in my current ministry. The theological basis for this interest came from James 1:27, in which James states that pure and undefiled religion is “to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.” Single parents and their children are either widows and orphans literally, or have been effectively orphaned and widowed through divorce and abandonment; I have witnessed the latter firsthand, as many families in my current ministry fall into this category. The church must care for these, as we are all “ex-orphans

adopted by God’s grace.”⁷ The need for continuous care for widows and orphans in the church was further highlighted by the fact that this project did little to assuage the affliction they face. As I reflect on this project, I ask myself this question: What does it truly mean to visit the orphan and widow in their affliction? It is clear that a six-week course is not adequate. Continuous, intentional care must be given to them. After all, if a family-equipping ministry at a church “fails to reach the spiritual orphans all around us, such ministry is not family ministry at all.”⁸

The final theological reflection from this project relates to the consistency of God throughout his Word. God gave the command for parents to teach their children in Deuteronomy, well before the nation of Israel entered the promised land. When Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, he quoted Deuteronomy 6, saying “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 22:37-40). Paul further writes about the need for parents to bring up their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). God’s truth remains the same because God never changes. This truth can be found all throughout scripture.

Personal Reflections

In addition to all that I have learned about God, the church, the Bible, and families throughout this project, I have also made many personal realizations. First, I feel incredibly grateful that God allowed me to complete a doctoral program. When I graduated with my master’s degree, I still did not feel as though I had the knowledge I desired. I started the process of seeking my next educational steps very soon after graduating, and over the course of two years I considered many options. After finally settling on this

⁷Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 168.

⁸Ibid., 169.

program, I knew it would be a challenge. However, God made it abundantly clear that I had made the right decision by providing financially as well as providing direction from friends and mentors. I now feel abundantly prepared to accomplish the work of youth and family ministry.

Second, I have realized that this is not the end of my learning experience. Throughout this program and this project, I recognized my need to constantly learn and grow. Continuous learning will prevent me from being complacent in ministry and satisfied with the status quo. Whether I get additional degrees in the future or not, I want to be a lifelong learner.

Third, my overall goal has remained generally the same throughout this program. When I entered this program and began this project, my personal goal was to be a better youth pastor. This is still my desire today. Many have asked me if I now desire to lead a church as a senior pastor. However, this is not a goal at this time. My passion continues to be for students. The only difference is that I now also have a passion for families and the partnership between church and home. I hope that, through what I have learned, I can continue to improve as a youth pastor and be even more effective at teaching students to follow Christ for their entire lives.

Fourth, I am proud of the families with which I spoke that truly began to take family discipleship seriously. One father told me that he has made faith talks a regular part of his family's schedule and still updates me on them from time to time. Another parent, a single mother, told me that her children have committed to family discipleship and feels that the church has given her tools for her family to be successful. These success stories are why I completed this project. For me, the ultimate goal was to make a difference in people's lives.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, this project has given me a vision for my own family. I am so thankful that I participated in this program as I was just starting to have children. As I taught this class, I began to feel the gravity of what I was teaching. I

knew that my adherence to the biblical mandate for parents to disciple their children not only had implications for my family, but also could function as an example for all who I serve in ministry. As my son grows and as my wife and I have more children, I want to always prioritize family discipleship and worship. After the course, one participant told me he wished I had taught this course before he had kids and now felt it was too late to make a difference. While God can surely redeem that participant's situation, especially in light of his realization, I took his comment as a cautionary tale. I never want to have any regrets in this area.

Conclusion

I had the unique opportunity to engage in this project at the onset of my first full-time ministry position. I also became a father while completing this project. The timing of this project as it relates to both is not lost on me. Initiating a study of family-equipping ministry has affected me as a minister, as a husband, as a father, and as a follower of Christ. It has allowed me to see that God gave me the responsibility for the spiritual development of my own family and the responsibility to equip the parents under my care to do the same. However, family-equipping must be something I am, not just something I teach. My own acceptance of what this project teaches has many weighty implications not just for my family, but for any family to which I minister.

As I continue in ministry for many years to come, I pray that these truths are never forgotten. I hope to continue honing these skills personally and improving the manner in which I teach them to others. Leading by example, I hope to see every parent I teach come to accept these truths and lead their children in faith as commanded by God. Most importantly, I hope to leave a lasting spiritual legacy by always keeping Jesus first and foremost. I commit myself to always remember the centrality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all I do, say, and teach.

APPENDIX 1
FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP ASSESSMENT

The following instrument is the Family Discipleship Assessment (FDA). A general survey, written by Timothy Paul Jones, was given.¹ This survey consists of sixteen questions on a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose was to assess each participant's perception and practice of family discipleship.

¹FDA survey copied from Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 215-18. Used by permission.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP ASSESSMENT

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess current family discipleship practices. This research is being conducted by Kevin Jones for purposes of assessment for Kevin Jones' doctoral project at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will describe current family discipleship practices. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer. The following questions will ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree

D = disagree

DS = disagree somewhat

AS = agree somewhat

A = agree

SA = strongly agree

- | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. | I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. | I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. | The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. | When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. | I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities— even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

- | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 6. | Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. | Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. | My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer. The following questions will ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

0 = never

1 = once

2 = a couple of times

3-4 = three or four times

5-6 = five or six times

7+ = seven or more time

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|-----|-----|----|
| 9. | Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7+ |
| 10. | How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7+ |
| 11. | How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7+ |
| 12. | How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7+ |
| 13. | How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7+ |

14.	How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+
15.	How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+
16.	How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+

APPENDIX 2

SPECIFIC FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The following instrument is the Specific Family Needs Assessment (SFNA). This assessment was given to all families to address issues related to family situations, including single-parenthood, children from previous marriages, and other non-traditional¹ family models. The assessment consists of three general short answer questions followed by eleven questions on a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose was to assess each participant's family model and determine specific needs and challenges.

¹See the "Definitions" section in chap. 1.

SPECIFIC FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your specific family needs. This research is being conducted by Kevin Jones for purposes of assessment for Kevin Jones' doctoral project at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will describe current family situation. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

General Questions:

1. How would you describe your family situation? (Please circle one)
 - a. Traditional (Mother and Father present)
 - b. Single-parent
 - c. Traditional with children from previous marriages
 - d. Other _____

2. In a few words, how would your children describe your family situation?

3. If you could do anything for your children emotionally and/or spiritually, what would you do?

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer. Please skip questions that are not applicable to you. The following questions will ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree
D = disagree
DS = disagree somewhat
AS = agree somewhat
A = agree
SA = strongly agree

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 4. I feel guilt that my decisions about marriage and family have negatively affected my children. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. Someone else's decisions (former marriage partner, etc.) have negatively affected my children. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

6.	I feel adequately equipped to navigate difficult family situations.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7.	My children know they are loved by their parent(s).	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	My children have Godly mentors in addition to their parent(s).	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	My church adequately addresses the needs of my family.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	My church addresses my family's situation equally with other family situations.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	I feel isolated from other families in my church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	The members of my church make me and my family feel loved.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	The church should be a primary place for families like mine to find peace and acceptance.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	My family would greatly benefit from consistent, intentional fellowship with other families in my church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 3

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The family discipleship curriculum evaluation (FDCE) was sent to an expert panel consisting of the lead pastor of FBC, pastors at partner churches (with expertise in family ministry), and a member of the FBC lay leadership team. This panel evaluated the curriculum for biblical adherence, theological accuracy, and applicable practicality.

Name of evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Lesson number: _____

1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Adherence					
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
Scope					
The purpose of the curriculum is clearly presented.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the basics of family discipleship.					
Methodology					
The curriculum sufficiently addresses family discipleship methodology.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, case studies, and homework.					
Practicality					
The curriculum includes opportunities to practice family discipleship.					
At the end of the course, participants will be equipped to disciple their children.					

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

APPENDIX 4

RESULTS FROM PRE- AND POST-SURVEYS

Table A1. Results from FDA pre- and post-surveys

Question	Degrees of Freedom	t-value	p-value
1	9	3.343	0.009
2	9	2.475	0.035
3	9	1.309	0.223
4	9	0.688	0.509
5	9	0.635	0.541
6	9	1.809	0.104
7	9	0.264	0.798
8	9	2.875	0.018
9	9	0.667	0.522
10	9	3.498	0.007
11	9	0.338	0.743
12	9	1.627	0.138
13	9	2.623	0.028
14	9	0	1
15	9	1.964	0.081
16	9	3.038	0.014

Table A2. Results from SFNA pre- and post- surveys from traditional families

Question	Degrees of Freedom	t-value	p-value
4	5	1.451	0.206
5	5	0.933	0.394
6	5	0.415	0.695
7	5	1	0.363
8	5	0.542	0.611
9	5	0.237	0.822
10	5	0.745	0.49
11	5	0.591	0.58
12	5	1.168	0.296
13	5	0.83	0.444
14	5	0	1

Table A3. Results from SFNA pre- and post- surveys from non-traditional families

Question	Degrees of Freedom	t-value	p-value
4	3	1	0.391
5	3	0	1
6	3	0.225	0.836
7	3	1.321	0.278
8	3	4.333	0.023
9	3	0.293	0.789
10	3	0	1
11	3	1.127	0.342
12	3	0.293	0.789
13	3	1	0.391
14	3	1	0.391

APPENDIX 5

EXPERT PANEL CURRICULUM EVALUATIONS

Table A4. Expert panel curriculum evaluations

Session	Feedback Question	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	Avg.
1	1	4	4	3	3.667
	2	4	4	3	3.667
	3	4	3	3	3.333
	4	4	3	3	3.333
	5	4	3	3	3.333
	6	4	2	3	3
	7	4	2	3	3
	8	4	3	3	3.333
2	1	4	4	3	3.667
	2	4	4	3	3.667
	3	4	3	3	3.333
	4	4	3	3	3.333
	5	4	2	3	3
	6	3	2	3	2.667
	7	4	3	3	3.333
	8	4	3	3	3.333
3	1	4	4	4	4
	2	4	4	4	4
	3	3	4	3	3.333
	4	4	4	3	3.667
	5	3	4	4	3.667
	6	3	2	3	2.667
	7	4	3	3	3.333
	8	4	4	3	3.667

Table A4 continued

4	1	4	4	3	3.667
	2	4	4	3	3.667
	3	4	4	3	3.667
	4	4	3	3	3.333
	5	3	3	4	3.333
	6	4	3	4	3.667
	7	4	3	4	3.667
	8	4	3	4	3.667
5	1	4	4	3	3.667
	2	4	4	3	3.667
	3	4	4	3	3.667
	4	4	3	3	3.333
	5	4	2	2	2.667
	6	3	2	2	2.333
	7	4	3	3	3.333
	8	4	3	3	3.333
6	1	4	4	3	3.667
	2	4	4	3	3.667
	3	4	4	3	3.667
	4	4	3	3	3.333
	5	4	3	3	3.333
	6	3	3	3	3
	7	4	3	3	3.333
	8	4	3	3	3.333
					% of each
Frequency of responses	Needs attention	0	7	2	6.3%
	Sufficient	7	22	39	47.2%
	Exemplary	41	19	7	46.5%

APPENDIX 6

SIX-WEEK CURRICULUM ON FAMILY WORSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP

The following lessons was taught once a week at Fairforest Baptist Church from October 2, 2016, through November 6, 2016.

Session 1: Why Family Discipleship?

- 1) Outsourcing
 - a) A Task Too Important to Leave to the Church Alone
 - i) No one else has the title of your child's mother and father. You are qualified to disciple your children simply because of who you are.¹
 - ii) While the church has not directly taken the primary role of discipleship from parents, it has created an atmosphere that does not encourage the parental role in their children's spiritual lives. In general, the church has sent the message to parents that discipleship is the responsibility of "trained professionals."²
 - iii) Except for homeschool families, academic training has been outsourced to schools. Athletic training is outsourced to coaches. Musical training is often outsourced to private teachers. Because of this cultural mentality, we outsource discipleship to the church. But the church cannot fully disciple your child in 1-2 hours per week.
 - iv) You must begin to see your children as "potential or actual brothers and sisters in Christ."³
 - b) Terms
 - i) Family discipleship
 - ii) Family worship – also called "Faith talks"
 - iii) Family ministry – a ministry of the church
 - iv) These will be expanded on in later sessions

¹Timothy Paul Jones, "The Task Too Significant to Hire Someone Else To Do," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 15-16.

²Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 83; Jones, "The Task Too Significant to Hire Someone Else To Do," 17.

³Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 71.

- c) Biblical basis: Deuteronomy 6 – Parents, not religious leaders, were given the command that children hear and receive the Word of God
- i) The Shema: “Hear, O Israel” – The Shema was often recited by Jews in daily prayer along with Deuteronomy 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41.⁴
 - ii) What were the people of God to hear?
“The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deut 6:4-5)
 - iii) In Matthew 22, Jesus called this the Greatest Commandment.⁵
 - iv) Deut. 6:6 - God’s commands were to be committed to memory, represented by the phrase “on your heart.”⁶ Note: this command and following commands were not given solely to religious leaders, but to everyone. Christopher Wright, in his Deuteronomy commentary, notes that the law was not just for the elite, such as kings or priests, but was accessible to all.⁷
 - v) The priests taught the word of God just as pastors do today, but this was never meant to be the full extent of biblical teaching.⁸ The commands of God were not to be taught solely by the leaders of Israel, but also by parents who are charged to “teach them diligently to your children.” (Deut 6:7)

⁴J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (London: Inter-Varsity, 1974), 121.

⁵James M. Hamilton Jr., “That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 36.

⁶Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 167.

⁷Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary Old Testament, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 100.

⁸Ibid.

- vi) The author of Deuteronomy further commands this teaching of children by telling parents to “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.” (Deut 6:7)
 - vii) Peter Craigie said this regarding this passage: “The commandments were to be the subject of conversation both inside and outside the home, from the beginning to the end of the day. In summary, the commandments were to permeate every sphere of the life of man.”⁹
 - viii) “Every household was to be marked by the words of God as a reflection of the inward reality that Israel is devoted to Yahweh.”¹⁰ – James Hamilton Jr.
 - d) Just as Israel, the people of God, were to do this, we the people of God must make our households the primary reflector of God’s glory on Earth.
 - e) The goal of this course is to show the need for family discipleship and a family-equipping ministry in the church, and to provide practical methods for each.
- 2) The Rise of Youth Ministry
- a) How did we get here? Why are our churches split up into age-separated ministries?
 - i) “By segmenting the generations, churches didn’t have to directly deal with the emerging generation gap. Youth had their own activities for themselves and their peers, separate from other generations.”¹¹
 - b) Too often, youth ministries in churches have been places to send students to keep them entertained and out of trouble until they are adults.¹²

⁹Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 170.

¹⁰Hamilton, “That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord,” 38.

¹¹Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 125.

¹²*Ibid.*, 54.

- c) Nothing is inherently wrong with youth ministries, or any age-specific ministries, but they have become so standard that there is very little inter-generational interaction.¹³
- d) The Rise of the Teenager- 4 factors¹⁴
 - i) Horace Mann presses for the practice of compulsory public education- everyone would be forced to go to the same kind of schools. “Education is the great equalizer of humanity.”
 - ii) The Supreme court allows for tax dollars to be used for secondary schools.
 - iii) Great Depression- before this secondary education was largely voluntary, but a movement came to move children out of the workforce to make room for adults, so high school became compulsory in many urban areas. Teenagers who at one time had been working now must go to school; this separated teenage years to be preparation for adulthood.
 - iv) Economic boom after WWII- many people did not want their children to endure hardship. The economic boom allowed parents to hand teenagers spending money, giving rise to a specific new age group that could leverage the economy. Age focused marketing directed at teenagers emerged.
 - v) A generation gap with a new culture was created as teenagers were separated from the adult world for much of their waking hours

3) Church and the Industrial Revolution¹⁵

¹³Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 126.

¹⁴Information in this section based on Timothy Paul Jones, class notes 80823—*Models of Student and Family Ministry*, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, July 12, 2016.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

- a) For most of human history, human production and society took place in the home, whether farming or cottage businesses. Food and goods were produced in household industries in which families worked together.
- b) Factories emerged as a means to produce goods cheaply and efficiently. Originally, families went together to the factory.
- c) By 1788, two thirds of cotton mill workers were children.
- d) In 1802, English parliament set a limit of child labor to 72 hours per week.
- e) Eventually, just the father went. As the middle class emerges, the movement was to raise wages so that the whole family doesn't have to go to the factory.
- f) Journalist Robert Raikes went into prisons and found that most inmates grew up in the streets, never learned a skill or trade, and had turned to alcohol and drugs. Asks "what can we do to keep them out of prison?" and promotes Sunday school to teach ethics and morals as well as reading.
- g) Industry and factories became the norm, and many aspects of cultural were influenced by factory models, the church included.
- h) As society moved to factories and thus to cities, different social societies arose, including societies of Christian young people.
- i) Youth were leading young people's societies themselves and had to report what they were doing in meetings once a month to the elders of the church.
- j) The move into the cities and the economic growth affected churches and created a culture from which Christian parents wished to protect their children.¹⁶
- k) Before compulsory high schools, youth as young as fifteen were engaging in business, considering Sunday school and church services childish compared to

¹⁶Mark Senter, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, Youth, Family, and Culture Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 153.

other activities in which they wished to be involved.¹⁷ The societies that formed within churches addressed this “youth problem” and provided young people with opportunities for accountability and leadership.¹⁸

- l) Into the mid-twentieth century, societies became more popular than church activities, disengaging youth from the church.¹⁹ Sunday evening youth fellowships emerged in an attempt to tie together church programs and youth societies, a model which changed the way churches sought to reach youth.²⁰
 - m) Youth societies gave rise not only to age-separated ministries within the church, but also to specialized pastors. Specialized children and youth ministries arose as a response to cultural changes. Specialization within the church arose from an “efficiency model” that believed you professionalize everything; however, specializing and professionalizing church ministries has taken discipleship out of the hands of families.
 - n) Think about how churches are set up now: they are run like a factory. You start in the nursery and you can move all the way through until they push you out into the cemetery out back!
 - o) This age separation ministry model is responsible for the church’s programmatic emphasis and it has its roots in the societal changes of the industrial revolution!
 - p) The current common model rarely takes family discipleship into account.
- 4) What needs to Change?
- a) We must take responsibility to disciple our children

¹⁷Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 155.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 155-57.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 190.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 198.

b) We must partner with our churches

c) We must take part in multi-generational Christian life

If you're a church leader, your purpose is not to equip parents to have exceptional parenting skills . . . It is important to help parents understand that their role is not to impress their children or anyone else with their ability to parent. Their role is to impress on their children the love and character of God.²¹ –Reggie Joyner

²¹Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 48.

Session 2: What Is Family Discipleship and Worship?

- 1) So, It's Not the Church's Job?
 - a) The church has a vital role in the discipleship of all believers, but age-separated ministries, when completely closed off from each other, hurt children and students most of all.
 - b) "Although the church may be faithful and effective designing ministries for children and youth, it cannot and should not be regarded as a replacement for parents as the primary spiritual influencers and navigators in their child's life."²² – John Ellis Steen
 - c) The identity of the church today is generally rooted in the sum of all its separate programs rather than the church body as a whole.²³
 - d) The church's role must move toward a family-equipping ministry model. Family-equipping churches do not completely reject age-separated ministries, but restructure their ministries to so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable for their children's discipleship.²⁴
- 2) Some definitions
 - a) Family discipleship – a general term used for all that encompasses making disciples of your children
 - b) Family worship – a means of family discipleship; usually, a weekly time of prayer and Bible study as a family- "Faith talks"
 - c) Family ministry – a ministry of the church; in this study, this will mean a family-equipping ministry that trains parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their

²²John Ellis Steen, "Family, a Context for Discipleship," in *Practical Family Ministry*, ed. Timothy P. Jones and John David Trentham (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 41.

²³Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 127.

²⁴Jay Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry: Church and Home as Cochampions," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 144.

children. This ministry focuses on the process of equipping parents to disciple in their homes rather than simply on family-related programs and activities.²⁵

3) What is the parents' responsibility in family discipleship?

a) Goal: to see your family and children in light of the gospel.²⁶

b) Meg Meeker, a medical doctor with seemingly very little orthodox Christian beliefs, provides an extensive list of desirable moral traits attributed to a focus on religious beliefs.²⁷ Additionally, she challenges the belief of some that religion should not be forced on children, arguing instead that beliefs about God are too important to avoid teaching.²⁸ She says,

You need to have someone behind you, someone your daughter can turn to when you're not there. You both need a bigger, better father on your side. . . . I don't make statements like these lightly. I make them as a doctor, based on what I have observed, studied, and know from experience, and I make them as someone who relies on the evidence of scientific studies with reproducible facts and correlations.²⁹

i) Even someone with very little knowledge of what the Bible says about discipling your children recognizes the value of it!

c) Ephesians 6:4 – The Bible commands Christ followers to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

i) “If we are to carry out the Apostle's injunction, therefore, we must sit back for a moment, and consider what we have to do. When the child comes we must

²⁵Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 33.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 97.

²⁷Margaret J Meeker, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters: 10 Secrets Every Father Should Know* (New York: Ballantine, 2007), 178-79.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 180.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 179.

say to ourselves, We are the guardians and the custodians of this soul. What a dread responsibility!”³⁰ –D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

- ii) Christian upbringing extends beyond basic cultural expectations and must be done with discipline and instruction in the Lord.³¹
- iii) While this command is given to fathers, mothers are not excluded.³² The role of both parents important in children’s discipleship. When there is only one parent in the home, or in situations where parents share custody, this is much harder but much more necessary. The specifics of this will be covered in a later lesson.
- iv) We must desire for our children to know and respond to the gospel.³³
- v) In Ephesians 5:15 & 18, Paul urges his readers to “look carefully . . . how you walk” and to “be filled with the Spirit.”³⁴ The Christian has received a new way of life, far better than anything the natural order can provide.³⁵
- vi) Ephesians 6:1 – Children are addressed first. The fact that children are even addressed directly counters the cultural trends of the Greco-Roman society.³⁶

³⁰David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home and Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18 to 6:9* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 290.

³¹Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 418.

³²Robert L. Plummer, “Bring Them Up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 52.

³³Ibid., 51.

³⁴Arnold, *Ephesians*, 411.

³⁵Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home and Work*, 237.

³⁶Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 402.

This shows that the children were present in Christian gatherings and heard teachings directly.³⁷

- vii) Paul's word for 'obey' shows he required an "unquestioning compliance" from children toward their parents.³⁸
- viii) In verses two and three Paul references one of the Ten Commandments, for children to honor their fathers and mothers. He notes that this commandment is the first with a promise attached to it; indeed, this is also the first of any of the Law to contain a promise.³⁹
- ix) So, as we return to verse four, it is important to note that the word Paul uses for 'father' here is different from the word for 'parents' in verse one.⁴⁰ Both Jewish and Roman traditions placed the father at the head of the house with responsibilities to educate and discipline their children.⁴¹
- x) The command to "not provoke your children to anger" was a counter-cultural idea, as both Roman and Jewish societies gave much authority to the father.⁴²
- xi) Paul certainly does not wish to reduce the authority fathers have (as shown in the opening verses of chapter six) but rather teaches that fathers must be sensitive and caring in their assertion of that authority.⁴³

³⁷Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 416.

⁴⁰Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 794.

⁴¹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

⁴²Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 399-400. See Eph 6:4.

⁴³Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

- xii) Paul contrasts his prohibitory command with a positive exhortation: “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Christian upbringing extends beyond basic cultural expectations and must be done with discipline and instruction in the Lord.⁴⁴
- xiii) In all this, parents must keep Paul’s context from Ephesians 5:18 in sight: the Holy Spirit enables them to instruct their children in wisdom.⁴⁵
- xiv) Parents’ main concern for their children should be that they grow up to know Jesus as Lord and Savior.⁴⁶
- d) Tell the story of God’s redemption⁴⁷ (Deut 6:20-25)
 - i) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
 - ii) Moses and the Exodus
 - iii) Redemption of Israel
 - iv) As co-heirs with Christ, we share in the redemptive heritage of Israel as God’s people.⁴⁸
- e) Likely you know you are supposed to disciple your children, and you desperately want to. Two things may hold you back:
 - i) Lack of training
 - ii) Lack of time
- f) Your church should provide the training... you must seek the time! The issue of time will be addressed in detail in session 6.

⁴⁴Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

⁴⁵Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 799.

⁴⁶Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home and Work*, 292.

⁴⁷Brian Howard Honett, “Family: A Context for Worship,” in *Practical Family Ministry*, 20-21.

⁴⁸Ibid.

g) The Church's responsibility

- i) Goal: to partner with parents to see God raise up generations of children and students who love God with all their hearts, souls, and strength.⁴⁹
- ii) Seek to grow children and students who:⁵⁰
 - (1) Love God as a way of life (Rom 12:1-2)
 - (2) Love others as a way of life (Mark 10:45)
 - (3) Love the church and understand their roles in it (Eph 4:4-7)
 - (4) Love the Bible and recognize it as authority for life (2 Tim 3:15-17)
 - (5) Love to share the gospel (Rom 10:14-15)
 - (6) Love to grow closer to God through prayer, Bible study, and discipleship (1 Tim 4:7-12)
- iii) "For Ezra had set his heart *to study the Law* of the Lord, and *to do it* and *to teach* his statutes and rules in Israel." (Ezra 7:10, emphasis added)
 - (1) The church must follow the pattern of Ezra:
 - (2) Learn – "To study the law" – church leaders must know God's truth
 - (3) Practice – "To do it" – church leaders must practice God's truth
 - (4) Impart and equip – "To teach" – Only after knowing and practicing it can church leaders equip others with God's truth.⁵¹
 - (5) "Ezra learned and practiced God's ways before he tried to equip others."- Danny Bowen⁵²

⁴⁹Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry," 150.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Danny R. Bowen, "Be a Family by Equipping Parents," in *Practical Family Ministry*, 73.

⁵²Ibid., 74.

(6) Church leaders must begin to disciple their own families before they hope to equip other parents to do so in their own homes.⁵³

iv) The church and its leaders must commit to studying and practicing the law, but then to teach and equip its members. More on this next week!

⁵³Bowen, “Be a Family by Equipping Parents,” 74.

Session 3: A Church-Based Family-Equipping Ministry

- 1) Ephesians 4:11-12
 - a) “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”
 - b) The church’s role is to equip saints for ministry. Too often pastors are seen as the only ones who do the work of ministry while the members simply attend and get “ministered” to.
 - c) This is not the Biblical model of church. All believers are called to the work of ministry, and church leaders are to equip them to do so.
- 2) What does a family-equipping church look like?
 - a) Teaching the Bible
 - i) A vast knowledge of the Bible is not required to lead your family. You do not need a seminary degree to teach the Bible at home!
 - ii) The church must teach the Bible in a way that allows parents the confidence and freedom to use the knowledge they have to lead their families.
 - iii) Christian Smith conducted a vast study called the National Study of Youth and Religion in the last 20 years. He said:

Even basic practices like regular Bible reading and personal prayer seem clearly associated with strong and deeper faith commitment among youth. We suspect that youth educators and ministers will not get far with youth in other words, unless regular and intentional practices become an important part of their larger faith formation.⁵⁴

- iv) Voddie Baucham, quoting him, says “it doesn’t take much. You can impact your child’s faith-life by reading and teaching the Bible at home. More

⁵⁴Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 92.

importantly, God has entrusted you (not the youth ministry or the Sunday school teacher) with this awesome task.”⁵⁵

- v) A family-equipping church makes **training parents to teach the Bible** a priority.
- b) Seeing God in the Mundane
 - i) “. . . because God is working all things together for the good of those who love him, even the most mundane events of life can call attention to God’s glory and his story.”⁵⁶
 - ii) The church must teach parents to see children’s questions as opportunities to share God’s story.
 - iii) Deuteronomy 6:20-25
 - (1) This section begins with a question from a child: “What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?” (Deut 6:20)
 - (2) The testimonies, statutes, and rules of the Lord are not described by the father as a rigid set of regulations with no purpose, but rather he relates all that God commands to God’s grace and goodness to his people. God’s commands are ultimately for the goodwill of his people.⁵⁷
 - (3) Read Deut. 6:21-25
 - (4) “Israel’s belief in God was thus expressed not in terms of an abstract formulation, but in terms of God’s dynamic activity.” – J.A. Thompson⁵⁸

⁵⁵Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 92.

⁵⁶Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 162.

⁵⁷Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 94.

⁵⁸Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 126.

- iv) A family-equipping church **teaches parents to see God in everyday life so they can do the same for their children.**
- c) Continuously Celebrate Parents
 - i) Your role cannot be diminished by the church. Parental influence is highly important
 - ii) Deuteronomy includes the phrase “lest you forget” at least seven times! Moses recognized that all believers are prone to forget the works of God in and for them.⁵⁹
 - iii) Our fallen forgetfulness is why the church must continuously recognize parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children.
 - iv) “Is that not an inefficient use of the church’s time and energy?” you may be asking. This is what Timothy Paul Jones has to say,

If your sole goal is organizational efficiency, constantly acknowledging the role of parents is probably an inefficient use of your time, and turning over children’s spiritual lives to professionals at church would make perfect sense. But efficiency is not the goal of gospel-centered ministry. The crucified and risen Lord Jesus determines the shape and establishes the goal for his church. . . . The Spirit does not give gifts for the purpose of making the church efficient; he arranges the gifts in the body according to his will to make us holy.⁶⁰

- v) A family-equipping church **prioritizes the role of parents in the lives of their children.**
- d) No new programs
 - i) Do any of us need something else to add to our calendars?
 - ii) If you have children, you are likely already at capacity when it comes to time and energy.

⁵⁹Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 171-72.

⁶⁰Ibid., 177-78.

- iii) Family-equipping ministry cannot simply be a new program, adding events to the church calendar; the church must give parents the tools they need within current programs.⁶¹
 - (1) Faith Talk Guides distributed on Sundays
 - (2) Training during normal Sunday School, small groups, or teaching times
 - (3) Sermon discussion guides
 - iv) Rather than creating new programs, the value of family discipleship must be instilled in parents within current ministry programs.⁶²
 - v) A family-equipping church **incorporates parental training within current programs.**
- e) Missional focus
- i) A church with a focus on evangelism must give focus to families; if parents are not trained to make disciples in their own homes, they cannot hope to make disciples of anyone else!⁶³
 - ii) “The Christian home should be a training ground that sparks zeal for God’s global mission in the world.”⁶⁴
 - iii) Evangelism begins with the equipping of parents to lead their children to reach out to others.
 - iv) You can create a family mission statement, aiming to seek “a missional passion for the expansion of God’s kingdom.”⁶⁵

⁶¹Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 156.

⁶²Ibid., 157-58.

⁶³Bowen, “Be a Family by Equipping Parents,” 72.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Michael S. Wilder, “Building and Equipping Missional Families,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 249.

- v) A family-equipping church **sends families on mission.**
- f) The church must intentionally resist the cultural norms that have given the church not only sole responsibility for discipleship, but also for all the ministry of the gospel. Families must be continuously celebrated and recognized as the primary means through which God accomplishes his will.

Session 4: Tools for Family Worship

1) *Family Worship* by Don Whitney

- a) This is not just something new to do to add onto your schedule, or just a new tradition. It is a vital part of training for the spiritual battles your children will face.⁶⁶
- b) Family worship, while not specifically commanded in the Bible, it is implied through many of the passages (among others) listed in previous lessons.⁶⁷
- c) Don Whitney's book provides a simple yet sufficient guide for family worship in the home.
 - i) Bible reading: Read the bible with your family enthusiastically and interpretatively, seeking to read to gain understanding.⁶⁸
 - ii) Pray: Have one person pray or all pray... it doesn't matter how you do it, just pray together!
 - iii) Sing: Sing songs together! (See below)
- d) Remember, the best thing you can do to start family worship in your home is simply to do more than you are doing now!

2) Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs

- a) I once read a blog that was discussing worship styles. I am not starting a debate about that right now, suffice it to say that worship is about the heart of the worshipper, not the style of music used to do it. But the author of this blog post was advocating for hymns while criticizing contemporary music. Under his heading encouraging readers to "Stop attending churches that do contemporary

⁶⁶Honett, "Family: A Context for Worship," 26.

⁶⁷See Prov 3-4, Gen 18:19, Josh 24:15, Exod 12:26-26, Exod 13:14, Ps 78:4, 2 Tim 3:15.

⁶⁸Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 45.

- music,” he referred to a church member at a contemporary style church saying that he was sad that his kids would not hear the hymns he grew up with.
- b) The intent of this point was to say, “go to churches that sing hymns so your children will hear them.” What I saw instead was a symptom of the bigger issue: **The father assumed the only place his children would hear spiritual songs was at church.** The church he chose to attend is one issue for him to decide, but the issue at hand is easily solved: he could play or sing hymns during family worship at home.
 - c) Theologically rich hymns and contemporary songs alike glorify God in any corporate worship setting, including within your family!
 - d) Ask your worship/music pastor to provide you with songbooks or other resources.⁶⁹
 - e) You can even just sing along with your favorite recordings of worship songs!
 - f) Children will likely not be powerfully moved by scripture memorization or deep Bible teaching, although both are important. But music can be incredibly moving for both children and adults!⁷⁰
- 3) Faith Conversations for Families – Jim Burns
- a) Keep it Short and Simple: Jim Burns refers to Deuteronomy 6 and encourages parents to give children “the Good News and teaching of God, but also to share our lives together. Create a warm environment and keep away from preaching, lectures and shame.”⁷¹

⁶⁹Whitney, *Family Worship*, 46.

⁷⁰Peter R. Schemm, Jr., “Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy P. Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 187.

⁷¹Jim Burns, *Faith Conversations for Families* (Ventura, CA: Regal, From Gospel Light, 2011), 11.

- b) Family worship times need not be rigid and overly serious. Moving conversations and fun events connected with family worship help keep children engaged.⁷²
 - c) This book has 52 short guides for family worship; if you are not sure where to start, this book can give you weekly family worship materials for a whole year!
 - d) Parents are encouraged to look over the weekly guide first and pray about how best to teach it and what would work for their children.⁷³
 - e) Example lesson, “The Bible” on pages 33-36
- 4) Family Worship – Joel Beeke
- a) Dr. Joel Beeke is a professor at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and his approach is mostly from a reformed, Presbyterian background.
 - b) In addition to practical methods, he provides a theological foundation for family worship, motivation to do it, and common objections to it.⁷⁴
 - c) He also affirms that the Bible requires families to engage in biblical teaching, prayer, and singing, each of which he contends must be done daily.⁷⁵
 - d) Even more so, Beeke urges parents to conduct family worship “twice a day, in the morning and in the evening.”⁷⁶ He does, however, encourage brevity along with consistency.⁷⁷
 - e) Worshipping as a family twice a day may be ideal, but is likely impractical for the average family. Even if family worship happens once a week, the key is

⁷²Burns, *Faith Conversations for Families*, 11-12.

⁷³Ibid., 12.

⁷⁴Joel R. Beeke, *Family Worship*, Family Guidance Series (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2009), 3.

⁷⁵Ibid., 10-12.

⁷⁶Ibid., 20.

⁷⁷Ibid., 21-22.

- consistency. Aiming too high leads to frustration from your children and ultimately in you. Decide what is realistic for your family to consistently do.
- f) Beeke’s view on this is consistent with Deuteronomy 6:7 – that parents should proclaim God “when you lie down, and when you rise.” (Deut 6:7) That is, in the morning and the evening. Even short prayers every morning and evening with our children, no matter how simple, will make a difference.⁷⁸
 - g) Beeke’s short book provides excellent guidance on how to lead family worship times.
- 5) Catechesis- Not as Scary as it Sounds
- a) Catechism is a question and answer style method of learning that has roots with the pilgrims in the 1600s. Many Catholic, Episcopal, and Lutheran churches use them for confirmation classes. While some may consider catechism to be outdated, dry, or rigid, it continues to be an effective means of teaching the basics of faith in Christ.⁷⁹
 - b) Put simply: Catechism is a series of questions and answers that teach Biblical truth.⁸⁰
 - c) Sojourn Community Church has created the North Star Catechism for children. This provides a simple, clear question and answer series that can be done by any parent. Some ideas to effectively utilize catechism in the home:⁸¹
 - i) Start Early- children as young as three can begin learning Biblical words and truths

⁷⁸Schemm, “Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household,” 187-88.

⁷⁹Daniel Montgomery and Jared Kennedy, *North Star Catechism Introduction* (Louisville: Sojourn Community Church, 2013), 3.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., 4-5.

- ii) Memorize together
- iii) Remember Deuteronomy 6 – you can talk about them at all times
- iv) Provide examples and recite with group

Session 5: Adoptive Ministry, Helping Families in Crisis

- 1) This is not meant to be a quick solution to all the problems single parents face. One hour cannot provide an adequate fix. This is just the start of a conversation, as well as practical ideas for what can be done.
- 2) You Are Not Alone
 - a) No matter the circumstance you are in, whether you are the spouse of a non-believer, you are single parent, you have been unable to bear children, or if your children are from previous marriages, God can redeem and use your family.⁸²
 - b) Do not believe the lie that your problems prevent you from participating in family worship! Family worship is a discipline to be practiced, and it is one that will positively affect your life no matter what your situation.⁸³
 - c) Family discipleship is extremely important for all families, and especially so for single parent families. The stability provided by consistent family worship will bring the light of Jesus into dark situations.
- 3) The Church as Family
 - a) “To bypass the orphan in favor of a focus on whole and healthy families is to neglect a heartbeat that has long marked the rhythms of God’s redemptive plan... There are, after all, no natural-born children of God among us; there are only ex-orphans who have been brought into God’s family through divine adoption.”⁸⁴ –Timothy Paul Jones
 - b) Family ministry that ignores single parents and families in crisis is not a gospel centered family ministry.
 - c) The church can provide family stability for those who need additional support.

⁸²Whitney, *Family Worship*, 56.

⁸³Ibid., 57.

⁸⁴Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 143.

d) Near and Far Principle- the church must provide the hope of Jesus to those who are near as well as those who are far.

4) Biblical Basis

a) James 1:27 – “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction...”

b) This references an Old Testament theme to care for widows and orphans and show concern for their well-being.⁸⁵

i) Psalm 68:5 – God is the “Father to the fatherless and protector of widows.”

ii) Exodus 22:22 – “You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.”

iii) Deuteronomy 10:18 – “He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.”

iv) Deuteronomy 27:19 – “Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.”

v) Psalm 10:14 – “...you have been the helper of the fatherless.”

vi) Psalm 146:9 – “The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless...”

c) The word for “orphan” has also been shown to refer to children who have lost only one parent, thus translated “fatherless” or “motherless” as reflected in some of the above passages.⁸⁶

d) “Religion” – Verse 26 offers a sobering reminder that religious practices can be honorable, but an ethical, compassionate heart must accompany them or religion is useless and self-deceptive.⁸⁷

⁸⁵List from Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2011), 169.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 170.

⁸⁷Peter H. Davids, *James*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 15 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 42.

- e) Some single parents have suffered loss by death of their spouse, but divorce and other unfortunate realities of our fallen world cause some to be effectively orphaned and widowed.
 - f) In any case, the orphan and widow in James 1:27 are a type, representing the afflicted of the world whom the church is called to care for (“visit”) in their distress.⁸⁸ (Jas 1:27)
 - g) The word for visit relates to an Old Testament word that implied the covenantal obligation that God’s people have to care for others and “oversee” the needs of the afflicted.⁸⁹ It implies oversight, caring, and assistance rather than simple visitation.⁹⁰
 - h) Douglas Moo: “Christians whose religion is pure will imitate their Father by intervening to help the helpless. Those who suffer from want in the third world, in the inner city; those who are unemployed and penniless; those who are inadequately represented in government or in law – these are the people who should see abundant evidence of Christians’ pure religion.”⁹¹
- 5) What is the church’s role?
- a) It is important for the church to equip every family to disciple their children
 - b) It is even *more* important to equip families in crisis, as they not only must learn to disciple their children, but also must help them navigate the difficulties they face together.

⁸⁸Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2000), 86.

⁸⁹Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries, vol. 37a (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 212.

⁹⁰John MacArthur, *James*, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1998) 89.

⁹¹Moo, *The Letter of James*, 86.

- c) Single mothers may face economic issues that affect decisions about work and childcare, as well as issues of time.⁹²
- d) Single fathers may feel inadequate to sustain new parental roles.⁹³ Both, especially single mothers, may “have no other adult to turn to for help.”⁹⁴
- e) The church is full of people who have sin in their past. While we must never lower God’s standard for His followers, the church must offer grace and comfort to those who have turned from sin and need help.⁹⁵
- f) Family-equipping ministry must focus not on the “earthly heritage” of sinful brokenness that especially effects single parents and their children, but on divine adoption into sonship and daughtership in the kingdom of God.⁹⁶
- g) The church must value people as image-bearers of God, not condoning sin, but embracing and loving the broken in order to restore them.⁹⁷
- h) The church must equip parents to help their children through grief.
 - i) Single parents must navigate their children’s feelings of abandonment and portray God as a loving father when even the idea of a loving father (or parent) may be a concept entirely foreign to them.
 - ii) “The emotional trauma and pain of losing your parents through the dissolution of their marriage is, without question, one of the most significant factors

⁹²David R. Miller, *Counseling Families after Divorce*, Contemporary Christian Counseling 8 (Dallas: Word, 1994), 218. See chap. 3.

⁹³Ibid., 216. See chap. 3.

⁹⁴Ibid., 218. See chap. 3.

⁹⁵Remy, “Be a Family for Blended Families,” 94.

⁹⁶Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 169.

⁹⁷Remy, “Be a Family for Blended Families,” 93.

contributing to the struggles teens cope with in the aftermath of parental divorce.”⁹⁸ –Les Parrott

- iii) Parents face the difficult challenge of attempting to help their children face divorce while themselves experiencing the same or more intense negative emotions. The church needs a plan to counsel and equip single parents in the midst of their own personal hardship.
 - iv) Children and adolescents who experience parental divorce “mourn the death of that marriage, just as they would mourn the death of a parent.”⁹⁹
 - v) Parents can help their children through this by walking them through the stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) and the church can equip them to do so.¹⁰⁰ Les Parrott’s book *Helping the Struggling Adolescent* has a great resource on this.
- b) The church must intentionally mentor children of single parents.
- i) While all children need mentoring, children of single parents need additional support from traditional families to fill the gaps left by the absent parent
 - ii) Children of divorce will likely distrust all adults after parental separation, wondering who they can rely on.¹⁰¹ Church leaders must be present in the lives of children of divorce, giving them reliable adults in which to confide.¹⁰²

⁹⁸Les Parrott, *Helping the Struggling Adolescent: A Guide to Thirty-Six Common Problems for Counselors, Pastors, and Youth Workers*, updated and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 293.

⁹⁹Ibid., 294.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Rich Van Pelt and Jim Hancock, *The Youth Worker’s Guide to Helping Teenagers in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 146.

¹⁰²Ibid., 147.

- c) The church must be a support system for single parents, providing them with Biblical community that includes practical help.
 - i) Grief/Divorce care groups
 - ii) Babysitting
 - iii) School Supplies
 - iv) What else?
- d) The church must “yearn to see the gospel bring new life to broken people.”¹⁰³

¹⁰³Remy, “Be a Family for Blended Families,” 91.

Session 6: Keep It Going: Maintaining Family Worship When Life Gets Busy

- 1) Review
 - a) Why Family Discipleship?
 - i) Deut. 6
 - b) What is Family Discipleship?
 - i) Terms
 - (1) Family discipleship – a general term used for all that encompasses making disciples of your children
 - (2) Family worship – a means of family discipleship; usually, a weekly time of prayer and Bible study as a family- “Faith talks”
 - (3) Family ministry – a ministry of the church; in this study, this will mean a family-equipping ministry that trains parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their children. This ministry focuses on the process of equipping parents to disciple in their homes rather than simply on family-related programs and activities.¹⁰⁴
 - c) A Family-Equipping Church
 - i) A family-equipping church makes **training parents to teach the Bible** a priority.
 - ii) A family-equipping church **teaches parents to see God in everyday life so they can do the same for their children.**
 - iii) A family-equipping church **prioritizes the role of parents in the lives of their children.**
 - iv) A family-equipping church **incorporates parental training within current programs.**
 - v) A family-equipping church **sends families on mission.**

¹⁰⁴Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 33.

- d) Tools for Family Worship
 - i) Family Worship – Don Whitney
 - ii) Catechism
 - iii) Faith Conversations for Families (example lesson: Lesson Seven on the Bible from Jim Burns’ *Faith Conversations for Families*¹⁰⁵)

2) Make the time!

- a) Babylon Bee article (Christian satire) *After 12 Years Of Quarterly Church*

Attendance, Parents Shocked By Daughter’s Lack Of Faith

Fullerton, CA—Local father Trevor Michelson, 48, and his wife Kerri, 45, are reeling after discovering that after 12 years of steadily taking their daughter Janie to church every Sunday they didn’t have a more pressing sporting commitment which was at least once every three months—she no longer demonstrates the strong quarterly commitment to the faith they raised her with, now that she is college-aged.

Trevor Michelson was simply stunned at the revelation. “I just don’t understand it. Almost every single time there was a rained-out game, or a break between school and club team seasons, we had Janie in church. It was at least once per quarter. And aside from the one tournament in 2011, we never missed an Easter. It was obviously a priority in our family—I just don’t get where her spiritual apathy is coming from.”

“I can’t tell you how often we prayed the prayer of Jabez on the way to a game,” added Janie’s mother.

“You know, the more I think about it, the more this illustrates how the church just keeps failing this generation,” lamented Trevor, citing a recently-googled study by Barna or someone.

The Michelsons further noted plans to have a chat with the pastor of their church after their younger son Robert’s soccer season calms down a bit.¹⁰⁶

- b) This article is a satirical exaggeration, but it is an indictment of many families today.

¹⁰⁵Burns, *Faith Conversations for Families*, 33-36.

¹⁰⁶“After 12 Years of Quarterly Church Attendance, Parents Shocked By Daughter’s Lack Of Faith,” *The Babylon Bee*, April 7, 2016, <http://babylonbee.com/news/after-12-years-of-quarterly-church-attendance-parents-shocked-by-daughters-lack-of-faith/>.

- c) It goes back to the idea of outsourcing. Many parents will blame the church for a child walking away from faith even if they barely attended. After all, it's the church's job to disciple our children, right?
- d) Hopefully by now you've figured out that this is not right!
- e) A lot of parents want to keep their children busy so they stay out of trouble. Have you discovered that they will likely get in trouble anyway?
- f) Busyness does not keep children out of trouble. Transformation by the gospel does.
- g) It is not wrong to desire that your children excel at sports, music, or anything else. But if your family is so busy that there is no time or energy for family discipleship, will it be worth it?
- h) Timothy Paul Jones' survey on family discipleship revealed that at least a third of parents would do whatever it takes for their children to succeed in such activities.¹⁰⁷
- i) "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37)
- j) "If children were nothing more than a gift for this life, a single-minded focus on children's happiness and success might make sense...But children are far more than a gift for this life. They are bearers of the gospel to generations yet unborn."¹⁰⁸
- k) Ultimately, this is a heart issue for parents. We must view ourselves and our children in light of eternity; it is when we lose sight of eternity that we focus solely on the fleeting, temporary successes of the world.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 101.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 102.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 104.

- l) Nothing is wrong with seeking success. But with anything, when it becomes more important than God, it becomes an idol. “Learning and play are joys that God himself wove into the very fabric of creation...yet, whenever any activity, however good it may be, becomes amplified to the point that no time remains for family members to disciple one another, a divinely designed joy has been distorted into a hell-spawned idol.”¹¹⁰
- m) God has given us a great responsibility. We must take it seriously. It will probably take us changing our priorities, but the souls of our children are far too important to ignore this.

¹¹⁰Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 104.

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING PARENTS AT FAIRFOREST BAPTIST CHURCH IN SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA, TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Troy W. Temple

This project sought to equip parents to disciple their children, recognizing the church's role in family discipleship. Chapter 1 presented the context, rationale, and methodology for the project. Chapter 2 covered the biblical basis for the project, exploring Matthew 28:18-20, Deuteronomy 6, Ephesians 6:4, and James 1:27. Chapter 3 examined the historical and practical basis for family discipleship. This project provided training materials and strategies to allow the church to facilitate family discipleship. Chapter 4 explained the project, and the project was evaluated in chapter 5. The ultimate goal of this project was to establish a Family-Equipping model of ministry at Fairforest Baptist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

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