

Restructuring the Church for Equipping and Evangelism

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If we are to be successful in reformation, we must first structure the church to give fathers a bigger role.

God's delivery system for truth has been almost completely been ignored by modern Church. The primary delivery system of the Old Testament covenants, the line of the messiah, and the communication of the Word of God from one generation to the next was meant to be a handoff from a father to his sons.

The Old Testament pattern you see repeated over and over again is from father to son, father to son, father to son... Old Testament writers were careful to document the genealogical lines from one generation to the next.

The Father to son handoff is important to God, but it has become not so important in our churches.

The purpose for our families is much larger than our families.

We don't build strong families to have a nice life with well mannered children who bless us. We don't build strong families for our own benefit. We do it in obedience to God, so that the members would be prepared to give their lives for the kingdom of God through spreading the gospel to their children and neighbors and the nations from one generation to the next.

We build strong families, because strong families build strong churches, and churches are Jesus Christ's body, building, family... His hands and feet.

Most Churches never involve parents and children together in discipleship and worship.

It might be said that the most family friendly time on Sunday morning in the typical church in America is the ride to church in the car. After that, the family goes their separate ways. When the family arrives at church on Sunday, they separate to their classes, and the church is structured to keep them apart until it is time to get back in the car and go home.

The Church Fragments the Family

A few years ago, I was an elder in a church where during one elders meeting I drew a graph on the white board to illustrate what we were doing to fragment our families.

I listed all the ministries we were providing on the top of the graph, and on the left, what function they provided whether it was for equipping or evangelism, and I added "fragments family", meaning that the ministry fragmented or separated the family from one another.

The graph or spreadsheet revealed that every thing we were doing fragmented the family. Every single opportunity in the church separated the family. I argued that we needed, not to make everything family integrated, but to shift some of our programs so that there were times that we kept them together. Here is how it looked:

COMING SOON

This is the pattern of almost every church in America. We almost always separate the family for equipping, evangelism and prayer. We are used to it, and we like it best that way.

The result is that, in our churches, sons and daughters almost never see their fathers worship or pray.

Not the best way to train a team:

If you wanted to train a baseball team to work together to win games, you would not isolate them from one another during training. Well functioning teams need to hear the same things and share the same experiences. They need to experience the instruction and practice together if they ever hope to be effective in winning. In the same way, if you take the team (the family) and always separate them during training, they are all hearing different kinds of things with different levels of quality and they have little hope of rallying around a central message.

This is not only a stupid way to train a team, it is a stupid way to train a family.

In the church we ought to be teaching both families (biological and spiritual) together. We are both physical and spiritual families. All are brothers and sisters.

Two kinds of Teams in the Church

In the church there are two kinds of teams, the households of earthly fathers (see I Chronicles chapters 1-10) and the household of God. The households of fathers come together and join with the household of God. There is the biological family and there is the spiritual family.

What causes the families to be fragmented? It is the priority of age segregation. So the question to be asked is: how effective is age segregation to the spiritual training process? My answer: not very effective at all.

Parents are busy with everything but the personal discipleship of their children. I am on the Board of Directors of our local crisis pregnancy center, so I am in line to learn a few things about teen pregnancy. Do you know the time of day when most teen pregnancies occur? Between 3pm and 6pm. Why? Mom and dad are not home. Mom and dad do not care enough to personally guide their children, so the children guide themselves. Mom is busy working. She has abandoned her God-given role to be a worker at home and her daughters are getting pregnant and her sons are looking at pornography because no one who really loves them is walking beside them.

We have adult-only apartment complexes, adult movies, churches where children are always removed from the presence of adults.

Children are a hassle

At a time when nearly every social structure separates the family, there is one that should break the mold and bring families together. This structure is the church.

Until recently (the past 150 years) the practice of the Christian Church was to gather the whole family together for worship. They did not travel to church and separate to their age-graded rooms, as is the norm today. They traveled together, sang together, learned together and prayed together. Over time though, many forces have contributed to the decline of family unity when it comes to the church (and nearly everywhere else).

The Industrial Revolution removed fathers from the household

Public education removed the children from the household

Feminism and postwar prosperity sparked an influx of women in the workforce

The Social Security Act enabled grandparents to rely on the government instead of staying on to help with grandchildren

The sixties sparked a rejection of the values necessary to sustain family life

These forces, which have been gradually introduced, have contributed to our modern aversion to children and the disciplines necessary to train them.

The separation of children from their parents in the church, a practice that governs modern church life, is more a product of our godless culture than it is Biblical Christianity. The church has departed from its heritage.

There is no indication from scripture that children were ever removed from the meetings designed for preaching, scripture reading, prayer and worship. But, in our culture, it is automatic and comprehensive.