

FAMILY MINISTRY FIELD GUIDE

AUDIOBOOK GRAPHICS

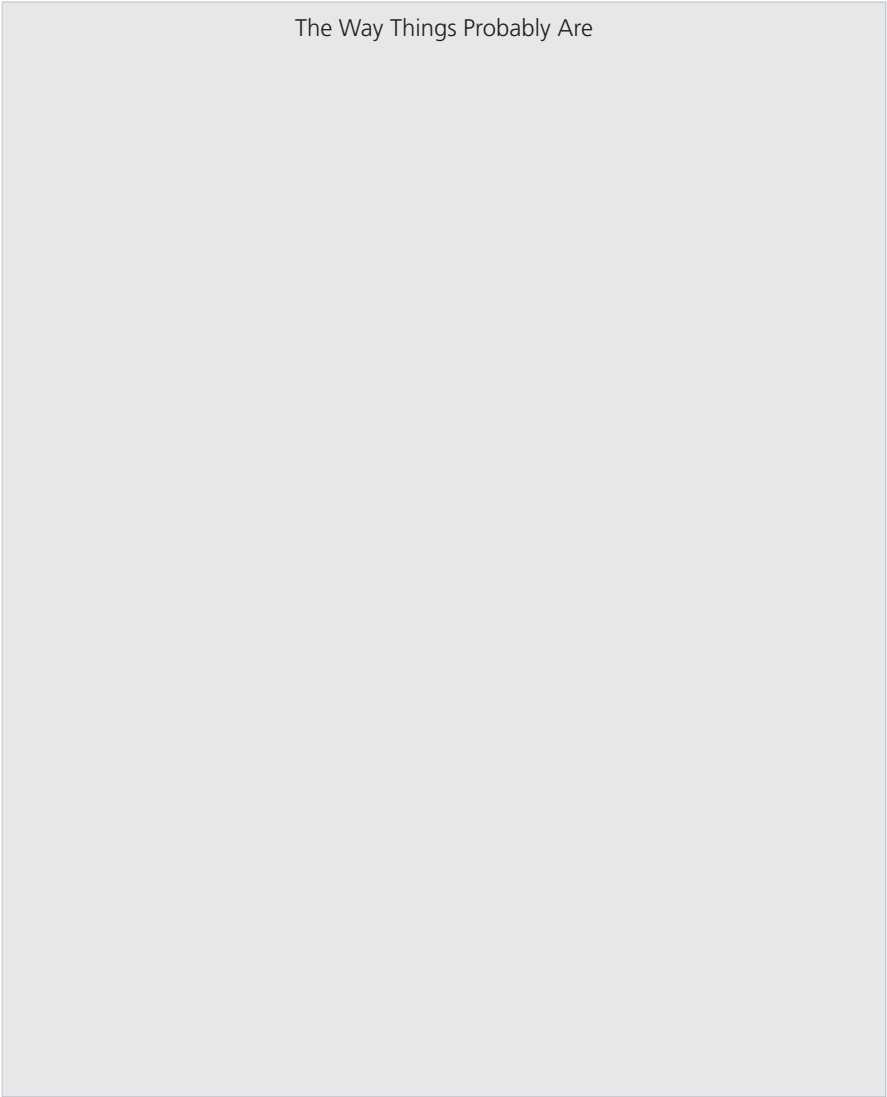
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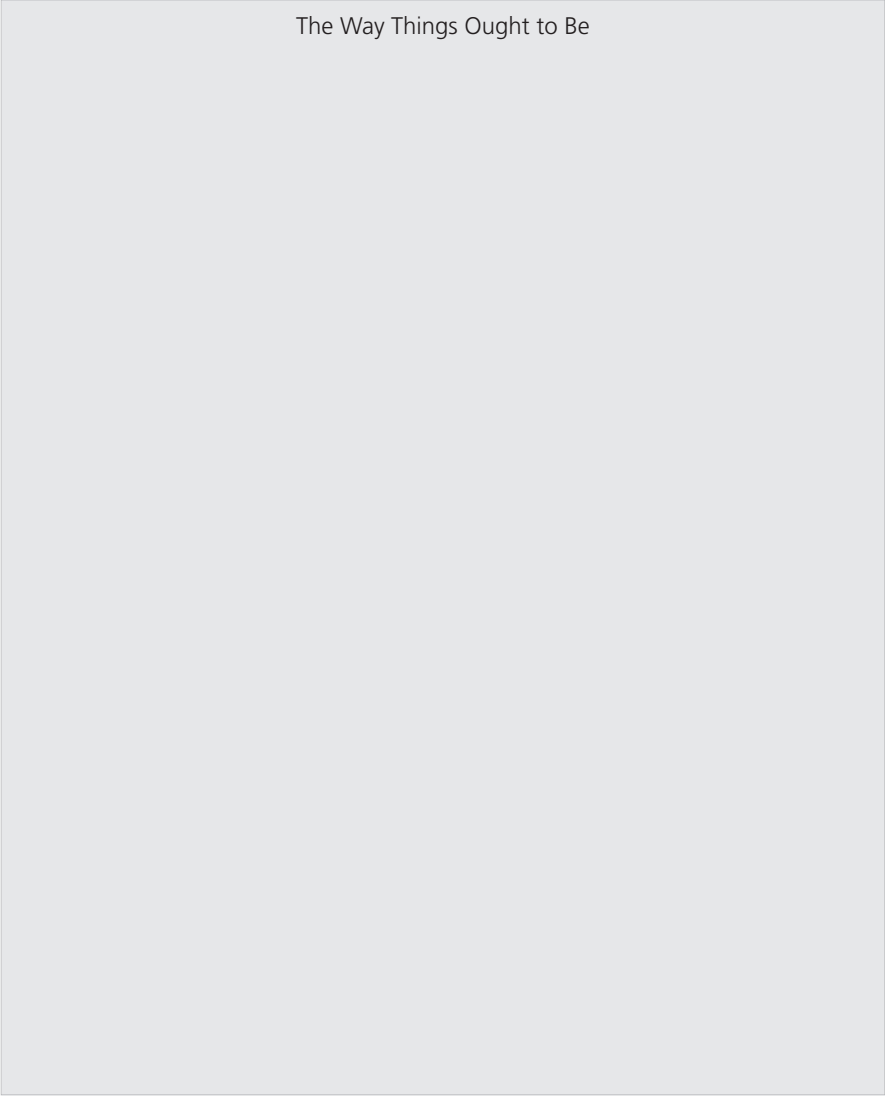
SKETCH THE SITUATION

The Way Things Probably Are



SKETCH THE SITUATION

The Way Things Ought to Be



against in this battle is not “flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this dark world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

I am able to remove some of these influences from Hannah’s life for now, but I cannot and should not shield her from them forever. What I can do is guide her to love what is good, beautiful, and true. I can train her in the fear and reverence of God. I can constantly call her attention to the gospel. And that’s precisely what I work to do—not only week-by-week in the café on Dutchman’s Lane, but also moment-by-moment in conversations about everything from the latest superhero film to the implications of Daniel’s prophecies. These may look like meetings for hazelnut coffee and whole-grain bagels, but what happens here is nothing less than the preparation and execution of a cosmic battle plan. Every week, every day, this is war.

SKETCH THE SITUATION

What intentional practices of family devotions or discipleship have happened in your home in the past week? List each one.

Sunday:

Monday:

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

Saturday:

What on your list reflects God’s good work in your family?

What’s missing?

- Nearly one-fourth of parents never or rarely prayed with their children; another one-fourth only prayed with their children occasionally.

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

A few months ago, the Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry at the seminary where I serve sponsored a more in-depth study with a smaller sampling of participants. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the precise dynamics of parents' disengagement from children's spiritual development. I oversaw this round of research—research that reinforced many of the findings from FamilyLife.

On the positive side, both studies suggested that around twenty percent of parents were praying, reading Scripture, and engaging in family devotions with their children at least once each week. Around one-fourth had read or discussed the Bible with their children seven or more times in the past couple of months.

The rest of the news was not so good, however. Our Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey revealed that:

- More than one-third of parents with school-aged children had never engaged in any form of family devotional or worship times at any time in the past couple of months. For an additional three out of ten parents, such practices occurred once a month or less.

Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey

Discipleship Practices in Churched Households

	Never	Once	A couple of times	Three or four times	Five or six times	Seven or more times
Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past <i>week</i> have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	21 percent	11 percent	14 percent	13 percent	20 percent	21 percent
How many times in the past <i>month</i> have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	20 percent	10 percent	25 percent	10 percent	9 percent	26 percent
How many times in the past <i>month</i> have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	7 percent	2 percent	21 percent	19 percent	20 percent	31 percent
How many times in the past <i>two months</i> has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	35 percent	10 percent	21 percent	6 percent	5 percent	22 percent



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE FIELD

Gap

THE KEY CONSIDERATION

How wide is the gap between what parents are doing and what they should be doing to disciple their children?

HOW TO FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Worksheet A: Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Communicate with key leaders in your congregation. Depending on your congregation's polity, the key leaders might include deacons, ministry staff, elders, or a senior pastor. Develop plans to assemble a team in your

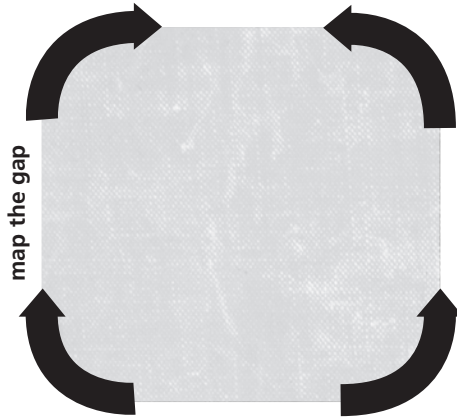
particular area of ministry to explore how the church can partner more effectively with parents. After gaining whatever approvals are appropriate in your congregation, assemble the team. In a larger congregation, this team might include staff and other key leaders. In a smaller congregation, this team may simply be a handful of vital ministry volunteers. Work to develop this team into a group that will champion family-equipping in the ministry that you serve.

WHAT TO DO

Make plans to meet at least monthly with the family ministry team. Enlist team members to assist in surveying the parents in the ministry that you serve, using Worksheet A: Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey. Once the data has been collected, summarize the results of the survey in a series of charts to provide a snapshot of how families are functioning when it comes to spiritual formation. Carefully compare what is actually happening in the families in your congregation with what should be happening. Where do you see causes for celebration? Where do you see a gap between what is and what ought to be? Which gaps will be the most difficult to close? Which one is most urgent to narrow as soon as possible?

WHEN TO DO IT

At least six months before you plan to begin the transition to family ministry



THINK ABOUT IT TOGETHER

Work through these activities with the family ministry team to develop a shared vision for your congregation's family ministry.

1. Study Ephesians 5:18—6:4, focusing on verse 4. The covenant relationship of a husband and wife is a divine mystery that God intends to reflect Christ's relationship with his church. Children are a fruit of this relationship. What did Paul present as the responsibility of Christian parents in relation to their children? Explore together the meaning of Paul's words in their original context.

2. Look at the results of the Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey from your church. To what degree are parents in your congregation living in obedience to Ephesians 5:18—6:4?

3. Watch the family dinner scene from *The Incredibles*. What do you see in this film clip that accurately reflects the families in your congregation? How do their perspectives and practices make it difficult for parents to engage in discipleship processes with their children? What practices in your church may unintentionally deepen family fragmentation instead of strengthening intergenerational appreciation?

4. As you consider emphasizing the responsibility of parents to function as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives, what makes you anxious?

What could go wrong? In the margins of this book, write each potential roadblock that your church could face. Every day this week, pray specifically and intentionally about each possible difficulty.

5. Begin asking simple, thought-provoking questions in your congregation to guide parents toward God's expectations—questions such as, "Who is primarily responsible to guide children toward the gospel? What do you think most Christian parents are doing to disciple their children? What is the most helpful thing that our church has done to partner with you as a parent? How could our church help parents do a better job in discipling their children? Does our church's schedule allow staff members enough free evenings each week to guide their own children's spiritual development?"

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU MAP THE GAP

Anthony, Michael and Michelle, eds. *A Theology for Family Ministry*. Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2011.

Jones, Timothy Paul, ed. *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views*. Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2009.

Stinson, Randy and Timothy Paul Jones, eds. *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspective*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Academic, 2011.

Wright, Steve with Chris Graves. *ApParent Privilege*. Raleigh, N.C.: InQuest Ministries, 2008.

family ministry. This much seems clear, though: The real numbers are far removed from the spurious statistics that have been spouted from the platforms of far too many ministry conferences.

Studies of Young Adult Dropout Patterns		
Dropout percentages vary from one study to another. Although it is possible to question whether twice-per-month attendance is the best definition of “church involvement,” the 2007 LifeWay Research study represents the most thorough research to date.		
Who was included in the study sample?	What was the date of the study?	What was the dropout rate?
Church attendees and dropouts, with <i>dropout</i> defined as someone who once attended church but who has not attended church in the past two years (Roozen)	1980	46 percent dropped out at some point during their lives, with 15.5 percent dropping out in their teenage years and an additional 9.1 percent dropping out as young adults
Youth (ages 16–17) and young adults (ages 18–29), with <i>attendance</i> defined as attending a community of faith at some point in the past seven days (Gallup)	2002	38 percent dropped out from older youth (ages 16–17) to young adulthood (ages 18–29)
Young adults who had attended a church at least two months at any point during their teenage years (Barna)	2006	61 percent disengaged spiritually; no longer reading the Bible, praying, or attending church regularly
Young adults who had been involved in a church at least one year during high school, with <i>church involvement</i> defined as attendance at least twice a month (LifeWay)	2007	70 percent dropped out from early young adulthood (ages 18–22) to middle young adulthood (ages 23–30); of these dropouts, 35 percent returned to twice a month or more church attendance in their mid to late twenties; if <i>church involvement</i> is defined as attendance twice per month or more, the net loss from early young adulthood to middle young adulthood was 45 percent.

WHY JESUS WASN'T WORRIED ABOUT RETENTION RATES

The infamous nine out of ten dropout statistic was a false alarm. Most likely, your congregation loses far less than that, and about half of the dropouts return within a few years.

SKETCH THE SITUATION

What percentage of students in your church remain highly involved after high school?

How many become less involved?

How many switch to another church in the area?

How many move away and become involved in another church?

How many completely drop out of church?

Draw a pie chart to represent how many young adults in your church fit into each category. If necessary, add additional categories to depict the patterns in your particular congregation.



GOSPEL-CENTERED FAMILY MINISTRY

All of this has profound implications for why and how a church ministers to families. If the congregation's motive for forming a family ministry is to find a programmatic cure-all to solve a perceived problem of losing young adults, the strategy will have failed before family ministry even begins—even if every church member applauds the new program as a resounding success. Such a congregation has bought into the soul-draining



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE FIELD

Goal

THE KEY CONSIDERATION

What goal is motivating your movement toward a family ministry model?

HOW TO FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Worksheet B: Motives Matter

WHAT TO DO

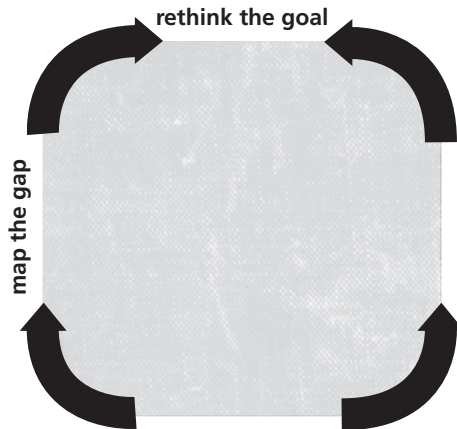
Gather your family ministry team. Work as individuals through the first part of the Motives Matter Worksheet, "Problem-Centered Planning: Developing Goals in the Wrong Direction," and compare your results. Discuss points of

agreement and disagreement. Then, work as a group through the second part of the worksheet, “Gospel-Centered Planning: Developing Goals Based on God’s Priorities.” Work toward consensus on what belongs in each box under “Gospel-Centered Planning.”

Based on the group’s consensus, develop a tentative, one-sentence mission statement for the family ministry team.

WHEN TO DO IT

At least four months before you plan to begin the transition to family ministry



THINK ABOUT IT TOGETHER

Work through these activities with the family ministry team to develop a shared vision for your congregation’s family ministry.

1. Carefully study Ephesians 4:10–16. In light of verse 16, what should shape and guide a church’s growth? What forms might this growth take in your congregation?

2. In the past, what has typically motivated changes in ministry practices in your church? Prayerfully consider what may need to shift in your team's motivations for considering family ministry.

3. List every activity for youth or children that will happen this week in your congregation. What is the real goal behind each of these activities? Do these goals consistently reflect a clear plan for godly, gospel-centered growth?

4. How many of your ministry activities with children or youth recognize and celebrate the central role of Christian parents in processes of discipleship?

5. Is it possible that some of your ministry's activities with children or youth may actually be working against the primary role of parents in discipleship? If so, how?

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU RETHINK YOUR GOAL

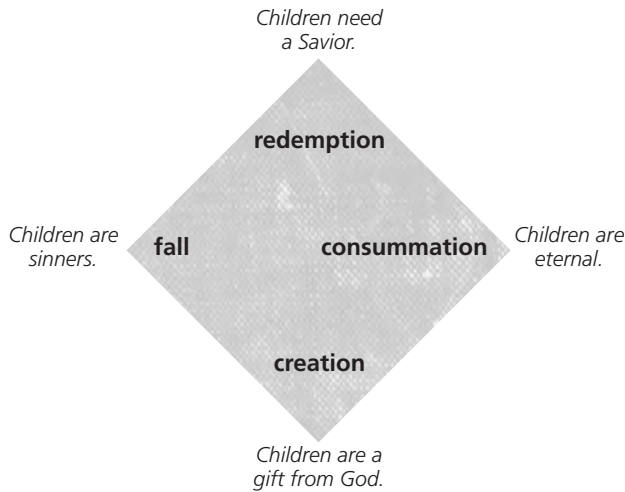
Shields, Brandon. "Family-Based Ministry: Separated Contexts, Shared Focus." In *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views*, edited by Timothy Paul Jones, 98–120. Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2009.

Smith, Christian. "Evangelicals Behaving Badly with Statistics," Books & Culture. n. d. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2007/janfeb/5.11.html>.

Stetzer, Ed. "Curing Christians' Stats Abuse," *Christianity Today* (January 2010). <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/january/21.34.html>.

Wells, David F. "Clerics Anonymous." In *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams*, 60–87. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995.

patterns train children to be satisfied with regulating outward actions and with pursuing gains that cannot persist past the end of time.

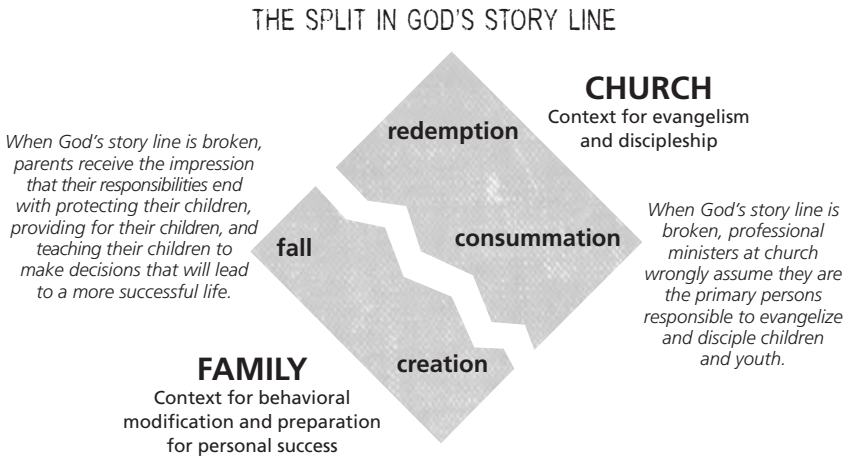


REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED, CONSUMMATION GUARANTEED

Viewed from the vantage of creation and fall, children are both gifts to be treasured and sinners to be trained. And yet, no amount of training can ever raise a child to the level of God's perfect standard. Every order of creation, including parenthood, has been subjected to frustration with the gap between the glory of God's creation and the fact of humanity's fall-
 enness (Rom. 8:20–22). And so, as Jesus dangled from the splintered beam of a Roman cross on that fateful afternoon, God himself bridged the gap between his perfection and humanity's imperfection (2 Cor. 5:21). The death of Jesus brought about redemption in the present; his resurrection guaranteed the consummation of God's kingdom in the future.

REMEMBERING WHO YOUR CHILDREN REALLY ARE

This truth introduces a radical new dimension to family life. To embrace God's redemption is to be adopted as God's heir, gaining a new identity



SKETCH THE SITUATION

Look carefully at the image "The Split in God's Story Line" above. Where in your ministries do you most clearly see this split between the role of the parents and the role of the church? Look at this month's church calendar. Where might each activity for children or youth fit on the image? In other words, does the activity relate more to: (1) appropriating the common grace of creation and coping with the effects of the fall, or (2) living out God's present work of redemption and looking forward to God's future work of consummation? Place each activity in the most appropriate place on the image. Now carefully and honestly answer these questions: (1) How many of the activities that relate to redemption or consummation also directly involve parents? (2) How many of these activities involve only youth or children and the ministry leaders for that age-group in isolation from parents? (3) What does this tell you about the ministry practices and priorities in your congregation?

PARENTING WITH YOUR GRANDCHILDREN IN MIND

My lunchtime meeting with the recent seminary graduate is over and now we're headed to his car.

"Can I be honest with you about something?" he asks, glancing down as he grinds his sandal sole against a blade of grass that's straining through a crack in the sidewalk.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE FIELD

God's story line

KEY CONSIDERATION

How do your congregation's ministry practices prepare parents to see their children in light of God's story line, as potential or actual brothers and sisters in Christ?

HOW TO FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Worksheet C: Living in God's Story Line

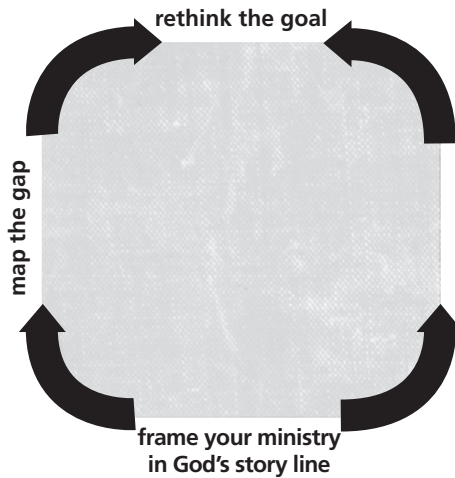
WHAT TO DO

Using Worksheet C: Living in God's Story Line, consider with the family ministry team whether your ministry practices tend more (1) to prepare

parents to see their children in light of God's whole story line, or (2) to separate parents from engagement with their children in the movements of redemption and consummation. Carefully consider how you might change any ministry practices that separate parents from involvement in the movements of redemption and consummation.

WHEN TO DO IT

At least two months before you plan to begin the transition to family ministry



THINK ABOUT IT TOGETHER

Work through these activities with the family ministry team to develop a shared vision for your congregation's family ministry.

1. Lead an in-depth study of God's story line based on some or all of these biblical texts: Genesis 1:26–28; 18:16–19; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Psalm 78:1–8; Romans 8:22–30; Ephesians 6:1–4; and Malachi 4:1–6.

2. Discuss how God has called parents to particular responsibilities that relate to each movement in the divine story line.

(a) In creation, God called humanity's primeval parents to fill the earth with children who would reflect God's image (Gen. 1:26–28).

(b) After the fall, God chose Abraham "that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD" (Gen. 18:19 *ESV*) and commanded Israelite parents to train their children in God's ways (Deut. 6:4–9; Ps. 78:1–8).

(c) Through faith in Jesus Christ, parents and children are adopted together as fellow heirs with Jesus and with one another (Matt. 12:50; Rom. 8:22–30). God has called the parents in the community of the redeemed to nurture their children in his ways (Eph. 6:4).

(d) In preparation for the consummation of God's kingdom on "the great and awesome day of the LORD," the prophet Malachi called for the hearts of fathers and children to be turned toward one another (Mal. 4:5–6 *ESV*).

3. List several events and activities in your church's ministries with children and youth. How might these ministries shift to partner more effectively with parents?

4. When parents see their children only in the framework of creation and fall, they tend to point their children toward better behaviors and successful lives. But they fail to see their practices of parenting in light of the grace, accountability, community, and eternal perspective that the gospel brings. Do the parents in your congregation view their practices of parenting in light of the gospel? If not, how can you guide them toward gospel-centered parenting?

5. What practices in your congregation might imply to parents that tasks related to redemption and consummation are best left to professional ministers or trained volunteers at church? Prayerfully consider how God might work through you to change these assumptions.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU FRAME YOUR FAMILY MINISTRY IN GOD'S STORY LINE

Chester, Tim and Ed Moll. *Gospel-Centered Family: Becoming the Parents God Wants You to Be*. New Malden, Surrey, U.K.: The Good Book Company, 2010.

Farley, William. *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2009.

Goldsworthy, Graeme. *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Plummer, Rob. "Bring Them Up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord." In *Trained in the Fear of God*, edited by Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Academic, 2011.

role in their children’s lives. They are fully aware that the spiritual development of their children is not a task that should be subcontracted to age-focused ministers.¹

It’s at this point that a paradox emerges, though. Even as parents admit their responsibility to function as primary faith trainers in their children’s lives, most are doing little, if anything, to fulfill this role. For most parents, intentional processes of spiritual formation with their children range from sporadic to nonexistent. One out of every five parents admits to never engaging in practices of prayer, Bible reading, or worship in their households.

Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey						
Parental Perceptions of Spiritual Responsibility						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching	26 percent	45 percent	17 percent	10 percent	2 percent	1 percent
When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.	61 percent	31 percent	3 percent	2 percent	2 percent	2 percent
Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0 percent	0 percent	0 percent	4 percent	34 percent	62 percent
Ministers or other church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.	37 percent	44 percent	11 percent	6 percent	0 percent	1 percent

Do you see the dilemma that emerges from this data? If more than 90 percent of parents see themselves as personally responsible for their children’s Christian formation, why are so few of them doing anything consistent to disciple their offspring?

Of course, far more is involved in the answers to these questions than a few personal or organizational issues. What we are talking about here is cosmic combat. “Spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” are warring

his people. Over time, family ministry may require you to streamline, combine, and even cut back activities so that families become free to join God’s mission in their households and communities.

This matter of time is highly significant, but scheduling priorities are not the sole roadblock in parents’ practices of discipleship. Around half of the parents in the survey identified themselves as too busy to engage in practices of family discipleship—a significant proportion, to be sure, but not enough to explain the full number of parents who have disengaged from their children’s spiritual formation. The second and far more significant problem has to do with the expectations and equipping that parents receive through their churches.

Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey						
Parental Scheduling Priorities						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.	16 percent	27 percent	26 percent	21 percent	10 percent	1 percent
I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.	8 percent	27 percent	17 percent	32 percent	12 percent	5 percent
I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family’s schedule.	5 percent	33 percent	17 percent	23 percent	18 percent	5 percent

CHURCHES AREN'T TRAINING PARENTS

“No one ever told me how to do anything like that before,” she said as she pointed at the video screen. As I think back, I see that she was right. As her pastor, I had urged parental involvement in children’s spiritual development. I had lamented and even lambasted the lack of commitment to

family discipleship. Yet I had never clearly shown parents how to engage personally in discipling their children—or even precisely what I expected them to do. And, as I thought about it, no church or ministry leader had ever equipped me to engage spiritually with my child either. What I was doing at that time to disciple my daughters, I did because I vaguely recalled bedtime prayers with my mother that continued into my teenage years, as well as daily Bible readings at the breakfast table when I was a child.

I wish I could write this off as an exceptional pattern that was limited to my own experience, but I can't. When the survey data from parents and churches came back, it became quite clear that my experiences were far from unique. As a whole, churches are not consistently encouraging or equipping parents to engage intentionally in their children's spiritual growth.

Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey						
Parental Perceptions of Equipping for Family Discipleship						
*For the purposes of this survey, "church leader" included pastors, elders, ministers, deacons, teachers, or small group leaders.						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	18 percent	41 percent	17 percent	18 percent	6 percent	1 percent
	Never	Once	A couple of times	Three or four times	Five or six times	Seven or more times
How often in the past year has any church leader* made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in any of my children's spiritual development?	68 percent	12 percent	14 percent	5 percent	0 percent	2 percent

WHAT PARENTS AREN'T GETTING AT CHURCH

When asked whether their churches had helped them to develop any plans for their children's spiritual growth, nearly 60 percent of churched parents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while an additional 17 percent somewhat disagreed. Only 7 percent could state without any reservation that their churches had helped them to plan for spiritual growth in their

this, especially in my early years as a youth minister, I gave parents the impression that I didn’t need their input. My volunteers and I had everything under control—or so I wanted parents to think.

When all the data was brought together, lack of time, lack of training, or both factors together accounted for 90 percent of the parents who had disengaged from their children’s spiritual development. (For the purposes of this statistic, I defined disengaged as a failure to engage consistently in any form of prayer or Bible study with children.) Ten percent of these disengaged parents admitted that their churches had equipped them to disciple their children but that their families weren’t making the time. Almost three out of ten suggested that they had the time to engage spiritually with their children but that their church had provided no guidance. A little more than half stated that both factors were descriptive of their families: They were too busy *and* their church had provided no consistent equipping or encouragement.

As far as I can tell, that’s the truth about where we are. It may hurt a bit but, like the death of St. Nicholas, the truth is no less true simply because it makes us wince.

Family Survey Factors in Parental Disengagement from Family Discipleship	
	Percentage of Parents
Lack of training only	28 percent
Lack of time only	10 percent
Both lack of training and lack of time	52 percent
Neither lack of training nor lack of time	10 percent

WHAT PARENTS REALLY NEED: TELLING, TRAINING, AND TIME

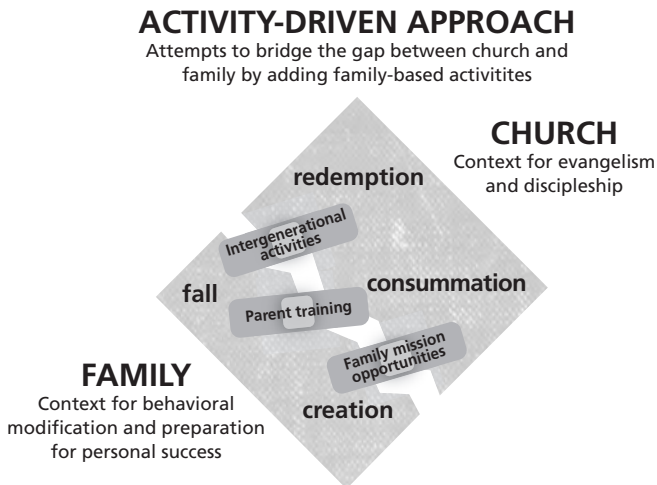
Let’s pull together in a few paragraphs what we’ve learned thus far in this book about families in our churches: Most parents are not consistently engaged in any intentional processes of discipleship with their children. Parents typically

FAMILY MINISTRY FOR THE LONG-TERM

“Is anybody out there actually doing what we’ve described?”

That’s the question that I found myself asking when I first developed the concepts that have now coalesced in this book. My colleague Randy Stinson and I had envisioned a distinct approach to family ministry—one that was theologically grounded and yet practical; something that provided churches with a clear vision for equipping parents without becoming simply another program.

Although we agreed that age-organized programs have often cut off parents from their disciple-making role in their children’s lives, we still saw some value in focused ministries for children, youth, singles, senior adults, and other age-groupings. At the same time, we knew that it is not enough simply to add a few family friendly activities to what churches are already doing. Activity-driven approaches, while perhaps a positive first step for many churches, will never be sufficient to equip parents to disciple their children. Parents need training, to make the time, and to be told that God has called them to play a crucial role in their children’s spiritual development. This will require churches to rethink and rework their age-organized ministries in radical ways.



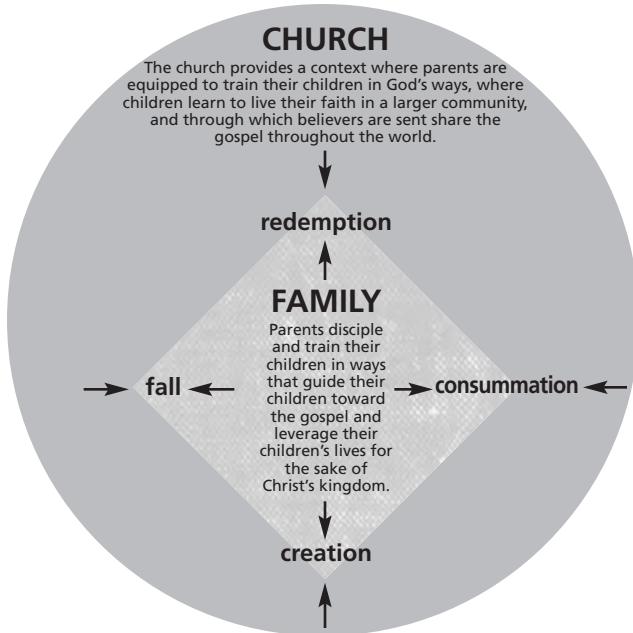
And so, Randy and I developed the theological foundations for the approach that I eventually dubbed the “family-equipping ministry model.”

Early in the process, I wondered at least a few times whether anyone would be willing to do what we had envisioned. I had been engaged in some of these practices during the last few years that I had served as a pastor, but I felt fairly certain that I was alone in what I was doing.

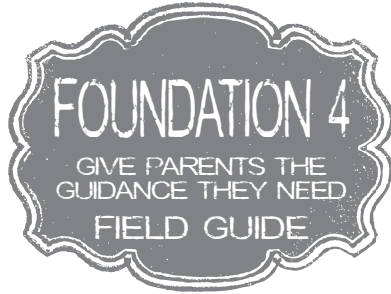
I soon discovered that I had not been alone after all.

FAMILY-EQUIPPING APPROACH

Existing activities and events are reoriented to equip parents to disciple their children



Randy began to visit churches throughout the United States and soon gathered an informal coalition of ministry leaders who were already doing in practice precisely what we had sketched out in theory. Many of these leaders had never even met, yet they were pursuing models of ministry that were similar in significant ways. Steve Wright in North Carolina called it “co-championing church and home.” Jay Strother in Tennessee and Brian Haynes in Texas were referring to parents as “primary faith trainers.” Brian had also implemented a process for a lifelong partnership between church and home that he called “legacy milestones,” and so on. As the number of participants in the discussion increased, we sharpened, corrected, and learned from one another.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE FIELD

Guidance that parents need

THE KEY CONSIDERATION

In what ways are we presently guiding parents to become primary disciple-makers in their children's lives?

HOW TO FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Worksheet D: What Message Are We Sending?

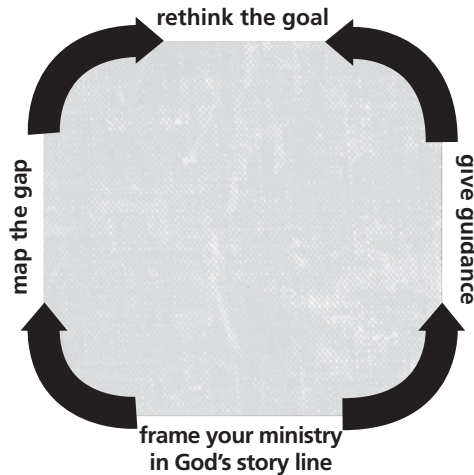
WHAT TO DO

Gather your family ministry team. Using Worksheet D: What Message Are We Sending? look at the events, activities, and teaching that parents and participants in your ministry might have experienced in the past month.

Honestly assess whether your ministry is acknowledging or guiding parents to be primary disciple-makers in their children's lives. Based on what you know now, revisit and revise the tentative mission statement you developed earlier.

WHEN TO DO IT

At least one month before you plan to begin the transition to family ministry



THINK ABOUT IT TOGETHER

Work through these activities with the family ministry team to develop a shared vision for your congregation's family ministry.

1. Develop an in-depth study of Genesis 22:1–19; Hebrews 11:16–19; and Romans 8:32. Focus on God's call to Abraham to be willing to give up his hopes for his son for the sake of obedience to God's Word, as well as the willingness of God the Father to give his only Son in our place. Consider how parents can allow dreams for their children's personal

happiness, present popularity, or vocational success to become false gods in their lives. You may find helpful the introduction and first chapter of Tim Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* (New York: Penguin, 2009).

2. Discuss the hopes and expectations that parents in your ministry have for their children. Are these hopes rooted in the false assumption that the purpose of parenting is to raise happy and vocationally successful adults? Or do these hopes arise from a gospel-centered longing to leverage children's lives for the sake of Christ and his kingdom?

3. Prayerfully consider what habits or practices in your ministry might contribute to parents' fixation on personal happiness and measurable success. Does your planning focus on how to make participants happy instead of aiming them toward gospel transformation? Do your assessments of events rely on visible successes and budget numbers or on whether Scripture was faithfully and understandably proclaimed?

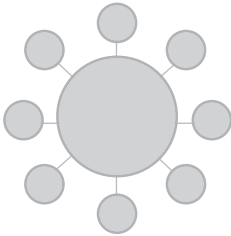
4. What are your hopes for your children, whether present or future? If you do not have children, are you mentoring any? If so, what are your hopes for them? Are these hopes authentically God-centered? What have you done in the past week to see God-centered hopes realized in the lives of your children? Where have you become caught up in the idolatrous dreams of the culture?

5. "No one ever told me how to do anything like that before," the woman said when she finally glimpsed how her family might engage in faith training at home. Could members in your church make a similar statement? If so, what has kept your congregation from acknowledging or equipping parents as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives?

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU GIVE PARENTS THE GUIDANCE THEY NEED

- Hemphill, Ken and Richard Ross. *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose*. Nashville, Tenn.: B&H, 2005.
- Rienow, Rob. *Visionary Parenting: Capture a God-Sized Vision for Your Family*. Nashville, Tenn.: Randall House, 2009.
- Strother, Jay. "Making the Transition to Family-Equipping Ministry." In *Trained in the Fear of God*, edited by Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Academic, 2011.
- Wilson, Rodney and Selma. *The Parent Adventure*. Nashville, Tenn.: B&H, 2009.

THE ONE-EARED MICKEY MOUSE AND OCTOPUS WITHOUT A BRAIN



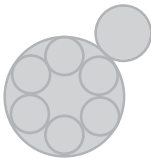
Societies (late 1800s and early 1900s)

In the era of societies, one congregation might have Sunday schools for each age-group, mission societies, temperance leagues, young people's prayer meetings, literary societies, a Young People's Association—all in addition to a Christian Endeavor society for youth and perhaps one or more Endeavor societies for children and adults. Each society ran parallel to others while the goals and curricula of each group remained unrelated. The church's connection to the societies was often loose and informal.



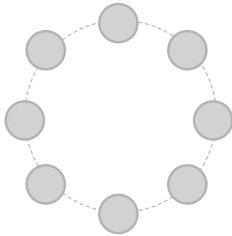
Efficiency (early to mid-1900s)

The societies of the previous generation became the church-based programs of this generation. In this initial movement toward the segmented-programmatic church, programs were streamlined, combined, and centralized.



Separation (mid-1900s)

Faced with the emerging generation gap between adolescents and their parents, parachurch organizations attempted to reach youth directly, bypassing parents and communities of faith. Churches tried to replicate the "youth groups" that Young Life and Youth for Christ had developed, even hiring youth ministers with the goal of attracting and retaining youth in these groups. The result was the "one-eared Mickey Mouse"—churches with youth ministries that were barely attached to the rest of the body.



Segmentation (late 1900s to present)

A separate ministry with separate activities and a separate track for youth seemed attractive not only for youth but also for other age-groups. Singles, children, senior adults, and other groups soon developed their own segmented programs with their own worship experiences, activities, and goals until no central point of reference remained in many churches. The identity of the church became the sum total of its separate programs. The result was the "octopus without a brain."

BRINGING THE GENERATIONS BACK TOGETHER

Today, the octopus without a brain remains the predominant model of ministry in many churches. But not everyone sees the octopus as the most faithful way of organizing the church of Jesus Christ. Even at the end of the twentieth century, a grassroots movement of pastors and youth ministry professionals had begun to point out some serious problems with mutant mice and mindless cephalopods.

The segmented-programmatic church had seemed quite successful when it came to providing lots of age-organized activities, but this bulk of programs came at a cost. Age segmentation became so systematic that the organizational structures in many churches complicated or even eliminated the possibility of different generations interacting with one another. Churches were providing parents with little encouragement and no equipping when it came to their children's spiritual development. After all, why equip parents to do something that the church was already paying youth and children's ministers to do?

SKETCH THE SITUATION

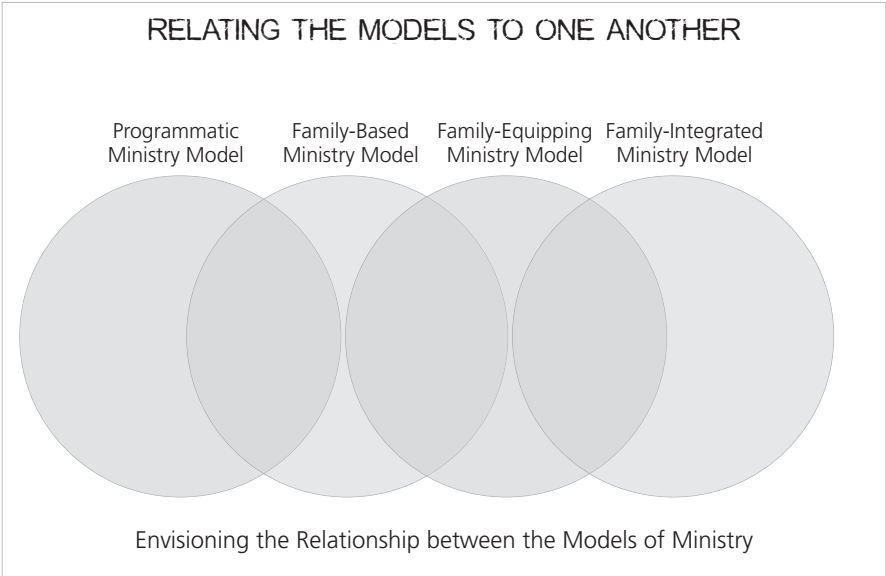
In the space below, draw an octopus arm for each ministry in your church. Label each arm. Now honestly consider: What is the organizational brain at the center in your congregation? Yes, I know, Jesus, the Bible, and the glory of God are supposed to be at the center, but what is the central decisive person or ideal that shapes the organization of each ministry in the congregation? If there is no central organizing factor, leave the center blank.

In many churches, no central organizing system exists or the central organizing system is simply the word of a strong leader or a vague dream for the church's future, neither of which can sustain long-term coordination of the church's ministries.

The aim of family ministry is not to eliminate every arm. Some sort of organizational arms will exist in any congregation of believers and these diverse organizational segments are not necessarily wrong. Spirit-guided coordination of diverse members of the body is a thoroughly biblical concept (1 Cor. 12:12–27). The first Christians gathered not only in large groups but also “house to house” (Acts 2:46 NASB), implying a pattern of organizing in smaller groups. Family ministry synchronizes the church's groups around a clear strategic question and coordinates ministries in ways that equip parents as primary faith trainers in their children's lives.

book *Family-Based Youth Ministry*. Family-based ministries support families by adding or expanding events to provide different age-groups with excuses to interact together. The result is a smorgasbord of activities to connect youth and children with their parents and other persons from a variety of generations. In a family-based church calendar, you're likely to find everything from a father-daughter banquet to a community outreach event where older and younger folk serve together; from a mother-son date night to a family mission trip or family camp, in addition to youth mission trips and youth camps.

2. The family-integrated ministry model: The family-integrated model takes a very different approach to tackling over-segmented church programs. Instead of adding activities or combining events that are already happening, family-integrated ministries remove every hint of generational segmentation. Finding insufficient biblical foundations for age-organized ministries, proponents of family integration make every activity and event intergenerational. That's right: no nurseries, no age-graded classes, no youth groups, and no senior adult outings. The entire congregation is restructured to require parents, and particularly fathers, to disciple their households. The family-integrated ministry model has been around for many years, but one of the most popular recent presentations has been in the book from Voddie Baucham entitled *Family-Driven Faith*.

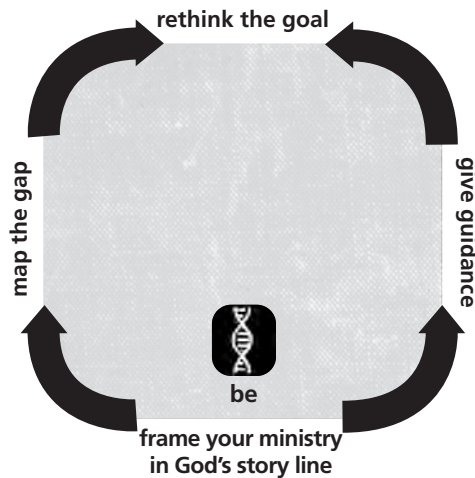


common goal of partnering with parents so that they become primary disciple-makers in their children's lives. At least a few elements of each one tend to be woven throughout one or both of the others.

Models for Ministry to Families

	Segmented-Programmatic Ministry Model	Family-Based Ministry Model	Family-Equipping Ministry Model	Family-Integrated Ministry Model
What does this model look like in the local church?	Ministries are organized in separate "silos" with little consistent intergenerational interaction. Family ministry, if it exists, is simply 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.	Programmatic structures remain unchanged, but each separate ministry plans and programs activities that intentionally draw generations together and invite parents to take part in the discipleship of their children and youth.	Although age-organized programs and events still exist, the ministry is completely restructured to draw generations together, equipping parents, championing their role as primary disciple-makers, and holding them accountable to fulfill this role.	The church eliminates age-segregated programs and events. All or nearly all programs and events are multi-generational, with a strong focus on parents' responsibility to use their household as a context for evangelizing and discipling not only their own families but also others, inside and outside the faith community.
What other approaches might be included in this ministry model?	Therapeutic-Counseling Family Ministry (Chap Clark) Church-Centered/Home-Supported Ministry (Ben Freudenburg) Family-Sensitive Ministry (Michelle Anthony)	Family-Friendly Youth Ministry; Family-Focused Youth Ministry (Dave Rahn) Family-Based Youth Ministry (Mark DeVries) Family-Friendly Ministry (Michelle Anthony)	Youth-Focused Family Ministry; Youth-Friendly Family Ministry (Dave Rahn) Home-Centered/Church-Supported Ministry (Ben Freudenburg) Co-Champion Model (Steve Wright) Family-Empowered Ministry (Michelle Anthony)	Family Discipleship Model (Alliance for Church and Family Reformation) Family-Centered Ministry (Michelle Anthony) Inclusive-Congregational Ministry (Malan Nel)

I then add, “Your church’s family-equipping ministry doesn’t begin in an administrative meeting or a business session or the pastor’s personal planning retreat. Family-equipping begins in the homes of the leaders in your ministry—in the pastor’s den, at the deacon’s dining room table, in the youth minister’s car. You can’t lead a family ministry with any degree of integrity unless you become a family minister in your own household. *Be* before you *do*.”



LIKE THE PLUMBER WHO WON'T FIX HIS OWN FAUCET

One pattern that became clear as I surveyed churches was that it's not enough to change the church organization. Family-equipping ministry requires ministry leaders to come to terms with their own failures and struggles when it comes to family discipleship. This sort of transparency and honesty doesn't come easily, but it is an essential first step toward full-fledged family-equipping.

The apostle Paul spent a single extended sentence (six verses in most English translations) in one of his letters summing up the qualifications for a pastor (1 Tim. 3:2–7). Two of those six verses spell out specific expectations related to the leader's household (1 Tim. 3:4–5).

every Monday morning to pray with a half dozen sixth graders about their week at school. The pastor is present at every community outreach event, and everyone praises his clear vision for the church's future. Yet the student minister can't seem to carve out a half hour each week to talk with his family about living in light of the gospel. The middle school prayer leader hasn't prayed with her husband in more than a decade. And, outside of keeping the children in church and hoping none of them does anything that causes a public scandal, neither the pastor nor the pastor's spouse has any clear vision for his children's spiritual formation.

In most cases, the root of these patterns is not deliberate rebellion against God. It is a misplaced perspective that fails to see the home as the ministry leader's first context for ministry. As a result, ministry leaders try to do ministry in their churches and communities without first becoming ministers in their own households.

REAL-LIFE IDEAS FOR MOVING FROM DOING TO BEING

The point of these ideas is not to provide a step-by-step guide to making the shift from doing to being. The point is to spark your thinking by providing you with examples of real-life practices that other ministries have used effectively.

Don't Wait for the Movie

Ministry teams frequently read and discuss books together—typically books about theology, leadership, or administration. At least once or twice each year, read and discuss a book together that challenges ministry leaders to become disciple-makers in their own households. Here are some suggested resources that have helped other ministry teams: Jim and Jerolyn Bogear, *Faith Legacy: Six Values to Shape Your Child's Journey* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009); William Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2009); Rob Rienow, *Visionary Parenting: Capture a God-Sized Vision for Your Family* (Nashville, Tenn.: Randall House, 2009); Kelli B. Trujillo, *Faith-Filled Moments: Helping Kids See God in Everyday Life* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009); Steve Wright with Chris Graves, *ApParent Privilege* (Raleigh, N.C.: InQuest Ministries, 2008); John Younts, *Everyday Talk: Talking Freely and Naturally about God with Your Children* (Wapwallopen, Penn.: Shepherd Press, 2005).

continued

REAL-LIFE IDEAS FOR MOVING FROM DOING TO BEING *continued*

Ask the Right Questions

Ministry teams can also function as accountability groups. Develop questions for each meeting to hold one another accountable for discipling children. Such questions might include, "What have you done since our last meeting to disciple your family? How has the gospel transformed your parenting practices over the past month? In what specific, planned ways are you engaging with your spouse, children, or the children of some other parent as a disciple-maker in their lives?" Set some simple expectations for ministry leaders in the area of family discipleship; talk about these expectations at each meeting and hold one another accountable.

Talk About What's Working in Your Own Homes and What Isn't

Develop an atmosphere of openness and mutual accountability by talking together about how you began to disciple your children. Share stories of family discipleship with one another, and not only the triumphs! Be ready to say, "Here's great idea that worked well in my family!" but also be willing to admit, "I am struggling in this area of family discipleship. Is anyone else having difficulties here? How can we pray for one another? What resources or help could we provide for one another?" You are likely to discover that many of your ministry leaders have never engaged in any discipleship practices with their own children. If so, do not respond by with pride by pointing to your own accomplishments. Work alongside your brother or sister; help your fellow believer to develop these habits not because of a guilt-driven sense of obligation but as a free and joyous response to the gospel (Rom. 15:1-7; Gal. 5:25-6:10).

Share Your Stories with Your Children

Many ministry leaders have never even told their children how they became believers in Jesus Christ. If ministry leaders haven't shared their testimonies in their own living rooms, it's unlikely that they will be very effective when it comes to sharing the gospel with persons beyond their homes. At your ministry team meeting, ask ministry leaders to share their faith-journeys with their children before the next meeting. Talk at the next meeting about the children's questions and responses to these testimonies. Encourage leaders to build on this sharing time by beginning a weekly practice of devotions with their families where family members share other stories of faith with one another.

Write Letters to Your Children

At your ministry team meeting, ask ministry leaders to write letters to each of their children, expressing their hopes and desires for their children's futures. If leaders do not have children, have them write letters to their future children or to children that they are presently mentoring. Use this opportunity to talk about how even Christian parents tend to embrace the world's goals for their children, chasing earthly happiness and success instead of eternal purposes. Ask ministry

continued

REAL-LIFE IDEAS FOR MOVING FROM DOING TO BEING *continued*

leaders to share their letters with their children before the next meeting. If a ministry leader's children are too small to understand or if the ministry leader wrote the letter to future children, encourage the ministry leader to share the letter with his or her spouse or a close friend. At the next meeting, share your letters with one another. Discuss what you learned by writing and sharing these letters. Encourage ministry leaders to build on their sharing time with spouse or children by developing a weekly habit of discussing eternal goals for their child's life. See page 149 for an example of a letter written by a youth pastor to his unborn child.

Turn Your Ministry Leaders into Guinea Pigs

Develop a weekly devotional guide for families. Ask your ministry leaders to test the devotionals with their own families and provide feedback at team meetings. The goal is eventually to provide these devotionals to families in your church, but by testing them with your ministry leaders, you are developing discipleship habits in the homes of your leaders.

Check Your Calendars

It's possible that your ministry leaders are too busy (perhaps even with church activities) to disciple their own families. Take a critical look at your calendars. Give each other the freedom to say no to some activities so that you have sufficient time to engage spiritually with your families.

MAKING THE SHIFT FROM DOING TO BEING

So what will it take to shift your ministry leaders toward gospel-centered equipping of families? When I presented that question to ministers whose churches had effectively made the transition to family-equipping, one word rose repeatedly to the top of the list: *repentance*. A critical first step toward family-equipping occurred when ministry leaders admitted that they hadn't been actively engaged in growing their children's souls and began to shift the priorities in their households.

Of course, you can't cause this sort of repentance; only the Holy Spirit can do that. What you can do is create a safe context where ministry leaders can consider their roles in discipling their families and where the Spirit can work freely in their hearts.

You probably already have regular meetings with ministry leaders or key volunteers, so don't add any more meetings to your calendar! Take advantage

Notice as the gospel begins to set the rhythms in the homes of ministry leaders. Listen as the cry of the orphan becomes woven into the fabric of your discussions and drives you to live out the gospel near and far.

A LETTER WRITTEN BY A YOUTH PASTOR TO HIS PRE-BORN CHILD

My child, you and I have not yet met face to face, but I have seen your shape being formed, and I have heard your heart beat. I cannot wait to hold you in my arms, to comfort you, to pick you up when you fall down, and to pray over you while you sleep. I look forward to the day Jesus becomes as real to you as your mommy and me.

I pray that you would know Christ.

I pray that you would feel the love of your daddy and mommy.

I pray that you would run to me when thunder claps, when the lights go out, when the monsters growl under your bed, and when you skin your knee.

I pray that you would love serving Jesus.

I pray (if you're a boy) that you would grow into a godly man, and that you would marry a woman like your mommy. I pray you would cherish her, love her, and be a strong man for her.

I pray (if you're a girl) that you would find a man who loves you as much as your daddy does, in whose arms you feel safe, that you would love him like your mommy loves your daddy. I pray that you would be loving, gracious, kind, and his greatest encouragement and helper.

I pray that you would grow academically, have your mommy's singing voice, be more coordinated than your daddy, and find joy in all you do.

I pray that no matter how much you love Mommy and Daddy, you would love Jesus more and that you would find all your joy and peace in him.

I pray that when it comes time to let you go, that you would go wherever God takes you.

I pray that you will have more faith than I did.

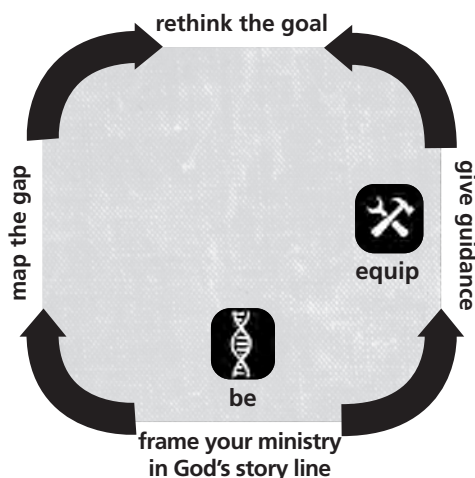
I pray you would have a heart for the nations, that you would love people who live far away and that you would pray for them and share Jesus with them.

My child, I don't want the American dream for you. I don't even know what the American dream will look like by the time you read this. But I do know this: I don't want you to be happy with more stuff or bigger vacations or an easier life. I want you to know Christ, to make him known, and to be willing to go wherever he takes you, regardless of the cost.

I love you.

Daddy

—Scott Douglas



PREPARING PARENTS TO LEAD FAITH TALKS

Parents are the primary teachers in their children's lives, even if they don't know it. Some parents are better teachers than others, but every parent is a teacher when it comes to the children with whom he or she shares a home. Even after decades of family fragmentation, the most significant influence on children's spiritual formation remains "the religious life modeled and taught to them by their parents."¹ The problem is, many churches have provided parents with the impression that when it comes to shaping their children's souls, the primary teachers ought to be paid professionals at church.

That's not the story that the Scriptures tell us, though. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul specifically commanded fathers not simply to be good examples for their children but to provide their children with training (*paideia*) "of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). The meaning of the term that Paul connected here to the training of children includes planned and intentional teaching of particular content. Paul later used the same word to describe the function of Scripture in a pastor's leadership of a local church (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Early Christians clearly understood the practical implications of Paul's words. A sermon from the late first century A.D. admonishes parents to

“Over-communicate your family-equipping approach at every level of church life! From the pulpit all the way down to the pre-camp parent meeting, use every opportunity and venue you have available to you to promote the coordination of church and family. Develop statements that clarify your goal. Many churches even weave the message into their mission statements: ‘Changing our world for Christ, one home at a time’ or ‘Where faith meets home,’ for example. Be creative with your approaches, remembering that people need to hear or see something several times before it sinks in.”

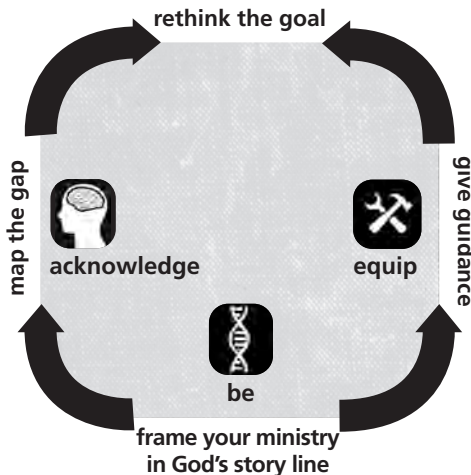
—Jay Strother

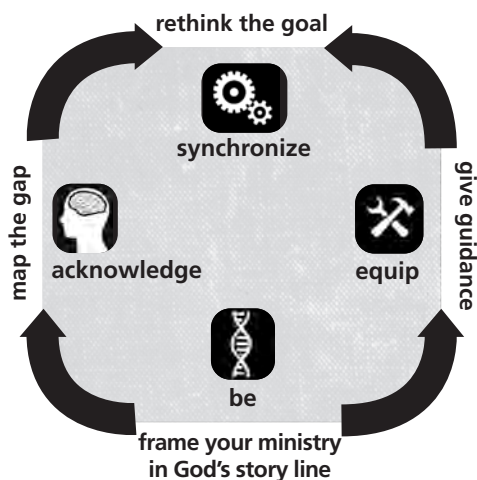
very hearts (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:24–27). All of Scripture is about Jesus—even these commands from Moses to the Israelites to remember God’s works (John 5:46; Luke 24:27).

But there is a secondary principle at work in this text too: Every one of us is prone to forget the implications of what God has done for us and in us. Simply put, we need constant reminders so that we will remember what God desires to do among us—and one habit of life that grows out of remembering what God has done among us is the training of children in his ways. Without constant reminders, we are prone to forget this implication of God’s work among us.

That’s why family-equipping ministries must mention God’s expectations for families far more often than the yearly couples’ retreat, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, and baby dedication Sunday. Min-

istries that have effectively transitioned to family-equipping ministry constantly acknowledge the role of parents as disciple-making partners in their children’s lives. Without constant reminders, we are prone to forget what it means to live as sons and daughters of God, as brothers and sisters of Jesus himself, and as potential brothers and sisters of our children (Heb. 12:5).





TIE IT ALL TOGETHER

Don't tell him, but we are both a little jealous of our friend Bryan. Whenever Bryan wears a necktie, he has that perfect Windsor knot, complete with the dimple in the middle. Bryan was a successful Boy Scout (he even starred in a Boy Scout commercial in his childhood) so perhaps that's why his neck always seems to be so perfectly knotted. Neither of us has managed to master the fine art of the perfectly dimpled necktie.

Looking at churches that have effectively implemented family-equipping ministry may make you feel like we do when we look at that Windsor knot beneath Bryan's chin. You may feel as if, no matter how many angles you try, family-equipping (or tying the perfect knot) is simply not going to work for you.

When it comes to your church ministries, however, we can offer some significant encouragements, based on what we've observed in churches that have made the transition: Work patiently, carefully, and prayerfully through each ministry and look for creative ways to turn activities that once bypassed parents into vehicles for fulfilling one of three functions: (1) training, (2) involving, or (3) equipping moms and dads.

Real-Life Ideas for Moving from Segmentation to Synchronization

The point of these ideas is not to provide a step-by-step guide to making the shift from segmentation to synchronization. The point is to spark your thinking by providing you with examples of real-life practices that other ministries have used effectively.

What did the activity look like before?	How did the church choose to change the activity: train, involve, or equip?	What did the activity look like afterward?
Youth attended yearly camp; camp experiences were celebrated in an afterglow service the following Sunday evening.	Train and Equip	Before camp, church staff developed four family faith talk guides that applied what youth would learn at camp. The faith talk guides coordinated visually and thematically with the camp. At the pre-camp parent meeting, parents and families in faith were introduced to these themes and encouraged to pray in specific ways for their youth. Parents and families in faith were also asked to attend a dinner and learning session on Wednesday evening during camp. Using the four faith talk guides, parents and families in faith were trained through this learning experience to engage in four weeks of faith talks with their teenagers. The afterglow service was shifted to serve also as a time of commitment for families and families in faith, to reinforce these themes and teachings through their households.
At the end of the school year, the children's ministry hosted a recreational time to kick off summer programs.	Train and Involve	During the first part of the recreational time, parents and families in faith attended seminars; the themes of these seminars ranged from dressing children modestly to monitoring Internet usage, from how to begin family faith talks to cooking projects to share as a family. After the seminars, the children's recreational time concluded with a competition filled with silly games that didn't depend on skill or numbers, that placed children on teams with their parents or with their families in faith.
Each summer, the church conducted separate youth and adult mission trips.	Involve and Train	One mission trip became a trip that encouraged every father to participate. Fathers served as crew chiefs and, each morning, received training in how to lead a specific family faith talk. Each evening, fathers led their families in that faith talk. Less guidance was given each day to encourage fathers to begin developing faith talks on their own. The other mission trip became a joint one that brought together the senior adult ministry and the youth ministry. Two seniors—a senior in high school and a senior citizen—partnered together to lead each work crew on the mission trip. <i>continued</i>

Real-Life Ideas for Moving from Segmentation to Synchronization

continued

What did the activity look like before?	How did the church choose to change the activity: train, involve, or equip?	What did the activity look like afterward?
Each year, sixth graders were welcomed into youth group at a special weekend youth retreat.	Involve and Train	The youth retreat became a rite of passage event; prior to the retreat, parents and families in faith were trained to engage with their youth in a series of studies to prepare for adolescence. The retreat culminated with parents and families in faith coming to the campground and participating in a celebration and commissioning that recognized the privileges and responsibilities of the child's growth toward adulthood.
The themes of Sunday morning sermons were never intentionally rehearsed or reinforced at home.	Equip	Each Sunday, a brief faith talk outline began to be provided in the worship folder. The faith talk guide was designed to apply the pastor's message at home. Before the benediction each week, one of the pastors briefly summarized how the faith talk guide might be used at home. The weekly message in youth group was also coordinated to share a text or theme with the weekly faith talk guide and with the pastor's Sunday morning message. The youth minister provided every parent with a brief outline of each week's message with a series of faith walk questions.
During Vacation Bible School, parents dropped off their children each evening. On Friday evening, parents stayed to watch their children perform in a program.	Equip	Beforehand, the church obtained special coupons from several local restaurants and purchased gift cards at three of these restaurants. Additionally, a staff member developed a one-page parents' discussion guide for couples as well as a similar guide for single parents. The discussion guides worked through issues related to children's spiritual development in ways that also presented the gospel.

continued

Real-Life Ideas for Moving from Segmentation to Synchronization

continued

What did the activity look like before?	How did the church choose to change the activity: train, involve, or equip?	What did the activity look like afterward?
		<p>On Monday evening, parents were required to stay for a brief orientation to the week's events and to sign medical release forms. Parents were informed that they were invited to stay for a second half, to learn how to help their children to develop spiritually.</p> <p>During this second half, in addition to a brief discussion of the role of parents as primary faith trainers, parents were provided with the discussion guides, as well as the restaurant coupons, and encouraged to set aside one evening while their children were at VBS to go out to eat and work through the discussion guide with a spouse (if married), friend, or mentor from church. At the end, three medical release forms were randomly drawn; the parents of those children received the gift cards.</p> <p>Parents were invited to a reception on Friday evening, while their children were preparing for the program, where they were given opportunities to talk about what they learned on their date night as they worked through the discussion guides.</p>

The gospel is to be rehearsed in the home and reinforced through the church so that Jesus Christ can be revealed with integrity to the world.

Do *not* hand these printed resources to youth or children with the hope that the resources will miraculously make it to mom and dad. I, too, was a captive of this quixotic hope for many years.

Then, I became a parent and discovered that such resources rarely survive the trip home. Placed in the hands of children, most resources end up crumpled and laid to rest beneath the car seat amid happy meal toys, secondhand suckers, and stray pieces of cereal. There they remain for months or years, until a parent finally cleans under the seat, a time when family discipleship isn't at the forefront of anyone's mind.

Providing children with papers to clutter the car is not the same as equipping parents with the resources they need to engage in cosmic combat. Handouts for children falls more in the category of killing trees for



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE FIELD

Gospel-centered synchronization

THE KEY CONSIDERATION

How can the ministry move toward synchronizing every event and activity with what parents and families in faith are doing to disciple children?

HOW TO FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Worksheet E: TIE Your Ministry Together

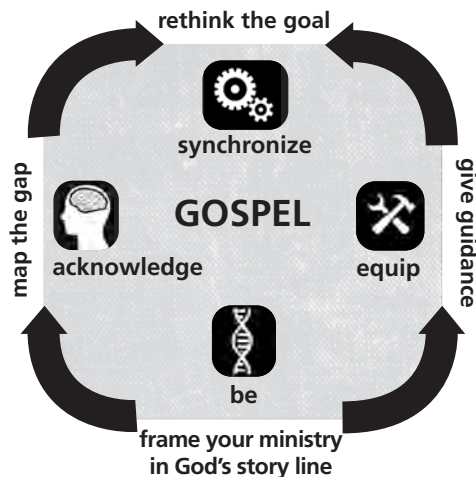
WHAT TO DO

Gather your family ministry team. Finalize a mission statement for your ministry with families. Decide on a unifying strategic question that you will begin to ask about every event or activity for children or youth—a question

such as, “How will this event equip parents to view themselves as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives?” or “How will we train, involve, or equip parents through this activity?” Using Worksheet E: TIE Your Ministry Together, list every activity and event in your ministry. Apply the TIE test to each one. Develop ways to train, involve, or equip parents through every activity or event. Make a multiyear plan for reworking each area of ministry, paying special attention to areas where church members or church leaders may be resistant to change.

HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE

Do not attempt to tie your ministry activities to the primary role of parents until your ministry leaders see the discipleship of their families as a response to God’s work in their lives (“be”). Begin applying the TIE test when parents cannot avoid hearing about their primary responsibility for their children’s spiritual development (“acknowledge”) and when the congregation is providing training for parents and families in faith (“equip”). In most congregations, it seems to take three years or so for these processes to take root and another three to five years for them to be fully implemented.



THINK ABOUT IT TOGETHER

Work through these activities with the family ministry team to develop a shared vision for your congregation's family ministry.

1. Develop an in-depth study of 1 Corinthians 12:12—13:13. Consider carefully how coordination of different members in the body of Christ connects with the need to synchronize discipleship in the church with the Christian household.

2. Talk about what it means for family ministry to flow out of a gospel-centered identity. Openly and honestly discuss whether team members are engaged in habits of discipleship in their own households. Offer encouragement and help to one another (Gal. 6:1–5).

3. Pray for your children and grandchildren even if you don't have children or grandchildren yet. Think not simply about managing your children's present behaviors but about whether generations yet to come will know and treasure the gospel. Pray also for the children for whom you will become a family in faith and for their future children.

4. Prayerfully consider what sort of family ministry God has called your congregation to implement. Your family ministry may fit neatly into one of the three categories described in this book (family-equipping, family-based, family-integrated). More likely, your church's family ministry will be a mixture of a couple of different models. Begin a process of rewriting job descriptions in your ministry to reflect what you have learned in this book.

5. Sketch out a multiyear plan to move your ministry toward your chosen ministry model. To turn this plan into a comprehensive strategy for transformation, you may consider working through Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2005).

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU TRANSITION TO FAMILY-EQUIPPING

Chester, Tim and Steve Timmis. *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping Around Gospel and Community*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2008.

Haynes, Brian. *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today*. Loveland, Colo.: Group Publishing, 2009.

Hellerman, Joseph. *When the Church Was a Family*. Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2009.

Moore, Russell. *Adopted for Life*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2009.

Younts, John. *Everyday Talk: Talking Freely and Naturally about God with Your Children*. Wapwallopen, Penn.: Shepherd Press, 2005.

TWELVE TOOLS TO EQUIP FAMILIES

FOR PARENTS

- Bogear, Jim and Jerolyn. *Faith Legacy: Six Values to Shape Your Child's Journey*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009.
- Farley, William. *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2009.
- Machowski, Marty. *Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotionals to Draw Your Family to God*. Greensboro, N.C.: New Growth Press, 2010.
- Nappa, Mike and Amy. *Creative Family Prayer Times*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 2007.
- Rienow, Rob. *Visionary Parenting: Capture a God-Sized Vision for Your Family*. Nashville, Tenn.: Randall House, 2009.
- Trujillo, Kelli B. *Faith-Filled Moments: Helping Kids See God in Everyday Life*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009.

FOR MINISTRY LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS

- Chester, Tim and Steve Timmis. *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping Around Gospel and Community*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2008.

Haynes, Brian. *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today*. Loveland, Colo.: Group Publishing, 2009.

Hellerman, Joseph. *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community*. Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2009.

Moore, Russell. *Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families & Churches*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2009.

Younts, John. *Everyday Talk: Talking Freely and Naturally about God with Your Children*. Wapwallopen, Penn.: Shepherd Press, 2005.

WORKSHEET A:

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

You may download a printable version of this survey from www.wphresources.com/fmfg. The survey may be reproduced and used freely, as long as no changes are made to it and every copy includes this statement: "Copied from Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011). Used by permission." If adding items using a scale of 1 to 6 when analyzing data from the surveys, reverse the order of the scale—so that it goes from 6 to 1 instead—on items marked "Reverse Scored."

SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

This survey is intended for parents with children living at home. If your children are too young to participate in an activity that is described, please honestly assess what you anticipate doing when your children become old enough to participate.

For the purposes of this survey, "church leaders" include pastors, elders, ministers, deacons, teachers, or small group leaders.

Part 1: Parental Perceptions

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
01. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.						
02. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.						
03. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.						
04. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.						
05. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.						
06. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.						
07. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others. [REVERSE SCORED]						
08. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.						

Part 2: Parental Practices

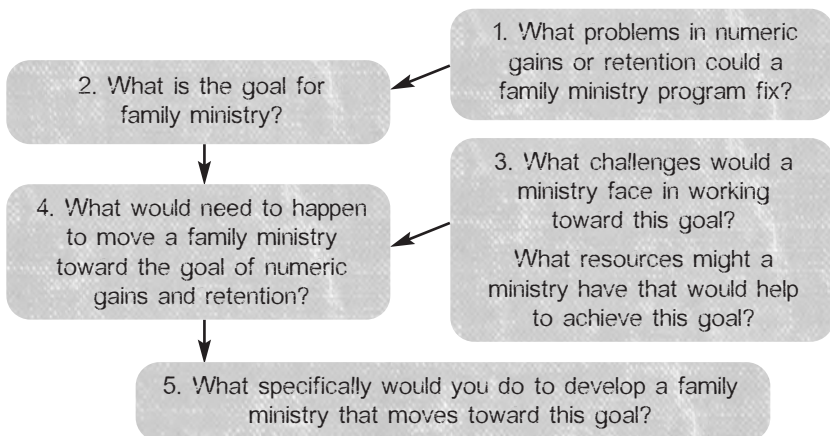
	Never	Once	A couple of times	Three or four times	Five or six times	Seven or more times
09. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past <i>week</i> have I prayed aloud with any of my children?						
10. How many times in the past <i>week</i> has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?						
11. How many times in the past <i>month</i> have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?						
12. How many times in the past <i>month</i> have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?						
13. How many times in the past <i>two months</i> has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?						
14. How many times in the past <i>two months</i> have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?						
15. How many times in the past <i>year</i> have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?						
16. How often in the past <i>year</i> has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?						

WORKSHEET B:

MOTIVES MATTER

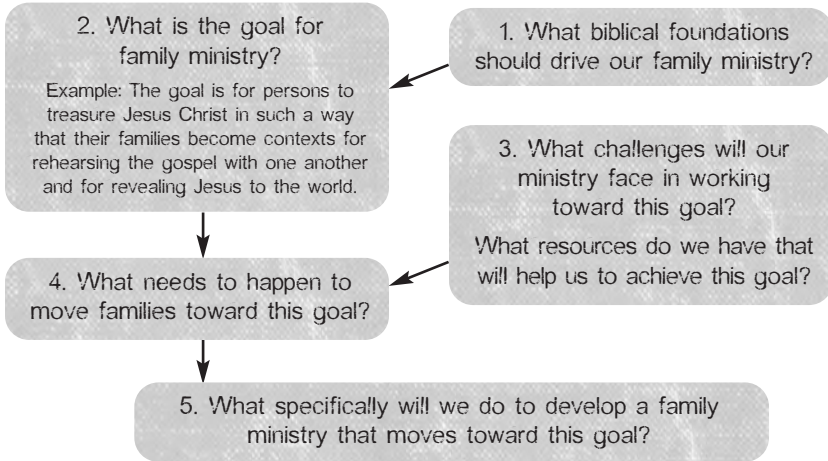
PART ONE—PROBLEM-CENTERED PLANNING: DEVELOPING GOALS IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

This is *not* the right way to develop or to implement your goals for family ministry! It does, however, show how we really make plans sometimes. Work through this flowchart individually. Compare your results with other members of the family ministry team. What do you see that is similar in your results? What is different? How did this exercise help you to rethink your motives for moving toward family ministry? Work through this flowchart supposing that your goals are *numeric gains* and *retention*.



PART TWO—GOSPEL-CENTERED PLANNING: DEVELOPING GOALS BASED ON GOD'S PRIORITIES

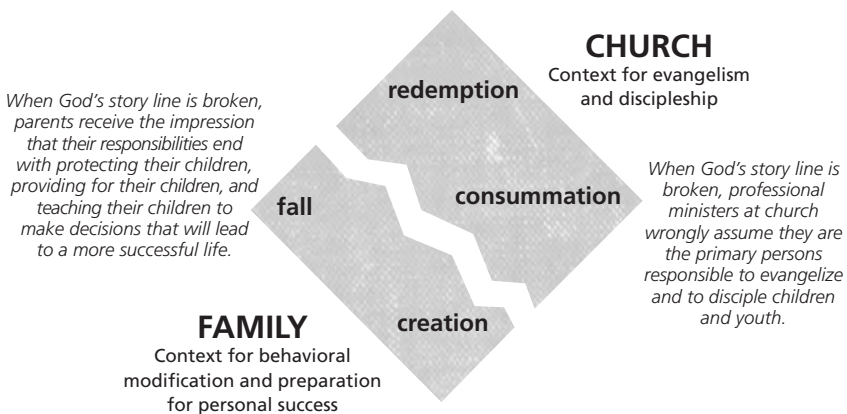
This flowchart is a far better example of how to develop plans for our ministries. Work through this flowchart together as a family ministry team.



Based on the results from your flowchart, work together to develop a tentative, one-sentence mission statement for your church's ministry to families. Write the statement below.

WORKSHEET C:

LIVING IN GOD'S STORY LINE



Look at your church's calendar for the past month.

Place a small X on the redemption/consummation side of the story line above for each activity or event that seeks to evangelize, disciple, or provide fellowship for children or youth.

For each activity or event that intentionally involves and equips parents to function as primary faith trainers in their children's lives, draw a line from the circle for that event to the word *family*.

Imagine that each line is a bridge that connects the generations. Based on this exercise, how many bridges has your congregation built to equip parents to evangelize and disciple their own children?

God has called parents to function as primary faith trainers in their children's lives. Yet, in most cases, churches are not consistently or intentionally connecting parents to the discipleship of their children.

If that's the case in your congregation, what will you do to help parents see their children in light of the whole story line of God?

WORKSHEET D:

WHAT MESSAGE ARE WE SENDING?

On a Sunday morning, take this worksheet and a pen or pencil and walk through the building where your church meets.

Carefully observe the posters, promotional materials, worship folders, and other handouts. Listen carefully to announcements and conversations in several different ministry areas, if possible.

Each time that you read or hear any indication that parents are primary faith trainers in their children's lives, write your observations in the space below.

Based on your observations and the observations of other family ministry team members, how clearly and frequently are parents in your church acknowledged as primary faith trainers in their children's lives?

How thoroughly are parents in your church equipped to engage actively in their children's spiritual development?

In what areas does your church do well when it comes to acknowledging and equipping parents as primary faith trainers in their children's lives?

In what areas can your church do a better job of acknowledging and equipping parents as primary faith trainers in their children's lives?

WORKSHEET E:

TIE YOUR MINISTRY TOGETHER

Look carefully at last year's events and activities in your ministry calendar. As a family ministry team, select ten events or activities to synchronize with faith training at home.

Individually, work through the following process with each event or activity: (1) In the left column, describe the current event or activity. (2) In the center column, choose whether the activity should be shifted to train, involve, or equip parents. (3) In the right column, clearly describe how the activity will be different after synchronization with family faith training. (4) Prioritize the changes; number the events to indicate which ones might be shifted first, then second, and so on.

As a family ministry team, compare the shifts that you have selected and prioritized. Use these suggested shifts to begin to develop a comprehensive plan for moving every aspect of your ministry toward synchronization with faith training at home.

WORKSHEET E: TIE YOUR MINISTRY TOGETHER

What does the event or activity look like now?	How could your ministry synchronize this event or activity: train, involve, or equip?	What will the event or activity look like afterward?

APPENDIX:

SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The Family Discipleship Perspectives and Practices Survey: Two hundred seventy-eight parents attending adult Bible study groups in thirty-six different evangelical congregations participated in the survey. Congregations were purposively selected to derive a sample that represented the actual distribution of evangelical church attendees in U.S. American churches in terms of region and church size. Given the approximate total number of parents with children living at home in the United States (35,218,000, U.S. Census Bureau, “America’s Families and Living Arrangements: 2010,” accessed April 12, 2011, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2010.html>), the percentage of adults in the United States self-identified as connected to evangelical congregations (26.3 percent, <http://religions.pewforum.org/affiliations>), and the number of persons in the sample, the confidence interval for the results of this study is +/- 5.88 percent with a confidence level of 95 percent. Recommendations in this book may be helpful in nonevangelical and non-U.S. contexts, but the results of the survey should not be generalized to populations outside the United States or to nonevangelical church attendees.

Characteristics and Transitional Patterns in Family-Equipping Churches: The Delphi method study is a widely recognized means for achieving convergence of opinion concerning real-world knowledge solicited from experts on certain topics by means of a group communication process. This

study included four iterations (rounds of consultation) with a three-person expert panel that resulted in consensus on eleven items—four related to transitions in organizational ethos and seven related to values and practices. When, as in this particular study that focused on transition to a particular model of family ministry, only a few persons are qualified as experts, smaller samples such as this one have been recognized as acceptable bases for development of consensus by means of Delphi method studies. See S. Lam, et al., “Prediction and Optimization of a Ceramic Casting Process Using a Hierarchical Hybrid System of Neural Networks and Fuzzy Logic,” in *IIE Transactions*, 32 (2001), 83–92; as well as J.G. Friend, “A Delphi Study to Identify the Essential Tasks and Functions for ADA Coordinators in Public Higher Education,” in *Digital Abstracts International*, 62 (2001), 1339.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

Part 1: Parental Perceptions

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
01. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.	5 percent	33 percent	17 percent	23 percent	18 percent	5 percent
02. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while. [REVERSE SCORED]	8 percent	27 percent	17 percent	32 percent	12 percent	5 percent
03. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching. [REVERSE SCORED]	26 percent	45 percent	17 percent	10 percent	2 percent	1 percent
04. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me. [REVERSE SCORED]	61 percent	31 percent	3 percent	2 percent	2 percent	2 percent
05. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together. [REVERSE SCORED]	16 percent	27 percent	26 percent	21 percent	10 percent	1 percent

continued

Part 1: Parental Perceptions *continued*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
06. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.	0 percent	0 percent	0 percent	4 percent	34 percent	62 percent
07. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others. [REVERSE SCORED]	37 percent	44 percent	11 percent	6 percent	0 percent	1 percent
08. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.	18 percent	41 percent	17 percent	18 percent	6 percent	1 percent

Part 2: Parental Practices

	Never	Once	A couple of times	Three or four times	Five or six times	Seven or more times
09. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past <i>week</i> have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	21 percent	11 percent	14 percent	13 percent	20 percent	21 percent
10. How many times in the past <i>week</i> has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	5 percent	5 percent	28 percent	31 percent	25 percent	5 percent
11. How many times in the past <i>month</i> have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	20 percent	10 percent	25 percent	10 percent	9 percent	26 percent
12. How many times in the past <i>month</i> have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	7 percent	2 percent	21 percent	19 percent	20 percent	31 percent
13. How many times in the past <i>two months</i> has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	35 percent	10 percent	21 percent	6 percent	5 percent	22 percent
14. How many times in the past <i>two months</i> have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	18 percent	6 percent	26 percent	16 percent	13 percent	20 percent

continued

Part 2: Parental Practices *continued*

	Never	Once	A couple of times	Three or four times	Five or six times	Seven or more times
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	44 percent	9 percent	27 percent	14 percent	2 percent	4 percent
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	68 percent	12 percent	14 percent	5 percent	0 percent	2 percent