

The Billy Graham School COMPASS

Navigating Ministry & Missions

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Reaching and Keeping Families

Not having been raised in a Christian home, I am a keen observer of healthy Christian families. Some of my Christian heroes are men who model for me what it means to be a strong God-honoring husband and father. I marvel at Christian mothers who sacrificially give their lives to support their husbands and raise children. And, children who love and respect their believing parents are a blessing indeed.



“Too often, our church-based programs for discipling children, youth, and adults were disconnected and unfocused.”

I wish, though, that I would have better understood the parents’ role as disciplers when I served as a local church pastor. I knew that families are important, but I failed to recognize the significance of the home as the center of discipleship. Too often, our church-based programs for discipling children, youth, and adults were disconnected and unfocused.

We failed, frankly, in *expecting* and training parents to be disciplemakers.

Looking back, I now wonder if our failure ever contributed to the wanderings of some of our church youth. Even some of our best youth – raised in Christian homes and always active in the youth group – strayed in their walk with the Lord. I realize that teen years are naturally years of rebellion, but I can’t help but wonder if we really helped parents establish the home-based foundation needed to help prevent teenage wandering.

This issue is perhaps more important today than ever. The worldly pressures on children and youth seem so great that I’m not sure I would want to be a young believer today. The young generations under our spiritual care desperately need

discipleship – and that process begins in the home. The home and the church then partner together to produce stronger families.

This edition of the *Compass* is designed to help you and your church strengthen family ministry through your congregation. I pray that you will find something here that moves you in the right direction.

Blessings,
Chuck Lawless
Dean, The Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism

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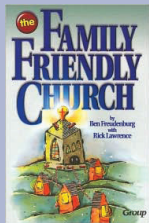
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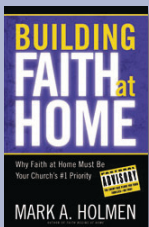
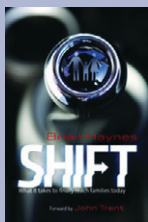
Recommended Resources

Topic of the Month:
Family Ministry



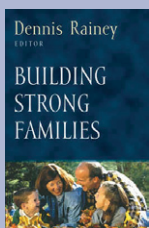
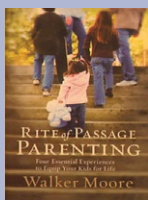
Ben Freudenburg
The Family-Friendly Church

Brian Haynes
Shift



Mark Holmen
Building Faith at Home

Walker Moore
Rite of Passage Parenting



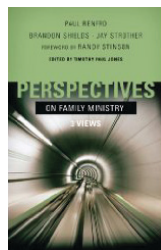
Dennis Rainey
Building Strong Families

Steve Wright
ApParent Privilege



Books can be found at:
Lifeway.com or Amazon.com

Perspectives on Family Ministry



Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views
edited by Timothy Paul Jones

In a 2003 survey, 85 percent of Christian parents admitted that they were responsible for their child's spiritual development. Yet, even as these parents outwardly admitted this responsibility, the majority were not personally engaging in *any* activities that might guide their children to spiritual maturity—except for the fact that two-thirds of these parents did regularly take their children to church.

From the perspective of the typical parent in our churches, schoolteachers are responsible to grow their children's minds, coaches are employed to train their bodies, and specialized ministers at church ought to develop their souls. When it comes to Christian formation, this per-

spective faces a single critical snag: *God specifically calls believing parents to the task of training their children in the Christian faith.* This is one task that, from the perspective of Scripture, parents simply cannot hire someone else to do (see, for example, Deut 6:6-7; Psalm 78:1-7; Prov 1:8; Eph 6:4; Col 3:21).

In my forthcoming book *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, I have partnered with three family ministry practitioners to outline three models of family ministry—which I define as *the process of reorienting a church's proclamation and practices so that parents—and especially fathers—are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable for the task of discipling their children.* Viewed in this way, family ministry is not an optional program for some churches; it is an essential part of doing church in ways that reflect God's design for his people.

By Timothy Paul Jones, Associate Professor of Leadership and Church Ministry, SBTS

Discipling Your Own Children

By Randy Stinson, Dean of the School of Church Ministries, SBTS

Go into any Christian bookstore, and you will see hundreds of books on parenting, each claiming to have answers for the task of discipling our children. However, most boil down to the following core issues:

The Primacy of Scripture

We cannot choose to parent our own way. A lot of people I know just reproduce whatever their parents did, but the Bible gives much instruction about how to go about making disciples of your children. The Bible is clear that it is our responsibility to disciple our children, not the youth pastor or the children's pastor (Deut 6).

The Priority of Marriage

The marriage is the priority relationship in the home, and children should know this by experience. The strength of the home is grounded in the gospel picture of the marriage (Eph 5). Many parents neglect their marriage by prioritizing their rela-

tionship to their children, and this produces an unstable home and resentful children.

The Secrecy of the Heart

Proverbs 4:23 exhorts us to guard our heart because from it flows the spring of life. One of the most difficult aspects of discipling your children is not falling prey to merely dealing with external behavior. God is concerned about the heart, and our child's behavior reveals what is in it. In fact, Mark 7:21 indicates that the heart actually determines behavior. How many of you have been dealing with the same problem over and over again? The heart has not yet been reached.

The Necessity of Discipline

This may be a sensitive subject, but one of the key aspects of discipling your children is what I call "a gospel centered spanking." The Bible is clear that failure to use the "rod" is an act of hate toward the child (Prov 13:24). Why? Because the Bible says that foolishness is

bound up in the heart of the child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him (Prov 22:15). If you love your children, you will not leave them to deal with their sin all by themselves. You must point them to the gospel by making painful corrections so that they will know regularly that they need a savior.

Once these core issues are in place, here are a few activities that you and your child can do to foster growth in Christ in your home:

- Dads, regularly have a date with your daughters, and have a men's night out with your sons.
- Read the Bible aloud to your children, and pray with them.
- Husbands, date your wives. Let your children know how much you love her.
- Initiate conversations with your kids about God.
- Worship together with your kids at church. Let them see you and learn from your example.

CHURCH HEALTH 101



How healthy is your student ministry? In light of a family ministry approach to student ministry, below are five questions for evaluating the health of your student ministry.

1. Are parents expected, encouraged, and held accountable for discipling their own children?
2. Do you have an intentional, strategic, and well-communicated process for integrating parents/parental figures into what you offer for young people?
3. Is your teaching, preaching, counseling, and leading pointing young people back to the authority of their parents?
4. Are you practicing family ministry principles in your own home this week?
5. Are the key dads or father figures in your church on board with your family ministry philosophy?

Source: Brandon Shields - High School Pastor, Highview Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky

Purpose Six

The most important relationship context for teaching prayer is the family, and the most significant teachers of prayer should be parents. Here are a few ways to become a prayer-driven family:

- Make prayer a habit in your home. Set a time and a place, and make prayer a priority.
- Give your children a prayer calendar. Help them think about important events in their lives (school tests, field trips, friends' birthdays, and so forth), and then pray about the events.
- Set the example. Let your children see and hear you pray (especially you fathers!).
- Allow children to make a prayer poster for each week. List prayer needs, and hang the poster in the child's bedroom.
- Encourage your pastor and church leaders to offer training on leading family devotions.

Source: Charles E. Lawless, Jr., *Serving in Your Church Prayer Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 80-1.

RESEARCH SHOWS

Family Discipleship Practices of Churched Parents

	Never or rarely	Occasionally	Several times a month	Several times a week	Almost daily
Have family devotional time	56%	23%	8%	6%	7%
Talk about spiritual values with children	8%	30%	29%	22%	12%
Pray with spouse (excluding mealtimes)	52%	24%	9%	6%	10%
Pray with children (excluding mealtimes)	24%	25%	15%	13%	22%

Source: Family Needs Survey: August 2008. Little Rock, Arkansas: FamilyLife, 2008.



Missions: Kevin and Laura B, Cylia (2 years) and Lucas (6 months)

We serve in a South American mega-city of around 13.5 million people. Our work is focused on reaching the 10 to 15 thousand practicing Muslims who come from a variety of backgrounds. There are fourth and fifth generation Syrian and Lebanese followers, as well as new immigrants arriving daily from countries in Africa such as Senegal.

At the present time, we have a national team that fluctuates between 15 and 20 people. We have recently finished our first church planting training. Our prayer is that within the next year we will see at least three groups formed for the purpose of evangelism by national team members among their existing contacts.

Our ministry is very much a family ministry. Both of our children were born in the city that we live in. Our home is a place where many



first encounters, times of discipleship, and Bible studies take place. My wife and I model to many believers and non-believers what the Bible teaches us about the relationship between a husband and a wife, as well

as the relationship between parents and children. Please pray that our family will glorify Christ in how we love one another. Pray that God would use the witness of our family to draw others into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

BGS HELPS

Want More info on Family Ministry?

<http://www.legacymilestones.com>

<http://www.inquest.org>

<http://www.familylife.com>

<http://www.ropparenting.com>

Forthcoming August 2009: <http://www.familyministrytoday.com>

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