

The background of the entire page is a blurred, warm-toned photograph showing the dark silhouettes of a family—a man, a woman, and two children—standing together. The lighting is soft and golden, suggesting a sunset or sunrise, which creates a warm and intimate atmosphere.

Family Ministry

(As We Know It)

Must Change:

How Emerging Generations
Will Change the Way Local Churches
Reach & Minister to Households

Mel Walker

Seminar Notes



VISION FOR YOUTH
P U B L I S H I N G

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NOTE: This webinar was held on Thursday, April 22, 2021.

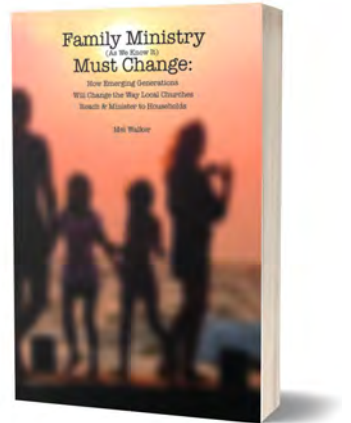
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FAMILY MINISTRY

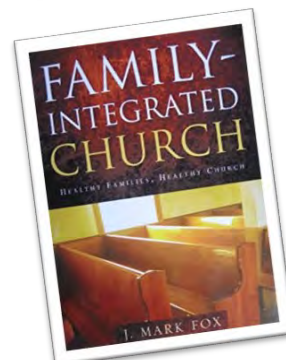
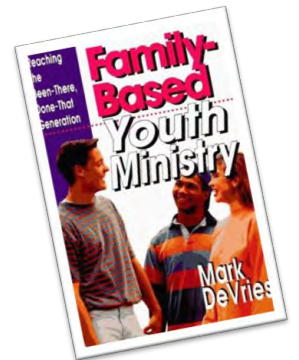
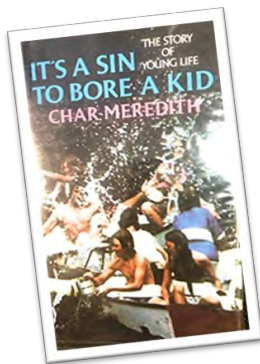
(As We Know It)

MUST CHANGE:

How Emerging Generations Will
Change the Way Local Churches Reach
& Minister to Households



RECENT HISTORY OF YOUTH MINISTRY & HOW IT RELATES TO
FAMILY MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH:



RECENT HISTORY OF YOUTH MINISTRY AND HOW IT RELATES TO FAMILY MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH...

KEY TRENDS	CULTURAL FACTORS	ROLE OF CHURCH YOUTH MINISTRY	ROLE OF PARENTS	IMPORTANT BOOKS / THOUGHT LEADERS
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RECENT OBSERVATIONS OF FAMILY MINISTRY:



TRENDS FACING TODAY'S HOUSEHOLDS:

A 2x2 grid of empty rectangular boxes. To the left of the top-left box are two book covers: 'essential church?' and 'already gone'. To the left of the bottom-left box are two more book covers: 'THE POST-CHURCH CHRISTIAN' and 'YOUTH MINISTRY IN A POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD'. To the right of the top-right box are two book covers: 'Churchless' and 'THE RISE OF THE 7NONES'. To the right of the bottom-right box are two more book covers: 'GENERATION' and 'Household Faith'.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT? Balanced Family Ministry



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The logo for Vision For Youth, featuring a stylized green leaf and the text "Vision For Youth".

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Leadership is best learned by walking with experience.

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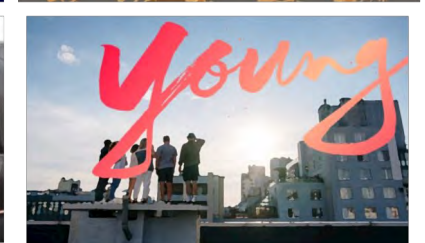
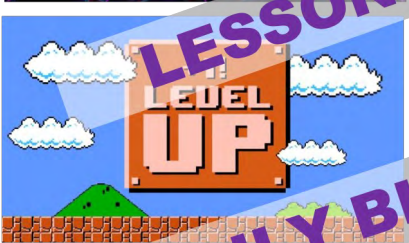
*Don't let the name fool you!
 This podcast is all about family ministry, leadership, and much more!*

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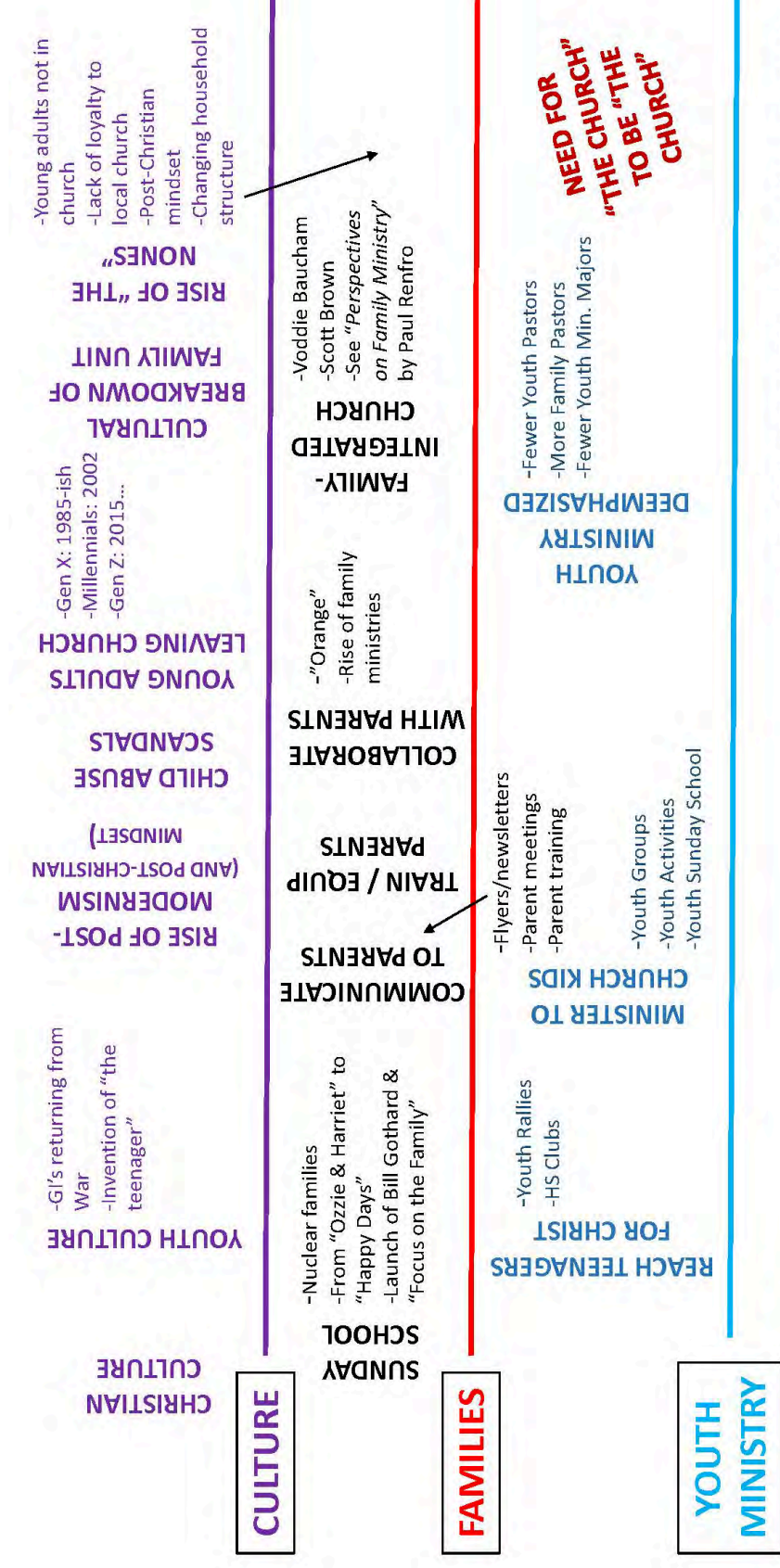


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HOW DO PARENTS RELATE TO YOUTH MINISTRY?

ROLE OF PARENTS	ROLE OF YOUTH MINISTRY	RESULT
Parents Are Absent	Share the Gospel & Provide Spiritual Mentors	Kids See the Gospel in Action from Loving Adults
Parents Are Disinterested	Significant Spiritual Influence	Kids Are Welcomed and See Church as a Family
Parents Bring Their Children	Responsibility for Spiritual Input & Social Connections	Church Leaders Teach God's Word & Reach Out to Families
Parents Who Serve	Utilize Parents to Help in Church Ministry	Kids See Parents as Willing Helpers
Parents Learn From Church Leaders	Church Leaders Hold Classes to Teach Parents	Parents Learn About Youth Culture & Some Parenting Skills
Parents Collaborate With Church Leaders	Work Alongside Parents to Encourage Toward Spiritual Maturity	Kids Grow Spiritually and Many Go On For God
Parents Mentor Other Parents	Equip Older Parents to Mentor Younger Parents	Kids Learn That Parents Need Input from Others in the Church
Parents Disciple Their Own Children	Stay Out of the Way	Kids Are Isolated From Broader Christian Community

RECENT HISTORY OF YOUTH MINISTRY AND HOW IT RELATES TO FAMILY MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH...



© 2021 by Mel Walker (Disclaimer: Of course, the events on the above timeline are estimates and are not intended to be precise.)

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3

YOUTH MINIST?Y

QUESTIONS



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4



5



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Family Ministry Big Picture Trends:



Reach Teenagers for Christ



Communicate with Parents & Help Train Them



Minister to Church Kids



Parents & Church Collaborate



Youth Ministry is Not Needed

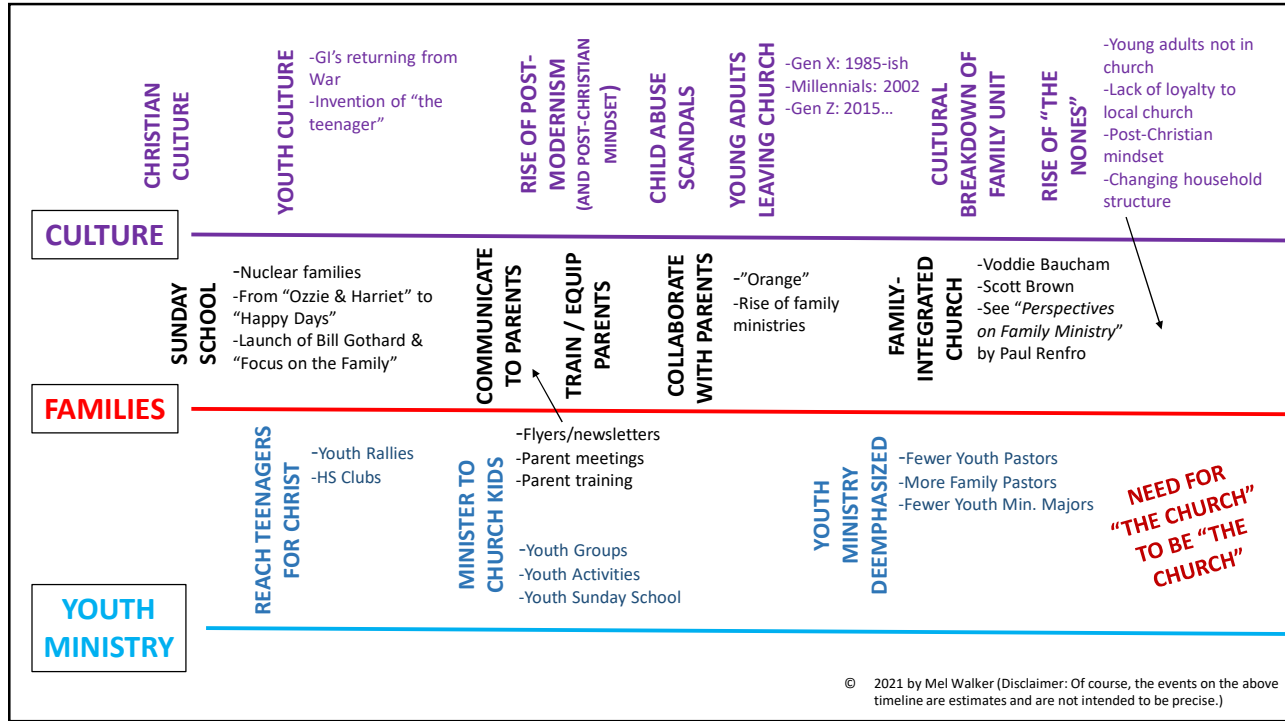
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RECENT HISTORY OF YOUTH MINISTRY AND HOW IT RELATES TO FAMILY MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH...

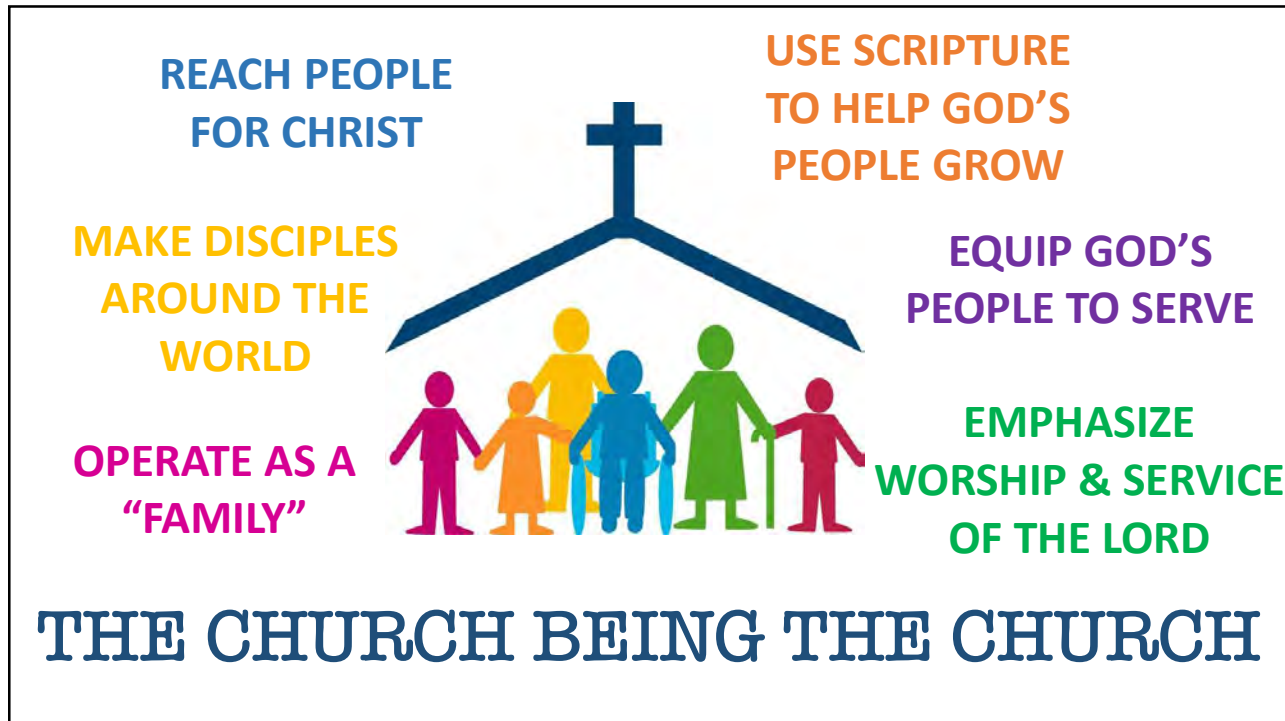
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TRENDS FACING TODAY'S HOUSEHOLDS:



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The book cover for 'Households of Faith' by David Platt is shown. The cover features a red and white color scheme with a graphic of a staircase. The title 'Households of Faith' is written in a bold, sans-serif font. The author's name, 'David Platt', is at the bottom. The cover also includes several small icons representing different aspects of faith and community.

“Churches that want to understand and serve teens and young adults should focus first on true household ministry, and not just family ministry.”

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TRENDS FACING TODAY'S HOUSEHOLDS:

YOUNG ADULTS DROPPING OUT OF CHURCH

NO RELIGIOUS LOYALTY

POST-CHRISTIAN MINDSET

CHANGING HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

15

THE NONES
RYAN P. BURGE
WHERE THEY CAME FROM, WHO THEY ARE, AND WHERE THEY ARE GOING

Why Has Generation X Left the Church?
I was so lost I should have died
But You have brought me to Your side
To be led by Your staff and rod
And to be call a lamb of God
-from Paris and Lamb of God

Millennials Are Leaving Religion And Not Coming Back
By Daniel Cox and Amelia Thomson-Delvaux
Filed under Religion

Gen Z is spiritually illiterate and abandoning church: How did we get here?
By TESSA LANDRUM
Posted Friday, December 27, 2019 11:22 am
Our society is in the midst of a massive cultural shift. According to the Barna Group, "rates of church attendance, religious affiliation, belief in God, prayer and Bible-reading have been dropping for decades. Americans' beliefs are becoming more post-Christian and, concurrently, religious identity is changing."
This is the environment in which Generation Z is growing up. This conglomeration of young people – born anywhere between 1995 and 2015 depending on which study you read – has several defining characteristics. They are "the most ethnically diverse generation in American history." They were individually, lonely, and social justice oriented. They were raised on technology and their lives are often built around the same world. They are activists and volunteers who are seeking stability. They are American


TESSA LANDRUM
The oldest members of Generation Z are entering their 20s and stepping into the workforce

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BALANCED FAMILY MINISTRY:



OUTREACH	TEACHING & EQUIPPING
COLLABORATION	MENTORING Titus 2:1-5



18

BALANCED FAMILY MINISTRY

OUTREACH
How are you reaching out to YOUR community?

TEACHING & EQUIPPING
How are you training & helping today's parents?

COLLABORATION
How are you working WITH parents for the spiritual growth of kids?

MENTORING
Titus 2:1-6
How can you train older parents to mentor younger parents?

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FAMILY MINISTRY
(As We Know It)
MUST CHANGE

20



The Future of Family Ministry

Identifying Current Trends

by MEL WALKER

The value of good homes cannot be overemphasized. Research shows that kids who grow up in consistent Christian homes and whose parents are faithful church members are very likely to live for God and be active in church when they become adults.

Of course, it would be great if every kid who attends church came from a solid Christian family where Mom and Dad both love the Lord and are enthusiastic, loyal supporters of the church's youth and children's ministries. But that's probably not what pastors and other church leaders are seeing.

A Brief History of Family Ministry in the Church

The recent history of family ministry in the church could be traced to the 1970s, when organizations such as James Dobson's Focus on the Family and Bill Gothard's Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts rose to popularity within a broad spectrum of churches. These organizations provided practical tools to use in the important process of raising children to live for the Lord.

Until that time, many churches and parachurch ministries alike saw children's and youth ministries as outlets for evangelism, and their programming emphasis largely focused on reaching young people with the gospel. Churches used ministries like Child Evangelism Fellowship, Awana, and Word of Life as evangelistic endeavors. Ministry leaders saw the need to reach the next generation for Christ, and their initiatives focused on communicating directly to kids, not necessarily to their parents.

The growth of a special emphasis upon equipping Christian

parents in the church took another large step forward in the 1990s with the publication of books like Mark DeVries's *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, then the next decade saw a rapid rise in family ministry with the publication of works such as *Think Orange* by Reggie Joiner that emphasized Christian parents collaborating with the church for the spiritual growth of their kids.

Pastors and other church leaders started to realize that it wasn't enough to see kids come to Christ; they needed to cooperate with Christian parents as partners in the church's Biblical mission to develop mature followers of Christ (Eph. 4:11–16). Seeing in Scripture the parental responsibility to raise kids “in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4), churches developed an approach to ministry that included interested godly parents in various aspects of church programming for children and teenagers.

Of course, this brief history of family ministry does not include all the Biblical and cultural influences that were reflected in the church's renewed desire to partner with parents. There is, however, one overarching philosophic approach that led to the growth of family ministries in the church: the compelling desire by the majority of Christian parents to take an active role in the spiritual development of their own children. It is no wonder that the Christian school movement also flourished during this time.

New Cultural Influences

Perhaps the time has come for churches to renew their efforts toward reaching kids for Christ and discipling them to

maturity in Christ without the active collaboration of Christian parents.

I understand that this statement may sound unconventional, considering the recent emphasis upon the role of godly parents. I am certainly not advocating a departure from the Biblical mandate for dedicated Christian parents to “diligently” teach the commands of God to their children (Deut. 6:1–9). I believe wholeheartedly in the importance of godly parents and am a champion of the life-changing impact that consistent Christian parents have on their kids.

This article, however, is a call to church leaders to reach out into their communities with the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. We are living in an increasingly secular and post-Christian culture that does not value church programming efforts as necessary or important for today’s children and teenagers. It is becoming increasingly essential for the church to see family ministry programming in a way that effectively confronts the rise of worldly thinking so prevalent in today’s households.

Cultural Trends That Impact Family Ministry in the Church

I have personally observed two prevailing trends in today’s culture that have the potential to cause a seismic shift in how churches approach family ministry. These influences are currently having a wide impact on church programming and will undoubtedly trigger an increasing upheaval in the way churches structure their ministries to households.

1. The demise of the nuclear family in Western culture
The days of the nuclear family—a family unit of dad, mom, and kids, as the nucleus or core of society—living under the same roof are gone. The trend is away from that description of the traditional family. According to the authors of *Generation Z: A Century in the Making*, the number of nontraditional, broken, and hurting households is increasing. A quick look at demographics across the country will disclose a rapidly growing number of unmarried, single-parent, same-sex, blended, foster, or damaged households.
While it is still true in the United States that most people marry and have children, the statistical trends in this country are headed in the opposite direction. Fewer and fewer people are getting married, and those who do marry are waiting until later in life.
Church leaders should do everything they can to position their churches to reach out to and connect with the growing number of household structures that look little like the traditional family units of the past.
2. The decline in active participation in church programming
Recent studies have revealed a growing number of professing Christians who attend church services only about one Sunday each month. As members of the millennial generation have moved into adulthood, their church participation patterns are quite unlike previous generations. Some have identified work schedules, time with

family, extracurricular activities, other involvements, and a lack of relevancy as reasons for their lack of turnout and engagement in church. Current trends show that an ominous number of American households no longer see church programs as an essential influence on their kids. Pastors should take a long look at the attendance and participation trends of emerging adult generations and realize that these changing patterns will definitely influence family ministries in the church.

Much is being written and said today about the importance of family ministry, but—since we are ministering in a post-Christian culture, where the family is changing right before our eyes and is becoming less Christian and less involved in church programming—the time has come for the church to think through how to reach and disciple today’s young people when their parents and guardians do not faithfully attend church.

For these reasons I believe family ministry in the church as we know it must change. I am a big fan of family ministry in the church, but I have observed a growing disconnect between what many churches expect from parents and what is actually happening. Perhaps it is time for a complete reevaluation of the church’s ministry to today’s households, with the goal of developing creative approaches that will effectively reach new generations with the gospel.

Practical Questions to Help Churches Position Family Ministries for the Future

To assist churches in assessing and reviewing their ministries to families, here are four important questions, the answers to which pastors and other church leaders should consider as they begin to restructure their ministry programming to families.

1. How is your church reaching out into your community?
The move from partnering with Christian parents to reaching members of today’s cultural households for Christ will be increasingly crucial for the future of family ministries in the church. Again, it is important for churches to understand that the trend today is away from consistent, faithful, and church-centered homes. Churches will need to plan and implement relevant and creative evangelistic endeavors to reach out into their communities. Today’s nontraditional households will have serious needs and are likely to be quite receptive to the good news of the gospel.
2. How can your church provide resources for today’s households?
If the coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything, it is that local churches are uniquely positioned to help meet the needs of their communities. God has given His church the potential to reach the growing number of nontraditional households. Creative ideas abound: mature believers can lead training sessions in finances, parenting, and the like; churches can provide food, goods, and practical help; pastors and other church

leaders can offer Biblical counseling sessions; and churches can use their buildings to offer community- and household-related events.

3. How can you train older parents in your church to mentor younger parents in your community?
The Bible presents the concept of intergenerational ministry in the church that has often been absent in recent church programming. Titus 2:1–9, 1 John 2:12–16, 2 Timothy 2:2, and Christ’s ministry with His disciples in the Gospels (among other Biblical passages) present practical pieces of instruction about connecting the generations in the church. The familiar passage in Titus 2 specifically instructs Titus to teach his people the value of older people teaching and exhorting younger people in the church. This approach to ministry is absolutely invaluable for the church today. Instead of pastoral staff members taking the full responsibility to counsel people about issues relating to marriage and the family, why not develop a plan for godly older believers to mentor people from younger generations?
4. How can your church collaborate with Christian parents for lasting spiritual growth of kids?
The last few decades of family ministry influence have taught church leaders to work with godly parents to help build spiritual maturity in their kids. This approach

remains imperative for the church. Both institutions, the church and Christian parents, share the Biblical imperative to help develop lifelong spiritual maturity in young people (Eph. 4:11–16; 6:1–4). Working with Christian parents must now be balanced with a desire and a plan to reach out into our communities with the gospel, focusing on the needs and concerns of today’s needy households.

Family ministry has become a phenomenon in many churches recently. More and more churches are hiring family pastors instead of youth pastors, and a growing number of Christian colleges and seminaries are launching family ministry academic programs and majors.

However, it is important for all church leaders to fully grasp the current reality that a growing number of people in our communities will not represent solid, traditional Christian families. It’s time for churches to change the structure of their organized family ministries to provide platforms to share the gospel and to minister to an increasing population of people from nontraditional households. **B**

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FEATURED

5 BIG IDEAS FOR MINISTRY TO INCREASINGLY DYSFUNCTIONAL HOUSEHOLDS

MEL WALKER

March 9th, 2020

We all understand the value of good homes. Statistics reveal that kids growing up in a consistent Christian home are much more likely to live for God and to be active in church when they become adults. Of course, it would be fantastic if every kid in our youth group was from healthy and supportive families where Mom and Dad both love the Lord and are enthusiastic supporters of the church's youth ministry. But, that's probably not what today's youth workers are seeing.

According to the authors of "*Generation Z: A Century in the Making*" (Seemiller, Corey and Meghan, Grace, published by Routledge, New York, 2019, Chapter 8), today's young people are facing growing numbers of single-parent homes, cohabiting or non-married parents, multi-generational guardians, and same-sex couples. It is becoming increasingly clear that non-traditional and dysfunctional households are on the rise. Plus, due to youth sporting events and other extra-curricular activities, more and more teenagers are probably missing church services and youth group meetings due to other priorities and involvements.

Those of us in youth ministry are serving in a time when much is being written and said about the importance of family ministry. However, since we are ministering in a post-Christian culture when the family unit is becoming less Christian and less involved in church programming, the time has come for the church to think

through how to reach and disciple today's young people when their families do not support and maybe even do not attend the church.

(For more information, see my article, *8 Urgent Insights on Gen Z that Every Pastor Needs to Know*, at: <https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/urgent-insights-on-gen-z-that-every-pastor-needs-to-know.html>.)

Effective youth ministries through the next several years must consider how to reach this generation for Christ and how to disciple them toward long-time maturity in Him. The days where the “nuclear family” (meaning the traditional family unit of Dad, Mom, and kids living under the same roof) being the nucleus or core of culture are gone. Current trends reveal that a growing number of American households no longer see church programming as an important and vital influence on their kids.

That's why one popular Christian researcher recently observed, “Churches that want to understand and serve teens and young adults should focus first on true household ministry, and not just family ministry.” (*Households of Faith*, published by Barna Group & Lutheran Hour Ministries, Ventura, CA, 2019, page 23.)

What can today's youth workers and other church leaders do to build thriving ministries in a culture where many kids are likely to not have a positive support-system from God-honoring parents at home? Here are some practical suggestions that churches may be able to implement to minister to today's non-traditional and dysfunctional households.

Keep doing what youth ministry does well.

Historical youth ministry came to fruition with the goals of reaching kids for Christ, providing a place to develop positive peer relationships, and giving adults the opportunity to build growing connections with young people. The current generation demands a return to those basic priorities for youth ministries.

Present the Gospel – and creatively teach Biblical truth in a way that applies to life & answers life's tough questions.

Today's households need good news – and we have THE “good news”, the gospel of Jesus Christ. We also must re-prioritize the creative experience of Scripture so that our students see that it applies to their lives today and is God's source for them to find answers for their most difficult questions.

Provide and promote a safe environment for kids.

An increasing number of today's kids are growing up in difficult home situations with fractured relationships with their parents or guardians. Plus, daily news cycles are filled with accounts of adult predators who prey on vulnerable minors. *More than ever, churches must provide and then promote the safe environment.*

Mandatory background checks and clearances are a required starting point; but churches must also intentionally build their reputations in the community as a place that loves and cares for kids.

Offer quality, spiritual resources.

To have an effective and relevant presence in today's post-Christian culture, churches will need to position themselves as a positive repository of community-oriented resources. This will perhaps include making personal and family counseling available for today's struggling households, mentoring younger parents (see Titus 2:1-8), and using the church property, facilities, and budget more to meet the practical needs of the community.

Youth workers should seek to connect with kids in their “world” and work with their over-scheduled lives.

Many youth workers are experiencing the trend that today's busy teenagers are not regularly attending youth group meetings or church services. Youth sports and other extracurricular activities, jobs, homework, and other commitments often come before church functions. *Wise youth workers must make connections with teenagers outside of the church walls by attending their functions or by volunteering to serve somehow in the local schools.* Instead of complaining about how busy today's kids are, maybe youth workers should rearrange our schedules to meet with kids in public places at other times – like maybe meeting them for coffee before school.

In these days of an increasing number of non-traditional, dysfunctional households, the church must commit to being “the church” – to do what God instructed the church to do. The statistics may tell us that the majority of kids who go on for God are from “good” homes, but church leaders must commit to reach young people for Christ by serving their communities, teaching and preaching the Word of God that relates to life today, and discipling kids to lasting maturity in Christ.

For other resources related to helping at-risk youth and ministering to dysfunctional families, check out the follow downloads from NYWC:

- [Reaching, Ministering, and Mentoring High-Risk Youth](#)
- [Layers: Recognizing the Systemic Condition of At-Risk Youth](#)
- [Danger! At Risk Phases](#)

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Chapter Thirteen: Family Ministry

“Continue in What You Have Learned...”

Kids grow up!

This unbelievably profound (I’m being somewhat facetious here) statement sits at the core premise of this book. God wants each one of us to grow up. For example, take a look at Ephesians 4:11-16, especially verse 14: *“we are no longer to be children”* (NASB). The Lord wants His followers to move beyond infancy, both physically and spiritually, to maturity. God’s goal for our kids is that they grow through a lifelong process of spiritual development to become more and more conformed to the image of His son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).

That’s why Godly Christian parents and church leaders alike must be on the same page. Through a collaboration of both institutions working together (see Chapter 4), the next generation has the secure fences to grow up and go on living for Him throughout their lives – from childhood into adulthood. Paul’s letter to the Ephesian church makes this premise very clear. The church is to be involved in the spiritual maturation process (see Ephesians 4:13-14) and so are Christian parents, especially fathers (see Ephesians 6:4). In other words, it is God’s design for the family and the church to work together in an intentional strategy to help the next generation grow in spiritual maturity.

This substantiates the idea that a balanced view of youth ministry is essential for the church. It was never God’s intention for our kids to remain as adolescents. He wants them to grow up into adulthood and go on for Him – and that’s why the collaborative influences of the home and the church working together for the common goal of on-going spiritual maturity are so important.

There are, however, differing views and opinions within evangelical Christianity today on how the family and the church could and should work together. One source of research and information concerning these various viewpoints is *Perspective on Family Ministry* by Paul Renfro, Brandon Shields, and Jay Strother (edited by Timothy Paul Jones).¹⁸⁷ This book contains some very interesting comments from different perspectives relating to family ministry. One of the most helpful aspects of the book is the chart on page 52 that outlines the different models of family ministry. The following characteristics are identified:

Programmatic Ministry Model:

“Ministries are organized in separate ‘silos,’ with little consistent inter-generational interaction. ‘Family ministry,’ when it exists, is one more program. The program may provide training, intervention, or activities for families. In scheduling programs, churches may deliberately seek to be sensitive to family’s needs and schedules.”

Family-Based Ministry Model:

“Church’s programmatic structure remains unchanged, but each separate ministry plans and programs in ways that intentionally draw generations together and encourage parents to take part in the discipleship of their children and youth.”

Family-Equipping Ministry Model:

“Although age-organized programs and events still exist, the church is completely restructured to draw the generations together, equipping parents, championing their role as primary disciple-makers, and holding them accountable to fulfill this role.”

Family-Integrated Ministry Model:

“The church eliminates age-segregated programs and events. All or nearly all programs and events are multigenerational, with a strong focus on parents’ responsibility to evangelize and to disciple their own children.”¹⁸⁸

It’s interesting to take a look at the varying ways churches tend to approach their ministries toward families and parents. The traditional approach to youth ministry seems to reflect the *Programmatic Ministry Model* where age groups are virtually segregated from each other throughout the spectrum of church ministries. For example, teenagers often receive their own specialized educational training, their own style of worship, and often have their own pastors. At the other end of this continuum is the *Family-Integrated Ministry Model* where peer ministry is practically abolished in favor of family units meeting together for mutual training, worship, and where parents, especially fathers, are trained and encouraged to be the only influencers over their children.

As I mentioned in Chapter 5, one of the most vocal leaders of the *Family-Integrated Ministry Model* is Voddie Baucham, preaching pastor at Grace Family Baptist Church in Spring, Texas,¹⁸⁹ and the author of *Family-Driven Faith*. Baucham observes that “the family-integrated church movement is easily distinguishable in its insistence on integration as an ecclesiological principle.” He goes on to explain, “Our church has no youth ministers, children’s ministers, or nursery. We do not divide families into component parts. We do not separate the mature women from the young teenager girls who need their guidance. We do not separate the toddler from his parents during worship. In fact, we don’t even do it in Bible study.”¹⁹⁰

Another influential source that has sparked a great deal of conversation and discussion about this particular approach is

the relatively recent movie *Divided*,¹⁹¹ produced by Christian filmmaker Philip Leclerc. This documentary asserts that modern youth ministry is actually contrary to Scripture, and that it has its roots in Darwinistic evolutionary thought. Discerning readers and viewers will need to draw their own conclusions about this model of ministry. (For a balanced and honest evaluation of this movie, I recommend that you read the review of *Divided the Movie* by youth evangelist Greg Stier in the November/December 2011 issue of *Group Magazine*.¹⁹²)

Let me be clear on this point because it is so important. I wholeheartedly believe that parents are to be the primary influencers over their children (for example, see Deuteronomy 6:1-9). I also believe that God has instituted His church to exist to help bring Christ-followers to maturity in Christ (for example, see Ephesians 4:11-16 and 2 Timothy 3:11-17). That's why I emphatically want to emphasize that even consistent Godly parents are not to be the *only* spiritual influencers upon their children. I must confess that I have personally talked to Christian parents all over the country who do not allow their children and teenagers to attend the church's Sunday school or youth groups out of some arrogance or misguided impression that the church will negatively affect their kids. The two Biblical, God-established institutions (the family and the church) must work together for the common goal of our kids going on to spiritual maturity. I'll discuss some of the key questions surrounding this issue in further detail below.

My own personal conviction is that there must be a collaborative effort between these two God-ordained institutions for the long term spiritual success of the next generation. A balance must be struck between these two above-mentioned extremes of how churches relate to families. I have already made the case in this book that a total segregation of the generations in the church is a huge mistake. It is also important to note that I am not a fan of the *family-only* philosophy of ministry for a vari-

ety of Biblical and practical reasons. Some of which I will outline in this chapter.

There is an initial question that must be addressed. Does the Bible advocate teaching everyone of all ages at the same level of educational instruction? And is it really wise to teach everyone of all ages in the same environment at the same level of instruction? In other words, do children, youth, and adults learn alike, or should the church and Godly Christian parents seek to work together somehow for the common goal of helping emerging generations grow to spiritual maturity?

A Premise of Growth and Development

I believe that the Bible is clear on the basic premise that children and adults are distinct and that those age groups have differing levels of personal and spiritual maturity. Take a quick look at the principles identified in the following passages:

- Various age groups are identified as distinct – Psalm 148:12
- Young men and old men are different – Proverbs 20:29
- Children were exempt from paying the temple tax – Matthew 17:25-26
- Jewish parents took 12-year olds to the temple in a significant rite of passage – Luke 2:41-42
- Children have immature thinking and reasoning development – 1 Corinthians 13:11
- God does not want us to stay as children – Ephesians 4:14
- Older Godly women are to teach younger women – Titus 2:3-4
- Older men and women are different than younger men and women – Titus 2:1-8
- People of different ages are to be treated differently – 1 Timothy 5:1-2

-Children, young men, and fathers were identified separately – 1 John 2:12-14

By inference, there seems to be a definite Biblical precedent for the importance of teaching specific age groups at a level they can understand, and within a structure where they can grow and develop spiritually. I also honestly believe that age-segregated ministry (e.g., children’s ministry, youth ministry, and adult ministry) partially came to such wide-spread acceptance out of a genuine desire to help the age groups learn and mature at their own appropriate learning levels. From a personal perspective, I spent several years of my professional ministry life as an editor of church youth materials, and I have first-hand experience in developing age-appropriate educational materials for use by church youth workers in Sunday schools and youth groups. It was certainly our motive to help students develop a personal grasp of the Scriptures in a way that could be applied to their day-to-day lives.

Again, a balanced approach is in order here. Parents and churches, working in harmony with each other for the spiritual good of the next generation can and should provide suitable learning and growing educational and training opportunities and experiences in a format where children, youth, and adults can learn and grow at their own levels. To put this another way, churches must balance youth ministries alongside of intentional and growing inter-generational connections.

My argument for a balanced approach to youth ministry (balancing peer ministry with strong inter-generational connections) is also seen in the Biblical concept of basic growth and maturity. Take a look once again at the opening sentence in this chapter, “Kids grow up!” Scripture is filled with references to the fundamental idea of personal and spiritual maturation. God never intended our offspring to remain children – He intended them to grow up. Practically speaking, that thought is prevalent throughout the Bible. God wants us to grow up.

Several years ago, during a routine visit to a local children's hospital to visit a young man from our church, I mistakenly entered the wrong room and met the family of a child who was either eight or nine years old and who hadn't grown in any area beyond the size of an infant. That heart-wrenching event gave me an incredible visual aid of how sad it is when there is no growth. This is true physically, and it's also true spiritually. God expects growth. His goal for His children is that we grow through the process of becoming more and more like His son the Lord Jesus Christ (again see Romans 8:29).

There's another very practical visual aid in life that provides an apt illustration for this priority of growth and development. Each of us is born into our own individual families and God certainly uses parents to facilitate growth – physically, emotionally, and spiritually. However, it has never been God's intention that children should remain with their parents throughout their entire lives. In fact, the Scriptures say, "*a man will leave his father and mother*" (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7, and Ephesians 5:31). Yes, parents are to be the primary spiritual influencers upon their children, but ultimately our kids will grow up into adulthood and live on their own. So, the goal here is adulthood and maturity. As Ephesians 4:14-16 puts it, "*We are no longer to be children...We are to grow up in all aspects into Him*" (NASB).

That grand mission is best accomplished through the shared efforts between consistent Godly parents and a Biblically-based local church.

The Role of the Church: Providing Spiritual Examples

What then is to be the role of the church in this process of developing spiritual maturity? Among other things, the church exists to provide Godly, spiritual examples of what it means to genuinely and actively live for Christ. (For a fuller understanding of the different purposes of the church see Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Church*.¹⁹³) The Bible is full of real-life illustra-

tions of what this looked like in the early church. Older people were seemingly actively involved in the lives of younger people (see Acts 12:1-17 for an example of an inter-generational prayer meeting), and the reciprocal was also true – the Apostle Paul specifically instructed his disciple, Timothy, to be an example to older people in the church in 1 Timothy 4:12: *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."*

The Scriptures also contain multiple explicit imperatives about this idea of living as an example in front of other believers. Here is a brief list of some of those mandates:

1 Corinthians 11:1 *"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."*

Philippians 3:17 *"Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you."*

1 Thessalonians 1:6-7 *"You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia."*

2 Timothy 1:13 *"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus."*

2 Timothy 2:2 *"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."*

2 Timothy 3:14 *“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it.”*

The early church got it. They understood the importance of developing Godly and growing inter-generational connections. The idea of being an example is quite clear in Scripture.

A Real Life Illustration – The Story of John Mark

For one illustration of what this looked like, let's take another quick look at the life of young John Mark. Again I encourage you to read Acts 12 and 13. Take the opportunity to identify from the text some of the people who specifically impacted his life during those formative early years. The people of the church met in his home for prayer – certainly members of the body of Christ provided multiple examples for him. His parents opened their home for the church to gather, so undoubtedly his parents were significant. The Apostle Peter showed up following his miraculous escape from a martyr's prison. Later on, Peter declared himself to be John Mark's spiritual father (see 1 Peter 5:13), and the early missionary team of Barnabas and Saul took him along on the first missions trip ever. Several people invested in his life and served as spiritual examples for this young man who grew up in the church.

The story, of course, continues with some bumps along the way. Acts 13:1-13 tells the account of how John Mark quit the missionary team and went back home to Jerusalem. This departure ultimately caused a major dissension between Saul (soon to be Paul) and Barnabas (see Acts 15:36-41). But, you know the rest of the story. John Mark didn't end up as a quitter. In fact, at the end of his life, Paul wrote that John Mark was *“helpful to me in my ministry”* (2 Timothy 4:11).

John Mark's Godly parents, the body of Christ in the Jerusalem church that gathered for prayer in his home, the Apostle Peter (who himself knew what it was like to bounce back af-

ter failures), the hard-liner Saul/Paul, and his uncle (some translations use the word for cousin or relative) Barnabas (see Colossians 4:10), all played significant roles in his early spiritual development and all were undoubtedly used of God to help propel this young man into a life of profitable ministry where he would ultimately serve as the human author of the Gospel of Mark.

The Role of Parents: Providing Consistent Models

We've discussed the role of the church in the spiritual growth and development of young people; now let's take a further look at the role of parents in that process. Unquestionably, parents are to be the primary influencers upon their children, as I have previously stated. This should be accomplished through an intentional strategy of "*training and instruction*" (see Ephesians 6:4), which certainly implies a deliberate plan of "nurture and admonition" (which is the phrase used in the King James Version). In other words, successful parenting requires systematic guidance and effective discipline.¹⁹⁴

Did you notice the words I used in the last paragraph – *intentional, deliberate, and systematic*? Parenting definitely requires careful and purposeful responsibility – and yet, so many parents take it so lightly and so haphazardly. In fact, a report from the Barna Group research organization revealed that 85% of Christian parents believe they are primarily responsible for the spiritual development of their children, but very few parents spend *any* time during the week interacting with their children on spiritual matters.¹⁹⁵ Most parents responding to their survey had no intentional plans for their children's spiritual training. That attitude is far removed from the Biblical concept of parenting as presented in passages such as Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:4.

That brings me to what I believe is the key to effective Biblical parenting – parents with genuine, consistent, and *unfeigned* or un-faked faith. For clarification of this idea, take a look

back at what may be the clearest explanation of true Biblical parenting in Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

I understand that some Hebrew scholars see a collective focus in this passage on the entire nation of Israel. They say that the language in the text is plural and could apply to the culture as a whole and not just individual parents. Their point is that the familiar commands presented in this passage were given to the community at large instead of specific parents, and gave the larger nation a hands-on responsibility with the next generation.¹⁹⁶

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the Bible expects parenting to be an intentional strategy where one generation loves the Lord *“with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength”* and then lives that relationship out in specific ways in front of the next generation. Notice that the language in this passage indicates that this transfer takes place as life happens (*“impress them; talk about them; tie them”*). Parents were to make their relationship with God the top priority in their lives and then utilize the various situations in life to purposefully and systematically teach and show their children to love Him that way, too. The key here was the consistency of the parents. Their genuine faith can’t help but be transferred from generation to generation.

In the New Testament, the classic human illustration of genuine faith is vividly portrayed in Paul’s description of Lois and Eunice in 2 Timothy 1:5 where Paul writes, *“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and lived in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.”* Timothy’s grandmother and mother were amazing visual aids of that genuine, sincere, real, or un-faked faith – and Timothy caught it, too. Twice in that one verse it says that Timothy himself possessed *genuine* faith. It was real in his life as well.

A Real Life Illustration – The Story of Timothy

So, what can Christian parents do to help their children grow up and go on for God? I'm convinced that we must look to the Scriptures for the answers. In the pages of the New Testament we are told the stories of some young people who grew up before our eyes (so to speak) in the Biblical narrative and who continued to live for God long into their adult lives. One of those young men was Timothy. We meet him in Acts 16 as a young man growing up in church and we read his story throughout the Epistles, including Paul's last letter to him in 2 Timothy. There are many things in the Bible that we can learn about Timothy, but for the sake of this chapter, let's take a look at some of the things his parents (especially his mother, Eunice – see 2 Timothy 1:5) did right.

It's important to note that parenting is never a formula or a recipe. It doesn't work to frivolously think that a few quick ideas lead to spiritual success with our kids. However, if we look at the sweeping principles that seemed to guide this family, we can take away some very practical advice for raising our own kids for God today.

1. A consistent lifestyle (2 Timothy 1:5).

Probably the most obvious thing that this family did right was Eunice's and Lois's consistent or genuine walk with God. The Bible calls theirs an "*unfeigned*" (KJV) or un-faked faith! Timothy's mom and grandmother demonstrated a genuine relationship with God – and it impacted Timothy. Notice again in verse 5 that Timothy also demonstrated a genuine faith. He grew up and went on for God – and that's what we want from our kids, too.

2. Communication of God's word (2 Timothy 3:15).

The second thing this family did right was that they made it a priority to communicate Biblical truth. Notice that from his earliest days, Timothy learned the Scriptures. The next two verses (2 Timothy 3:16 and 17) reveal that this strategy was much more than rote memorization of the Text. He also learned that Biblical principles are "*profitable*" for life and that these principles lead to true spiritual maturity.

3. Collaboration with the church (Acts 16:1-5).

There's another key element to their strategy that is worth identifying and that is their cooperation with the church to help develop Timothy's faith. Acts 16 identifies him as a "*disciple,*" who as a young man already had a good testimony with the other believers. He also was personally selected by the Apostle Paul to go along on this missionary journey. The text expounds on the purpose of their ministry: "*So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.*" Obviously, the church was a priority to young Timothy. He grew up in church and committed himself to a church-based ministry.

4. Concern for people and culture (Acts 16:1-5).

The Acts 16 passage also presents an interesting scenario of Timothy's circumcision even though he was a Greek (see verse 1). He perhaps was willing to submit to this cultural ritual due to the cross-cultural background in his own family. This somewhat dysfunctional family environment undoubtedly produced a heart-felt concern for other people and a genuine sensitivity for others.

5. Commitment to ministry (Acts 16:1-5).

The final positive thing I'd like to identify from this family was their dedication to God's work. They were willing to allow their son to follow Paul along on this journey. Without any visible hesitation on anyone's part, Timothy joined the missionary team and set off on what was the beginning of his call to vocational ministry.

Timothy was a young man who grew up and went on for God. The narrative of Scripture points out some identifiable things that helped in this process. Perhaps there is practical wisdom here for today's Christian families to implement into the fabric of raising their own kids.

I love how the Apostle Paul admonished his readers in Colossians 2:6: "*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught.*" We want our kids to grow up and go on for Him. So does God!

Two Important Questions about Ministering to Parents Families:

What should the church do to help weak, ineffective, and dysfunctional families?

According to a statistical overview of recent news reports: (1) the divorce rate in America hovers around 50%; (2) the typical age for people getting married has risen from around age 22 to almost age 29 in a short period of time; and (3) fewer and fewer people are choosing to get married at all.¹⁹⁷ Added to that is the recent political conversations about the rise of same-sex marriages in the United States.¹⁹⁸ There is also ample anecdotal evidence out there to substantiate a claim for a propensity for unhealthy and dysfunctional family units. I don't think it's

much of a stretch to say that the institution of marriage in popular culture is in deep trouble.

Churches ministering in today's culture will need to address the new normalcy facing the traditional nuclear family.¹⁹⁹ However, this trend must not release the church from its Biblical imperative to *"equip"* (Ephesians 4:12) for *"the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"* (NKJV).

I am a long-time advocate of the church developing an intentional strategy for building up solid, healthy, and God-honoring families. This will require training, education, and a purposeful plan to develop inter-generational mentoring relationships between older "successful" parents helping and encouraging new, younger parents. Parenting is too important to leave this process to chance – especially when a simple approach of connecting the generations could proactively solve the problem of younger parents not knowing what to do.

I also believe that churches can and should develop and institute a strategy where healthy, strong parents could "adopt" children and teens from weak, dysfunctional families. Again, this point illustrates the importance of the church providing intentional, inter-generational mentors for kids from these weak and unhealthy family situations.

The answer to this question clarifies the practical importance of an effective and Biblically-based local church youth ministry – not because youth workers supplant the Biblical authority and responsibility of parents, but because there will be many, many non-traditional families within today's culture. I think this idea is exemplified in passages such as James 1:27, *"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world"* and Acts 6:1-7, Romans 15:26, Galatians 3:28, and Colossians 3:11. The Biblical ideal for the church is that it should reach (Mark 15:16), include, welcome, and minister to everyone.

Are parents the best (the only) disciplers of their children?

As Scott T. Brown, the author of *A Weed in the Church* and the director of the National Center of Family-Integrated Churches,²⁰⁰ emphasizes, “Scripture teaches that the discipleship of youth should be directed by parents and oriented around the family’s day-to-day activities.” He lists the following Biblical passages in support for his overarching claim: Deut. 11:18-19, Acts 10:24, Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Eph. 6:4, Col. 4:15, Philemon 1:1-2, and 2 Timothy 1:5.²⁰¹

Certainly these verses contain some general support for the role of the home in the life of believers. However, I believe it is quite a stretch to cite these particular references as proof texts for a true Biblical model of discipleship. Some of the references listed here refer to the basic responsibilities and roles of parenting and others speak of places when the early, first-century church met in the homes of believers.

I want to reemphasize that I unequivocally believe that parents are to be the primary influencers on their children – and this definitely includes training, education, and spiritual development.

Yet, it is important for us to remember here that the primary Biblical pattern of true discipleship happened outside of the home and family structure (see Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Timothy 2:2, and 2 Timothy 3:10-11). Biblical examples of discipleship include Christ with His disciples and the Apostle Paul with men such as Timothy, Silas, and Luke. (One excellent source that identifies and explains the Biblical model of discipleship is Robert Coleman’s work, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*.²⁰²) This intentional educational method required a great amount of teacher-to-student time with each other and directly followed the rabbinical ideal of students following and learning from hands-on teachers (see Luke 4:40, “...everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher”).

In Christ's classic treatise on the cost of discipleship in Luke 14:25-27, the Lord told His followers, *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."*

This may sound very harsh, but the truth is that sometimes family entanglements actually get in the way of true discipleship. It has been my experience after having served for several years as an administrator and faculty member in Bible colleges, that in some cases even well-meaning Christian parents stand in the way of their children serving on the mission field or in full-time vocational ministry. In other situations, I've known people who aren't willing to follow God's call or leading in their own lives due to the excuse of handling family responsibilities. It sounds callous and harsh, but it does happen – quite often in fact. Families can, in fact, hinder and thwart genuine spiritual growth.

I am absolutely convinced that the New Testament clearly presents the crucial collaboration of parents and the church being actively and intentionally involved in the spiritual development of children (see Ephesians 4:11-16 and Ephesians 6:1-4). Parents, especially fathers, must take the Biblical responsibility to teach and train their children spiritually. Likewise, the church must equip believers to serve the Lord and educate Christ followers toward spiritual maturity. The partnership of these two institutions working together for the spiritual growth of the next generation is a powerful and life-changing influence.

United Families Dividing Churches: An Assessment of the Family Integrated Church Movement

Douglas Brown, Ph.D.

The Family Integrated Church Movement (FICM) is having a growing impact within fundamental Baptist churches—and unfortunately it is not all good. Since the mid-1990s an increasing number of families within fundamental churches have gravitated toward the family-integrated approach. In addition, families entrenched in the movement have been drawn to fundamental churches because of their emphasis on Biblical preaching and conservatism. At first glance the influence of the FICM might seem innocent and even beneficial for traditional churches, but instead it is proving to be problematic for many pastors and churches. The FICM mindset is dividing churches.

Understanding the FICM

The FICM is comprised of evangelical churches, pastors, and laymen who share a distinct philosophical approach toward the family and church. Advocates of family-integrated churches (FIC) believe that families should worship and fellowship together in age-integrated (i.e., multigenerational) services and activities. Conversely they insist that virtually all age-segregated ministries and activities at church, such as Sunday School or youth ministries, are unequivocally unbiblical.

The FICM is not a denomination but rather a loose association of churches and organizations represented by a variety of denominational perspectives. Some key leaders are:

- Scott Brown, director of the National Center for Family-Integrated Churches (NCFIC)
- Doug Phillips, president of Vision Forum Ministries
- Voddie Baucham Jr., professor, author, and pastor of Grace Family Baptist Church near Houston, Texas
- Eric Wallace, president of the Institute for Uniting Church and Home (IUCAH).

The NCFIC, founded in 2001, is the flagship organization for the FICM and has a national network of more than 800 churches. It should be no surprise that the FICM has close ties to the homeschooling movement and in many respects is its natural outgrowth. While home schooling is not essential to the FICM, the vast majority of families in FIC homeschool their children.⁵

The Central Concern of the FICM

God has established three institutions to bring order to creation and fulfill His purposes: the family, the state, and the church. Scripture delineates specific responsibilities for each institution, and ideally the relationship between the family, state, and church should be harmonious and complementary, each institution fulfilling their God-given roles within their distinct jurisdictions. According to those in the FICM, the fundamental problem within evangelical churches is the skewed relationship of the family and church.⁶ Leaders of the FICM argue that churches have usurped the responsibility and role of families and consequently enabled families (and especially fathers) to abdicate and abandon their God-given responsibility to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

According to the FICM, this distortion and blurring of jurisdictions have led to an alarming crisis within the American church. Youth are abandoning the church and Christianity at incredible rates. Studies suggest that as much as 40% and up to 88% of today's young people are leaving evangelical churches once they leave the home.⁷ In addition, only about 10% of churched teens have a Biblical worldview.⁸

These statistics are shocking and prove that something is clearly wrong. Those within the FICM believe the root of the problem is in fact the very way in which evangelical churches operate today.

Adherents of family integration identify the culture of age segregation within church ministry as the key culprit. They consider ministries that separate families by age (or for any other reason) as unbiblical and a form of “practical apostasy.”⁹ These ministries include Sunday School; youth ministry; children’s church; children’s clubs (like Awana and Kids4Truth); VBS; youth camps; college, singles, and senior ministries; and even nurseries (for many family-integrated churches).

Scott Brown contends that age segregation is wrong for several reasons.¹⁰ First, using the Regulative Principle and historical-grammatical hermeneutics, he argues that age segregation is unfounded in Scripture and is therefore unwarranted and indefensible. At the same time, he points to examples in Scripture where families worshipped together as the normal pattern. Second, he asserts that the very concept of age-segregated training is the product of humanistic philosophers, educators, and sociologists and is therefore corrupt. Consequently, the church has inadvertently replaced Biblical truth and methodology with pagan, non-Christian philosophies and practices. Third, Brown suggests that age-segregated ministries are wrong because they have failed to produce lasting fruit and are not working.

Distinctives of the FICM

The leaders of the FICM see themselves as part of a reformation movement within the church similar to the Protestant Reformation. As Voddie Baucham states, “This is a reformation, a paradigm shift. . . . We are not talking about a new program; we are talking about a complete overhaul of the philosophy that is accepted in our churches, colleges, seminaries, and homes as the only way to do it.”¹¹ They describe the church as the “family of families” to explain the complementary relationship between the church and family, that is, the church should acknowledge the authority and jurisdiction of families within the church.

So what do family-integrated churches look like?¹² First and foremost, they worship together. Virtually all services and activities are intergenerational. Second, there is conversely an absence of age-segregated ministries. Baucham summarizes, “The family-integrated church movement is easily distinguishable in its insistence on integration as an ecclesiological principle. . . . There is no systematic age segregation in the family-integrated church!”¹³ Third, “the family is the evangelism and discipleship arm of the family-integrated church.”¹⁴ Advocates in the FICM lay the responsibility of making disciples on the shoulders of parents, and primarily fathers, based upon the Bible’s clear teaching on childrearing (Deut. 6:1–9; Eph. 6:1–4). Fathers are expected to lead their families in worship and catechism.¹⁵ As a result, church takes a secondary role in the discipleship process, primarily training and equipping fathers and mothers to do the work of the ministry. Intergenerational teaching (when the older teach the younger, e.g., Titus 2:3, 4) takes place not through church programs but rather through informal relationships. Families are expected to reach their own children with the gospel and reach the lost outside the church through simple obedience to the Great Commission and hospitality.¹⁶ Fourth, family-integrated churches place an emphasis on education as a key component of discipleship. This involves not only family catechism but also homeschooling for most.

Other common characteristics in family-integrated churches include an emphasis on strong marriages, male headship and Biblical patriarchy, elder rule ecclesiology, courting, and the “quiverfull” approach to family planning. While it would be wrong to see the FICM as monolithic, the majority of leaders fall into either the Presbyterian/Reformed or Baptist wings of the Reformed tradition. Most see themselves as carrying the baton of the Puritans in matters related to the family and church.

Evaluating the FICM

How should we evaluate the FICM? We find several areas of agreement. First, those in the FICM have a high view of Scripture and correctly see it as the sole authority for doctrine and practice in the church. Second, they place a high value on expository preaching. Third, proponents should also be commended for staying in the church. Their ecclesiology reflects the New Testament more closely than other family movements such as cell churches and home churches who have virtually abandoned any semblance of ecclesiology. Fourth, those concerned with worldliness in the church will find an affinity with FIC authors.

Finally, I also believe they are essentially correct in identifying the breakdown of the family as the fundamental problem in why youth are deserting the church. Those who work with youth need to acknowledge that parents have the greatest spiritual impact.¹⁷ So the FICM's emphasis on parental responsibility in the spiritual training of their own children is welcome and needed. I have personally benefited from some of their writings on family worship.¹⁸

We find, however, several areas of disagreement with the FICM.¹⁹ The seminal problem with the FICM is the point upon which they are most insistent: absolutely no age-segregated ministries. This conviction is wrong for a number of reasons. First, it is wrong hermeneutically. FIC advocates protest vigorously that since there are no explicit Biblical directives or examples for age-segregated programs, they are unbiblical. But this kind of hermeneutical approach is flawed. Using this reasoning, things like church buildings, pews, musical instruments, and technological advancements, along with church officers such as clerks and treasurers, would have to be deemed unbiblical as well. FIC adherents press the Regulative Principle too far. This Reformation principle is intended to regulate corporate worship at Sunday services, not the outworking of the Great Commission in other activities.²⁰

Second, it is wrong theologically. The mandate to "make disciples" is given to the church (Matt. 28:19, 20). This mandate is to reach all people, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, age, or family status. The church is not required to reach individuals through their families. Although this normally may be the case, it certainly is not mandated. In fact, Jesus announced that He came to bring division to families, which is often the practical effect of the gospel (Matt. 10:34-36; Luke 12:51-53). Technically, churches are not comprised of families; they are comprised of believing individuals (at least in Baptist polity). In this sense, the church's authority to disciple individuals both includes families and transcends families.

Further, in Ephesians 4:7-16, we see a Biblical rationale for teaching ministries in the church. Paul wrote that God gifted the church with leaders, such as pastors and teachers, to equip the saints to accomplish the work of the ministry (4:11, 12). This work is essentially discipleship, and the heart of discipleship is teaching. So pastors are to train and equip the saints to teach.

This is a principled, Biblical argument for qualified men and women to teach the body of Christ. Christian education programs are simply venues to accomplish Biblical discipleship.

Third, insistence on family integration is wrong practically. In my opinion, the leaders of the FICM have failed to prove that age-segregated ministries are the cause of the problem. Instead, the family integration philosophy has actually generated divisions in traditional (nonintegrated) churches rather than unity. Families involved in the FICM tend to make their convictions a test of fellowship, choosing to disassociate with believers in their own church who do not share FIC values. Both Scott and Baucham acknowledge this unfortunate phenomenon in their writings and sermons. In addition, the emphasis on family discipleship with the FIC has the potential for alienating or neglecting those outside of nuclear families (e.g., singles and broken families).

In conclusion, the emphasis in the FICM on parental responsibility is welcome and needed. However, instead of uniting the church and home, the FIC philosophy often leads to division in the church.

End Notes

1 The NCFIC website (ncfic.org) has numerous articles and resources that articulate the vision for family-integrated churches. Particularly noteworthy is the NCFIC Confession and the documentary *Divided, The Movie*.

2 Vision Forum Ministries (visionforumministries.org) provides resources on many issues related to the family, such as home education, civil and legal issues, as well as a family integration. Especially informative for the FICM is its statement on Biblical Patriarchy.

3 Baucham is probably the most mainstream spokesman for the FICM. In addition to his books, his church website and blog have a wealth of information about the FICM (gracefamilybaptist.net).

4 Wallace promotes more of a mediating position between what he calls the Traditional Ministry (with multiple programs) and the Over-Corrective Designs (where the church focuses on nuclear families alone). He calls it the Household Relationship Design.

5 J. Mark Fox, *Family-Integrated Church: Healthy Families, Healthy Church* (USA: Xulon Press, 2006), 43, 44.

6 The majority within the FICM would also advocate that the relationship between the family and state is askew as well. Most are strong advocates for home schooling and believe the state has no right to educate youth.

7 Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), 19–36; Scott T. Brown, *A Weed in the Church: How a Culture of Age Segregation is Destroying the Younger Generation, Fragmenting the Family, and Dividing the Church* (Wake Forest: National Center for Family Integrated Churches, 2010), 37, 38.

8 Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 176, 184.

9 Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 37.

10 Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 71–130. See also Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 176–85.

11 Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 197, 204.

12 Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 195–203; Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 141–94.

13 Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 196, 97.

14 Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 197.

15 This is developed in Baucham's newest book, *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011).

16 See Paul Renfro's contributions int. P. Jones, ed., *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2009).

17 Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 215–19.

18 I made this same argument in my January 2000 Faith Pulpit article, "Family-Based Youth Ministry" (faith.edu/resources/publications/faith-pulpit).

19 Their views on patriarchy, however, are a distortion of Biblical complementarianism.

20 For critical reviews of the FICM see A. J. Köstenberger and D. W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2nd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 260-67; J. Webb, "The Family-Integrated Church Movement: An Exploration in Ecclesiology" (MAR Thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2009).

21 See Terry Johnson, "What Does the Regulative Principle Require of Church Members" 9Marks eJournal 8, no. 3 (May/June 2011)" 32-34, <http://www.9marks.org/files/ejournal/201183mayjun/pdf> (accessed February 21, 2010). Ironically, Scott Brown quotes Mark Dever's definition of the Regulative Principle in making his point about age-segregated programs (*A Weed in the Church*, 83), yet Dever's 9Marks E-Journal for Jan/Feb 2012 is dedicated to the subject of the Sunday School (9marks.org/ejournal/dont-be-too-cool-sunday-school, accessed February 13, 2012). Here's the point: not everyone who subscribes to the Regulative Principle would agree with Brown's application of it to age-segregation.

22 So also Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 259.

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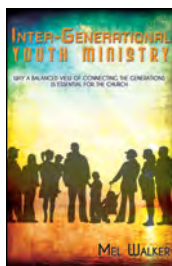
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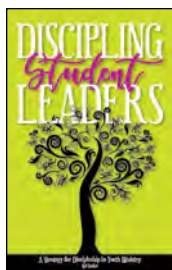
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Mel Walker is the president and co-founder of Vision For Youth – an international network of youth ministries, and he is currently the youth pastor at Wyoming Valley Church in Wilkes-Barre, PA. He has spent over 45 years as a youth pastor, pastor, professor, administrator, ministry leader, editor, writer, and speaker. Mel has visited approximately 30 churches each year for over 30 years – and he is the author of 14 books and hundreds of free-lance articles on various topics relating to youth ministry. Mel, and his wife, Peggy, speak to hundreds of young people, young adults, church leaders, and youth workers each year in a wide variety of events and venues. They are also the parents of three adult children – all of whom are in vocational, career ministry – and they currently have 10 grandchildren.

You can contact Mel, find out more about him and his ministry, and order his books at: www.YouthMinistryQuestions.com.



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Mel & his wife, Peggy, are the parents of 3 grown children, all of whom are in vocational ministry. Kristi is a missionary youth worker in Berlin, Germany; Todd, and his wife, Janine, is a pastor in Wilkes-Barre, PA (and also serves as a Vision For Youth missionary on secular college campuses); and Travis, along with his wife, Kaci, is a discipleship pastor in Ankeny, Iowa. Mel & Peggy now have 10 grandchildren.

After serving as a youth pastor in Michigan for several years, Mel then taught youth and family ministry courses and served in various administrative roles at Faith Baptist Bible College in Ankeny, Iowa, and then at Baptist Bible College & Seminary in Clarks Summit, PA. He has also been an adjunct professor of youth and family ministry courses at three other colleges and seminaries. Mel ministered for almost 10 years as the director of student ministries for Regular Baptist Press in Schaumburg, Illinois – where he led in the complete revision of their youth ministry curriculum.

Mel is the co-editor of 2 major anthologies of youth ministry (*Pushing the Limits: Unleashing the Potential of Student Ministry*, published by Thomas Nelson; and *The Greenhouse Project: Cultivating Students of Influence*, published by Word of Life). He also wrote 3 books, published by Regular Baptist Press on the subjects of youth discipleship, mentoring, and evangelism; and a devotional booklet for students on Biblical decision making. He recently wrote *Inter-Generational Youth Ministry: Why a Balanced Approach to Youth Ministry is Essential for the Church* and *Going On For God: Encouraging the Next Generation to Grow Up and Go On For God*, which were published by Vision For Youth Publishing.

He has been actively involved in various aspects of youth and family ministry for over 40 years and is currently the youth pastor at Wyoming Valley Church in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

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