



Pastor's Coach

# DOING CHURCH AS A FAMILY

Dr. Michael Brodeur

# **Doing Church as Family**

**Building Thriving Churches  
with Biblical Family Leadership Principles**

**By: Michael Brodeur**

# Doing Church as Family

## Quintessential Media

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# Introduction

The Church of Jesus Christ is at a crossroads. We stand on the cusp of what could be the greatest harvest of souls in human history, but if we're honest with ourselves, we know our values and priorities need a massive overhaul if we hope to be ready for what God is about to do on the earth.

My goal in this booklet is to help us look in the mirror—not to see the spots and blemishes but rather to see the possibility of fulfilling God's desires by becoming everything He created us to be. I'm approaching the Church as a doctor or coach, and I'm being totally honest: What are the real issues holding us back from maximum health and impact and what are the specific things we need to do to change? As a church coach, as well as a student of the Church as she's grown through the ages, I've come to believe churches tend to be one of three types: Fantasy, Factory or Family.

## The Fantasy Church

One of the most engaging preoccupations of our generation is a game called Fantasy Football, where players assemble make-believe teams from real-life players and battle one another for victory. Although it's a fun pastime for friends and family, it has very little to do with the real game of football. In the real game, plays are run, contact is made, points are scored and titles are won. In the fantasy game, all the results are imaginary and reality remains unaffected.

This is a perfect parallel to what I call Fantasy Church, in which we go through all the motions of church but never really moving the ball or scoring real points. Much like an athlete running in place—the members are working hard and expending a lot of energy, but they never truly “arrive.” In the fantasy church, we conduct worship services in which people come for an hour and then leave, with very little measurable change in their personal lives, or in the impact in the surrounding community. In fact, many of the largest churches in the world are located in communities with the most troubling social statistics. A fair question that every church needs to ask itself is this, “If you were to close your doors tomorrow, would anyone except your members notice you were gone?”

Many churches have lost the real metrics for measuring success and have defaulted to a set of measurements that are irrelevant to Heaven's priorities. We measure attenders, income, buildings, and events, while Jesus measures the transformation of souls, saints and spheres. In the fantasy church, the majority of people's time, energy, and money goes into maintaining the status quo and managing members until they get to Heaven, and only a small percentage of the church's resources is used to advance the Kingdom of God. In the fantasy church, we fall into a maintenance pattern that makes us *feel* like we're “doing church,” but we're not actually achieving any noticeable or measurable outcome.



## The Factory Church

In response to fantasy church, many churches develop a variety of systems and programs designed to accomplish the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. These models produce program-based churches that are designed to streamline the discipleship process and create cookie-cutter Christians in an efficient and effective manner. The Factory Church can be a mega-church or a cell-church but the eventual outcome is the same. They end up with a system that relies on policies and programs rather than on relationship and personal process.

Unfortunately, Factory Churches almost always end up being like a massive furnace, with all the members feverishly shoveling coal to keep the fire burning. Our resources are drained and we slowly burn out. Churches thrive best when they exist to foster the destinies of their members, not exploit their members to fulfill the destiny of the church. As Jesus once said, “Man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath for Man.” Factory Churches tend to get the cart in front of the horse and that leads to frustration and eventual fruitlessness. Although the innovators of this kind of church have the best of intentions, they opt for a corporation model of church that often violates key values of the Kingdom of God.

## The Family Church

What is the answer? I believe it is the *family church*. Every believer intrinsically desires to be part of a healthy spiritual family, but building this kind of church can be full of challenges. In the first place, our model of family in current culture has been damaged through materialism, workaholism, divorce and a hundred other problems. This has produced a deep wound of orphan-hood in our culture. This orphan-hood either leads to a deep “performance orientation” where people obsess and strive to receive love and acceptance through outward achievement or where others just give up trying in resignation and resentment.

Many churches mistakenly utilize the orphan mentality to recruit and reward their workers. In response to this, many people have romanticized the idea of “The Family Church” into a Disneyland ideal, of a place where each member is accepted, loved and cared for, without any expectations of reciprocation. In pursuit of this ideal, we miss the whole point of family. When I ask leaders to define what they mean by Family Church most will say, “A safe place to belong.” Is this really what a true family is all about?

You, as a senior leader, are called to be a spiritual father or mother to your congregation, which means you have a certain responsibility that is akin to natural parenthood. We’re going to look at how we can build a true family church that benefits all members and powerfully grows into the future. The process of building a true family church is almost never accidental. A healthy family is built on the solid ground of unconditional love and acceptance. Without this essential foundation, a home will

always revert to an orphanage. However, love is not the only quality that defines family; in order to truly understand family, we have to consult Scripture.

When God created the first family, He had a prime purpose in mind. He told them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.” In other words, ***family*** is God’s methodology for ruling the earth and filling it with His glory. It is also His methodology both in redemption and restoration. And as we’ll see throughout this booklet, true family is not about raising children. It’s about raising mature healthy adults.

# Chapter 1

## The Fantasy Church: A Tale of Three Churches

I love the Church of Jesus Christ, and I have committed the last forty years of my life to serving the Body of Christ in one form or another. Twenty-five of those years were spent as a senior pastor in the heart of San Francisco. Yet in my quest to help the Church become the glorious Bride without spot or blemish, I am compelled from time to time to hold up a mirror because I need to be able to see myself clearly.

Much of my love for the Church was formed while working with an amazing man named John Wimber, who founded the Vineyard Movement. I was first attracted to Wimber because of his emphasis on the supernatural. In 1984, my wife, Diane, and I attended the MC510 Conference in Anaheim with around 2500 other people, and we received a powerful impartation from God. I immediately signed up for the next conference on church planting and was surprised to find there were only about 25 registrants. I had the unique privilege of spending four days in a small group with John Wimber and Bob Fulton, learning the principles of church leadership Wimber had discovered while working with C. Peter Wagner in the Fuller Institute of Church Growth.

Wimber began this workshop with a series of questions that shook me to my core:

*“If you were NOT a leader in your church, would you GO to church there?”*

*“As a pastor, what business are you in?”*

*“How’s business?”*

To be honest, I had never considered those questions. Then Wimber made an incredible statement: “For most pastors, doing church is a lot like playing basketball without a ball and without a hoop.” In other words, we are going through a lot of motions but never really scoring... “doing church” has become a sophisticated form of pantomime. In fact, up to 80 percent of the time, energy and money of most churches is spent on maintaining the status quo, not really advancing God’s Kingdom.

This is confirmed by a study I read a few years ago that stated that not a single county in the United States had experienced “conversion growth” at a level that exceeded population growth. It is widely known that some of the largest churches in our nation are situated in neighborhoods with some of the worst social statistics, with soaring crime rates, divorce rates, and teen suicide rates. All we have to do is look at the national trends of racial tension, gay marriage, homegrown terrorism and a hundred other problems to realize we have our work cut out for us.



## Vision Without Evaluation

For most churches, the Sunday service is the primary indicator of the church's health. They measure how many people attend, the size of the offering, the "flow" of the worship and the impact of the message. These are fine things to measure; the only problem is that Jesus did *not* say, "Go into all the world and hold great Sunday services!"

Jesus had a set of priorities that governed His ministry on the earth. He came to declare and demonstrate God's Kingdom. He came to seek and save that which was lost. He came to heal the sick and cast out demons. He came to make disciples who make disciples. He empowered us to raise up leaders who would go on to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Each of these points is easy to preach but challenging to implement. These are the very things we must evaluate if we are to ever honestly answer the question: "How's business?" The major issue with the Fantasy Church is thinking that *preaching the vision* is the same as *fulfilling the vision*.

## Passion Without a Plan

Passion is a powerful asset to any person or organization, but passion without a plan is like a fire hose without a firefighter. It will spew water everywhere but rarely succeed in putting out the fire. In order to harness passion and produce real results, we need to have a plan, and that plan needs to have measurable goals and objectives. Many believers think that planning is "carnal," but Scripture says God has a plan and is "*working all things after the counsel of His own will*" (Ephesians 1:11). Although the resources of Heaven are unlimited, on earth our access to time, talent and treasure is always limited. Planning is an expression of wise stewardship that empowers us to maximize our influence and impact in the world around us for His glory.

The key to wise planning is beginning with the outcome in mind. According to Isaiah 61:1-4, the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus—and by extension, us—to bring transformation to souls, saints, and the different spheres of society. That may not be the only agenda on God's heart, but it is a good starting point. If our "business" is to reach and enfold the lost, to equip and empower the saints, and to transform the world around us . . . what kind of plan will accomplish that outcome?

## Maintenance Without Movement

Many churches exist in order to continue to exist. Most didn't start out this way, but as the years passed they gradually succumbed to the tyranny of the urgent and the inertia of tradition. Rather than spending the majority of their resources running toward a God-given vision, they became overwhelmed with managing people, problems, buildings, and budgets. They are no longer playing to win but "not to lose." Although their vision

and mission statements may declare the grand purposes of God, if you look at their calendar, checkbook and programs, they are designed to maintain the status quo.

Keep in mind that fantasy churches come in all shapes and sizes, and they also come in various degrees of fantasy; some are only 25 percent fantasy church, while others are 50 or 75 percent fantasy. Whatever the “Fantasy Factor” we must do our best to gradually eliminate the areas in which we major on minors and squander our time, energy and money in non-essentials. Instead, we must refocus our ministry to fulfill the things that are central to the heart and ministry of Jesus.

## **The Factory Church**

In 1984 after completing my training for ministry, my wife, Diane, and I started a Vineyard Church in San Francisco that grew rapidly and became one of the largest churches the city had seen in a generation. But after fifteen years of great success, we hit a series of problems that caused multiple fractures in our church. In 2000 we started over with a group of less than two hundred. This restart took a couple of years to get moving, and I gradually became frustrated, comparing the challenges of that season with the great breakthrough we enjoyed in the past. For whatever reason, we couldn’t seem to regain our previous momentum. As I talked about in the last chapter, we felt like we were playing basketball without a ball or a hoop.

Around this time, I heard about a cell church strategy from Latin America. As I investigated it further, I discovered a brilliant and well-organized system of soul winning, discipleship and leadership development that was bearing great fruit around the world. This system was committed to the ministry and gifts of the Holy Spirit and provided great biblical curricula that covered a wide range of topics. In other words, they had developed a “plug and play” system for fulfilling the Great Commission. We tried it on for size, and in the beginning it brought some real benefits to our church; however, after a year or two it began to feel a lot like Saul’s armor – it just didn’t fit. We found ourselves no longer doing *family*. Instead, we were doing *factory*.

Living things grow from within, and our approach to implementing this system ended up being artificial and mechanical. Within a short period of time we found ourselves having to work harder and harder to keep the machine functioning. Our leaders were initially grateful for the clear structure and strategy, but eventually they became burnt out from trying to prop up a system that was consuming more life than it was imparting. I call this phenomenon *factory church*.

Like fantasy churches, factory churches come in all shapes and sizes. They are not necessarily all cell churches (like we were at the time), but they are any ministry in which the program squeezes out God’s presence and the people’s passion. Here are a few earmarks of a factory church that will help you understand it in greater detail.

## **Wineskin Without Wine**

Jesus was the first to use the wine and wineskin terminology. In my book *Revival Culture*, I refer to this as “the coffee and the cup.” Church is all about the coffee but coffee is of very little use without a cup of some kind to hold it. That cup can be ceramic, paper, or plastic—but without a cup we can’t enjoy the coffee. At the same time, the cup without the coffee would never wake us up.

I love structure and systems. Charts are my love language, but I also realize that structure without substance will eventually bring some form of death. Many leaders have become preoccupied with structure at the expense of the life-giving substance, and those churches have begun a journey into an increasingly lifeless faith. A factory church must eventually resort to control and subtle coercion to keep people committed to the structure after the thrill is gone.

A factory consists of templates, conveyer belts, molds, and cookie-cutter forms that function well only when everyone conforms. The problem is that we are all diverse in history, temperament, spiritual gifts, and calling. If we try to fit everyone into a single mold, people will gradually find themselves growing oppressed and they will become resistant and resentful. The only way to overcome this is to apply more pressure and control, which works against the spiritual life of the church and eventually kills all momentum.

## **Duty Without Delight**

Every church has a culture of motivation that energizes the members to serve and sacrifice. The primary motivation of a factory church is almost always *duty*. Duty is a noble virtue and a necessary safety net for us when other motivations fail. Unfortunately, duty is not a sustainable motivation for long-term service, especially in our generation. Most leaders of a factory church emphasize the obligation of members to sacrifice like Jesus sacrificed for us, yet Scripture tells us that even Jesus needed more than mere duty to fulfill His destiny. Hebrews 12:2 says that He endured the cross “*for the joy set before Him.*”

The main cause of burnout in any church is the motivation of duty without delight. If Jesus needed a joy set before Him, how much more do we? Many things can bring your people joy, but I believe the greatest source of joy for the believer is the confidence that we are pleasing the Lord by being fruitful in His will. Jesus declared the purpose of His entire teaching on fruitfulness was to help His followers be filled with joy (John 15:11). True joy is found in discovering and fulfilling the unique destiny God prepared for you.

## Organization Above Individual

The purpose of a factory is to utilize people and resources to produce a profit. When machines and resources wear out and are used up, they are replaced. All things within the organization exist for the sake of the organization. But that is not the way God's Kingdom works. There are two priorities in the Kingdom of God: The church "organization" and the individual member. Both are important and both need to be grown for His purposes to be fulfilled. The question concerns the priority of God—which is the cart and which is the horse?

A factory church puts the "cart" of organization in front of the "horse" of individual development. This inevitably causes us to see people as expendable resources that God brought to fulfill our vision and mission. The problem with this thinking is that when we put the cart in front of the horse, we miss *God's* vision and mission. There is no higher mission for any church than to help develop every member to fulfill all Jesus created them to be and do. Jesus' important last words were, "Go into all the world and make disciples...teaching them to do everything I have commanded you." The Great Commission is not about "people utilization" but about people development.

It's time to move from fantasy and factory to God's solution: *family*. In the next chapter, I hope to illustrate the power of the family church and give some keys about how you can turn your church into a people development incubator.

## Chapter 2

# The Family Church

Diane and I raised seven children while planting and pastoring a thriving church in the heart of San Francisco. My understanding of family, both natural and spiritual, is shaped by the challenges and victories we've experienced over the years, and in my estimation, the highest expression of church will always be the family church.

Since the beginning of time, God's primary means of fulfilling His purposes has been family. Yet in my experience as a pastor and a mentor to other pastors, I've noticed people have a variety of ideas concerning what "spiritual family" actually means. It seems that family church is a bit like the story of the blind men and the elephant. The one who feels the leg believes the elephant is like a tree. The one who feels the trunk believes the elephant is like a hose. The one who touches the tail feels a rope. Perception always informs definition.

As I've coached pastors, I've found that leaders around the world typically use the word *family* to mean "a safe place to belong." Although this is a key dimension of family church, most churches that use this definition are actually doing fantasy church to one degree or another. While I agree that family is first and foremost a safe place to belong—it must be more than that as well.

Many leaders also consider the family church to be a place where they can raise children who serve the family. Yes, an important aspect of the family is raising children to serve God and others; however, many who use this language are doing some form of factory church. I'm going to give you a description of true family church that will inspire you to build the spiritual family God has called you to build.

### Individual Above Organization

In every family, tension exists between the value of the individual and the value of the group. If we put too much emphasis on the individual, it can lead to low commitment and high chaos. On the other hand, an imbalance toward the group leads to control and conformity that stifles the uniqueness of the individual and eventually harms the family. I believe this tension is best resolved by deciding which of the two is the "cart" and which is the "horse." Although the health of the individual and the organization are both essential to fulfill God's purposes, I believe that thriving individuals can build a better, more effective organization than a thriving organization can build the best people.

God created family with the prime directive to "be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it." This directive presupposes an ever-increasing number of new families and requires the full development of every child into a mature, powerful adult. The overarching purpose of "family" isn't to maintain itself but to *multiply*. How? By developing every member and sending him forth to create a new family. As I said in the

introduction, true family is not about raising children—it's about *raising adults*. This requires a priority structure that favors the individual slightly above the organization.

In a healthy family, the father and mother want their children to succeed and go farther than they did. They sacrifice so that their kids will have a better life than them and be better than them. But to accomplish that, the wise parents train their kids and incorporate them in the vision for the whole family. It's not let the kids do their own thing apart from the family, or exalting the child so much that the parents cater to every whim of the child. No! It's making each individual child's destiny more important than the parents, but involving them in the entire family's destiny as part of the developmental process. And that includes disciplining them and training them so that they mature and learn responsibility...so that eventually the children become mature adults and wise parents themselves who raise up a new generation... and so on. That's multiplication.

## **Diversity and Unity**

One of the things that makes family church so challenging is the tension between unity and diversity. Without unity we can never accomplish the goals God has given us as a family. At the same time, without a commitment to diversity we will never have the full representation of the different aspects of Jesus—and we will never be able to achieve the synergy described in Scripture as diverse members of Christ's body function together as one (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Diversity is one of the most important distinctions between a factory church and a family church. Factories are designed to spit out uniform products in an efficient and effective manner, while true family is built on the understanding we are all different by God's design. We will only be truly fruitful as a unit when we discover and fulfill our unique personal destinies as individuals. A family church allows every member to be different from one another and yet unified in heart and purpose. It also depends on the creation of structures and systems that can be adapted and customized to each person's unique journey.

## **Development Above Delegation**

Most pastors are decent delegators but not good developers. Most of us are so busy running the "program" of church that we are unable be intentional with our people. The tyranny of the urgent inevitably causes us to shift from *people development* to *people maintenance*. In addition, many of us lack a clear strategy to develop the people in our churches in a personal yet measurable way. As a result, many pastors default to mere delegation to keep the boat afloat.

One of my sons came to me a few years ago to share something that had upset him as a child. "You and mom used to joke with each other in front of us, saying, 'Honey, don't do the dishes. That's what we had children for.'" Although my son knew it was only a joke, it still hurt his heart.

I didn't conceive my biological children so I would have someone to do my chores for me. I had sons and daughters to consummate my love with my wife and to raise up the fruit of that love to fulfill every potential and overcome every obstacle they might face. I had sons and daughters so they would fulfill God's purposes by blessing others and raising up the next generation.

Unfortunately, some pastors believe God brings people to their churches to do the "chores" of ministry for them. They become frustrated when their people refuse to volunteer or if they burn out too quickly. Often, leaders mistakenly put the cart before the horse by setting the organization above the individual and delegation above development.

Over the years, I've come to realize that, as a good father, I must guide my children into ever-increasing levels of maturity and responsibility. I do this not for *my* sake or for the sake of the family as a whole, but it's for the sake of the individual. Delegation is important, not as an end in itself but as a vehicle for personal development and maturation. True family church is not merely about creating a safe place for people to belong. It's about creating a dynamic, developmental environment in which every member is able to discover and fulfill the purpose for which God created them.

I want to encourage you, as a senior leader, to think in terms of family in everything you do. Incredible beauty exists in the family. It is about relationship, covenant, connection, and ultimately this idea of multiplication as we help people move developmentally from immaturity to maturity, from innocence to knowledge. All of these things are part of the family concept. Family is a place of intentional development, where infants become toddlers and toddlers become teenagers and teenagers, adults. That is all because you as a leader, as a spiritual father or mother, stepped in and created an outcome that produces that result. As you go towards creating family, don't neglect the developmental side as you embrace the relational side. Make sure the two come together so ultimately everyone in church rises up in the fullness of who God has created them to be, so you can bring transformation to the world around you.

Let me put in a plug for our ministry, Pastor's Coach. We are committed to helping aspiring family churches avoid the pitfalls of fantasy and factory. We offer a variety of teachings and processes that will help you turn your church into a people development incubator. Connect with us at [www.pastorscoach.com](http://www.pastorscoach.com).



## **Chapter 3**

# **God's Threefold Strategy**

God has one solution to the pain and suffering in this world: to raise up healthy families who will extend His heavenly family through the whole earth. We live in a world where the wounds of spiritual orphan-hood have impacted every soul. Yet the good news is that every spiritual orphan and every broken heart can encounter our heavenly Father and find a home with Him, in His family. This is the heartbeat of heaven and the overarching purpose of God: That the earth would be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

To fulfill this amazing purpose, God has a threefold strategy: creation, redemption and restoration. To accomplish each of these strategies, God has created one methodology: FAMILY. Let's look at each strategy individually and see how the key to fulfillment is found in family.

### **God's Strategy in Creation**

God created the earth for a purpose, to birth a people who were made in His image to display His glory throughout the universe. God created us for both relationship and partnership. He wanted to know us and be known by us—that is the relationship part. At the same time, God is the Creator of all things and, therefore, with God it's impossible to have a relationship without also having a partnership.

When God gave our first parents the “be fruitful” command, He was setting in motion His plan to rule the planet through a partnership with those who were made in His image. In addition to the desire to bond with a spouse and produce children, He also put in our hearts a deep love and passion for our offspring, so we would treasure our babies and care for them unconditionally.

Then He placed within us an urge to see our children exceed and surpass us, and that impulse translates into a desire to impart identity, community, maturity, responsibility, and destiny. That impartation typically takes place over the course of eighteen years, and in a healthy family, it can continue for the rest of the child's life in some form or fashion. Family was created as God's perfect method for fulfilling His purposes on earth.

### **God's Strategy in Redemption**

Unfortunately, sin entered the world and damaged the family in a massive way. God's intended method for “filling and subduing the earth” became a source of brokenness and sin throughout the generations. Although family continued to function biologically, it developed and propagated huge spiritual problems that touched every nation, tribe and

tongue. However, God was not phased, but set in motion a redemptive plan that still used His strategy of family, despite humanity's brokenness and shortcomings.

When He called Abraham and Sarah to leave their home and journey to a new land, He promised they would raise up a family and that through their seed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. They could not possibly have known the extent to which their "SEED" would remove the power and penalty of sin and restore God's good purpose to the earth.

But surprisingly, in spite of God's specific promise, Abraham and Sarah were unable to conceive a child. They waited over twenty-five years, long past their natural childbearing age—until Sarah finally became pregnant and Isaac was born. Isaac and his wife, Rebecca, later gave birth to Jacob, and Jacob became the father of twelve sons, who in turn produced twelve tribes, and those twelve tribes ultimately became the nation of Israel, God's own people.

However, God's purpose wasn't merely to have a nation He could call His own. His purpose was the redemption of all humankind. Over the next two thousand years, He raised up a people who would be shaped through the Law and the Prophets to be a nation through whom He Himself would be born in human form—in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And through Jesus all the nations of the earth are now blessed.

God's solution to the damages of sin was to raise up a family that would ultimately give birth to the Redeemer. Family is God's methodology, not only in creation but also in redemption.

## **God's Strategy in Restoration**

The story doesn't end there, because Jesus did not come merely to redeem us from the power of sin. He also came to *restore* us to God's original intention in creation. Restoration is the third area in which God uses the methodology of family.

When Jesus began His ministry, He gathered twelve men and a group of women (Luke 8–9), and began to pour His life into them. They were His spiritual sons and daughters. He extended His family to seventy others, and that number continued to grow (Luke 10). After He accomplished His death on the cross, He told His sons and daughters to go forth and fulfill the Great Commission—an amazing statement that reiterates the command given at creation, as well as the command given to Abraham and Sarah. He instructed His disciples to "*Go and make disciples*," meaning to produce spiritual sons and daughters. We are commanded to raise these sons and daughters up by teaching them to do everything He commanded us, including the commission itself: to go forth and make new sons and daughters.

God's strategy for restoring the earth to His intended purpose is to raise sons and daughters into spiritual mothers and fathers, who will give birth to new spiritual sons and daughters through the declaration and demonstration of the gospel. These new spiritual

babies will be loved, cared for, trained, and developed, and eventually they will mature into spiritual adults, who will then give birth to new spiritual sons and daughters—until the knowledge of the glory of God fills the earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

Many church leaders are *trying* to be spiritual parents, but how do you know if you are doing it well?

## Secrets of Spiritual Parenting

As church leaders, we are spiritual parents with a powerful role to play in the lives of our spiritual children and the world around us. Because of the importance of that role, it is vital we parent our children for the right reasons, with the right understanding, and with the right application. Let's take a deeper look at what this means.

### Pure Motives

Many leaders like to incorporate fads and programs that seem to be working for others, but unfortunately, it is possible to use family concepts and terminology for the wrong reasons. The promise of family can be used as a marketing tool, even if there is no heart to back it up. It can produce expectations in the congregation that are very difficult to satisfy. Many who come to the church to find a true spiritual father and mother are left confused and end up with a deeper sense of orphan-hood than when they started.

As we grow together in Christ, let's make sure our promises of spiritual parenting and family are ones we can deliver on.

### Right Understanding

Second, we need to understand the true nature and purpose of family and make sure we are providing a full menu of God's paternal blessings.

The concept of family didn't originate on earth; it is the foundation of Heaven and the very pulse of the heart of God. Paul was clear in Ephesians 3:14–15 that **family** is Heaven's primary model and prototype. It is God's ongoing means of creating humanity and His primary method for maturing children into fruitful adults. It is also His way of filling the earth with people who, in all hope, will recognize their need for Him, turn and serve Him.

## Right Application

Third, if we are going to pursue the promise of spiritual family on earth and present ourselves as mothers and fathers to an orphaned generation, we need to do our best to apply ourselves appropriately.

A close friend of mine moved his large family to another state and joined a world-famous mega-church. Initially, I was concerned for the family because they had gone through different crises and needed a lot of care. I was afraid they would fall through the cracks of the several-thousand-member church. I was even more concerned when the father died in a freak lightning storm while hiking in the mountains. I thought for sure this family would not receive enough care, and I was unable to provide it myself from a thousand miles away. However, a month later I discovered the church had enveloped the family and cared for them in an outstanding way. In large part, this was due to the church's healthy application of spiritual parenting.

Obviously, it's unrealistic to expect any pastor of a congregation larger than a hundred people to be a personal spiritual father or mother to every member of the church. However, that doesn't mean spiritual parenting is impossible within larger congregations. The answer is to train up surrogate fathers and mothers, thereby creating reproducible family structures that care for sons and daughters and eventually multiply new fathers and mothers.

Spiritual family is not a matter of size but the combination of values, culture and structure. In all honesty, many smaller churches fail to provide the quality of care and development for their spiritual sons and daughters that some larger churches provide quite well. Churches that navigate this road successfully provide true community that cares. They feel your absence and genuinely want you to be a part of the family.

These are just a few of the secrets to spiritual parenting that provide a foundation for a legitimate church-family experience. What has your experience with spiritual parenting been like?

## Chapter 4

# The Gifts Imparted in a Healthy Family

Over the years, I've had the privilege of coaching hundreds of pastors from a wide variety of churches. In almost every case, the word pastors use most often to describe their ideal church is *family*.

As a pastor, you are called to be a spiritual mother or father who raises up spiritual sons and daughters who will develop much like a natural family. In a biological family, people are born essentially undeveloped, but there is a process of development by which they become who they are ordained to be. We see this clearly in the natural family. The responsibility of a mother and father is to take a child and help her grow. Relationship, love, tenderness, cuddling on the couch—all of these things are very important, but we also help our children grow by teaching them to clean up their toys, make their beds, and do their homework. Why? Because our ultimate goal is not to raise children. Our ultimate goal is to raise adult who can live fruitful, functional lives. If we want them to be mature at 21, we have to start when they're 3 years old as we teach them to clean up their toys.

In our world, there is strong sense of spiritual orphan-hood that has produced a deep hunger for the “Father Heart of God”. This desire has been answered in recent years by dozens of books and conferences that address this topic and seek to heal this problem. Unfortunately, this has led some to “romanticize” the concept of God’s Fatherhood and spiritual family in an unhealthy way. People come to church and ask, “Will you be my spiritual parent?” thinking it will make up for all that was lacking in their past. We have to work against romanticism as we seek to institute family in our churches. Otherwise we run the risk of cultivating a demanding attitude or a sense of entitlement in our members that will eventually lead to a critical attitude when expectations are not met.

Family is supposed to be fun and fulfilling. In every family, there are times when we cuddle-up-on-the-couch, tickle on the floor, and times when we connect to one another deeply and relationally, but family isn't only about Disneyland vacations, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Those experiences, although wonderful, are only a small part of what family is all about. Family is also about sharing your toys, making your bed, taking out the trash, and learning how to drive. In other words, a significant part of family deals with growing up.

As we've discussed, family is God's methodology for extending His Kingdom throughout the earth. The ultimate goal of family is to reproduce new families by raising up sons and daughters into mature adults, who in turn raise up sons and daughters and so on. For this to happen, we need to set our sights not merely on raising children—but on *raising adults*.

If my goal is only to raise a child, I will begin to lose interest in the teen years, but if my goal is to raise an adult, I won't be content until I see my children's children. The same

is true of spiritual family. If my goal is only to birth new converts (versus raising leaders), ***my church will stay a spiritual nursery forever.***

Here are five things you, as a healthy parent, need to impart to produce healthy spiritual children who will make you a proud spiritual grandparent.

## **1. The Gift of Identity**

### **Impart a Secure Identity**

We live in a fractured world with a thousand pressures bearing down on us from all sides. A fractured world tends to spread to communities, families and ultimately individuals. As a result, many of us grow up without a sense of secure identity and when we come to Christ, and try to step into our new identity in the Lord we find ourselves struggling to embrace who God has made us to be. One of the most important gifts a parent can give a child is a sense of secure identity. This is the same with spiritual parenting.

One of the first things a child learns is his or her name. In faith-filled homes, a child's first name is often chosen after prayer and consideration, but the last name is a statement about the family of origin. Names reinforce identity. Identity is formed in an environment of love, intimacy and care. The same is true in the Kingdom. Some of the first things we learn as new believers are how much we are loved, who we are in Christ and who Christ is in us. Those things are the foundation of Christian identity.

Unfortunately, many of us were raised in broken homes by imperfect parents who were unable to impart a sense to us a true sense of identity. As spiritual parents, we need to bring healing to the broken parts and impart true identity to our spiritual sons and daughters in a way that fosters stability, security, and personal victory. Here are three dimensions of identity that need to be imparted and reaffirmed throughout our lives.

### **Fearless Faith**

The foundations of identity are laid in the first moments of life but continue to grow as the child grows. This is true both in the natural and in the spiritual. The sense of safety, care, and provision are imprinted on the heart of a child long before they are able to carry on a conversation. This sense of deep security is actually an expression of faith. In other words, the presence of the caring family (mother, father, siblings, and friends) imparts an understanding of God's existence and nature that will stay with the children throughout their life.

If we want to have a true family church, we must be willing to be there for new believers and members, providing the care and understanding that will secure their identity deeply in the Lord and the family.

## Unlimited Hope

Hope is the positive expectation of future good. Hope is based on the certainty that God's promises are sure and steadfast. As He said, "*I know the plans I have for you, to do you good and not harm,*" (Jeremiah 29:11). This confidence in a good future empowers us to sit higher above disappointment, discouragement and negative circumstances.

As we seek to be a spiritual family with strong identity, we continuously need to challenge false beliefs and replace them with the sure promises of God's Word.

## Unconditional Love

Perhaps the most important foundation of our identity in Christ is found in our ability to experience and express God's unconditional love. Those of us who are parents in the natural understand the *automatic* nature of the love we feel for our children. The moment we see them; we cannot help but light up with delight. Even at the worst moments of inconsolable crying, a healthy parent has access to supernatural patience to love their child (Galatians 5:22–23).

A common mistake made by uninformed believers is to confuse love with blessing. While God's love is absolutely unconditional, His blessings are almost always conditional. As a wise spiritual father, I need to convince my children of my unconditional love in such a way that when correction is needed, it's never manipulative but always a true expression of God's heart.

Unconditional love doesn't mean we get to sidestep moments of instruction and correction, because "*those the Lord loves He chastens and scourges every son who comes to him*" (Hebrews 12:6). Correction is an expression of unconditional love and must be done in a loving manner. However, by the time my child is old enough to need correction, they are secure in the knowledge that they are loved and confident in their own identity that they can joyfully receive instruction and grow as a result.

Spiritual parenting is an absolutely necessary part of making disciples and leading churches. Just like natural parenting, it is not always easy but when it is done well the rewards are phenomenal. Each of us are called to be a spiritual father or mother to the people that you are leading. One of the most important gifts you can give your spiritual sons and daughters is a solid sense of who they are in Christ, who Christ is in them and who they are in the family of God. They are valued. They are loved. They belong. As we impart Kingdom Identity to our spiritual sons and daughters we will lay the foundations for the next generation of world-changing leaders to arise.



## **2. The Gift of Community**

As I have said before, my wife, Diane and I have seven children. Although they are all now adults, they weren't always. In fact, as a homeschool family on the mission field of San Francisco, our kids were almost always together and that made conflict and competition a normal part of our lives. It seems like Diane and I were often intervening in some kind of dispute or disagreement. This is why it became essential to give our children the gift of community by teaching them to love one another, share with one another, forgive one another and persevere with one another.

In a natural family, children thrive on a sense of connectedness. Family is where the value for community is introduced and imparted. The same is true with spiritual family. Every believer needs to be committed to some kind of ongoing fellowship with other believers in order to grow. Community teaches us that we are not alone, that we are not self-sufficient, and that we deeply need one another. Let's look at three different aspects of community that bring life to every church.

### **Communication**

The first step in developing community is to understand the capacity for communication. For the first several years of a child's life, communication is mostly nonverbal, but as the child learns words and forms sentences, communication becomes easier. The same is true for a new believer coming into God's family. Initially they won't know the lingo, the Bible, or even the "rules" of the house, so they need to be lovingly instructed as to how to become part of the community.

The importance of communication grows deeper and deeper as a person matures in Christ. The ability to share our hearts with one another, to communicate our needs and desires—these are part of what it means to be a family. We can't assume that everyone who comes to Christ—or even every person who already knows Him—has the ability to communicate well, so we need to develop a culture of clear communication and help people understand one another.

### **Generosity in Sharing**

One of the first things a child needs to learn is how to share. Initially sharing centers on toys and food, but as adults it means our time, talents, and money. The foundation of community is generosity. When the early church gathered together, Scripture says they had "*all things in common*." That is an incredible level of sharing among the saints. People in the family need to be taught how to share. They need to be taught how to give, how to tithe, how to love others in practical ways. Why? Because that is what community is all about.

This is why I believe so strongly in the power of small groups. Sunday services accomplish many wonderful things but they can never teach us to share life with each other like a small group can do. There are many different small group models, some can be ingrown and of minimal value. At Pastor's Coach we have developed a small group

model that maximizes the sharing of gifts and actually serves as a personal destiny incubator: Each member helping each other discover and fulfill God's calling in each person's life.

## **Conflict Resolution**

Community doesn't only need to be built—it must also be maintained. This happens through healthy conflict resolution. As a dad I repeatedly had to train my children to admit when they were wrong and to ask for forgiveness. Many people grow up with a sense of guilt and shame, and when facing conflict, they will resort to defensiveness, blame, and accusation. We must train people in the truth of Scripture: that love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and never fails. We need to believe the best about each other, and we need to stand strong against the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10).

As we teach our spiritual children to “not let the sun go down on their anger” and “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace” we will cultivate a culture of forgiveness that will demonstrate the love of Jesus to the earth.

The Gift of Community is one of the greatest blessings we can bestow on our spiritual sons and daughters. In order to accomplish this, we must reject the tendency to be “passive-aggressive” in our leadership styles. We must be careful not to play favorites but be consistent in our instruction and correction. As we lovingly model and celebrate Kingdom Community, we will see our spiritual offspring grow into caring, mature and powerful spiritual adults.

## **3. The Gift of Maturity**

As a father of seven, I had children in my home for over 30 years. Each of my children was so different from the others in temperament, gifting and talents. This made a “one-size-fits-all” approach to parenting impossible. But what was even more challenging was that each child was at a different point of maturity at any given time. This diversity made it difficult to navigate the positive aspects of parenting but it also made it hard to bring discipline and correction. So we had to establish a simple ground rule: Immaturity is not a sin. We do not correct for immaturity but only for defiance.

Yet, as a child grows up, he or she is expected to display increasing maturity. Although physical maturity is inevitable, emotional maturity must be intentionally developed. This is also true in the Kingdom of God. Spiritual maturity is a combination of our ability to consider others above ourselves; to process disappointment and pain without blame; and to live in a proactive, not reactive, manner. Spiritual parents need to tune in to the maturity level of their sons and daughters to help foster growth as time passes.

Let's take a look at a few ways we can help facilitate growth in our kids.

## Objectivity

In the past some theologians and scientists thought the earth was the center of the universe, but a renewed perspective revealed we are just one of many planets rotating around our sun. That is maturity. It is objectivity.

By nature, every person is self-centered and perceives the world through a limited lens. In order for a person to mature, they need to begin to see the world through a larger lens, which is the movement from subjectivity to objectivity. When we come to Christ, we have to learn we are no longer the center of the universe—Jesus has assumed that role. The foundation of maturity is the ability to look upon the needs and perspectives of others and see the world through their eyes, so we can love them in truth. That is the essence of the golden rule.

## Delayed Gratification

A mark of immaturity is a demanding spirit that expects everything to come to us the moment it is desired. This “spirit of entitlement” is the root of much pain in the world. So many people in our society have become borrowers who end up slaves to the lender. We need to understand that sometimes our needs and wants are not the priority of the moment. It is possible to train our sons and daughters how to postpone present pleasure for long-term gain.

## Victorious Perspective

A mark of maturity is the ability to perceive difficulty and pain through the eyes of Christ. An excellent biblical example of this is Joseph when he finally met with his brothers after they sold him into slavery. He said, “*You meant it for evil but God meant it for good.*” (Gen. 50:20) Immature people maintain a victim mentality. Three are times when victimization is real and it can cause deep damage to the heart, mind, and body. Unfortunately, it can also produce a mindset that limits us from becoming all God called us to be. The healing process requires maturity and a victorious mindset that forgives our abusers and embraces God’s perspective on our pain.

The gift of maturity is difficult to impart to our spiritual children. One reason for this is that most of us are still growing into our full maturity in Christ. Yet, if we maintain a clear vision for a family of believers in which everyone is willing to be “*speaking the truth in love, we grow up into Him in all things,*” (Eph. 4:15) we can bestow the blessings of maturity without becoming controlling or punitive. Rather, through careful instruction and modeling, we can demonstrate and celebrate maturity in such a way that every member moves into spiritual adulthood in God’s family.

## 4. The Gift of Responsibility

One of the biggest problems in current parenting is the inability for parents to give their children the gift of responsibility. In my 30 years of raising children, it was one of our biggest challenges to consistently require our children to fulfill their responsibilities of chores, schoolwork, and outside jobs. Now that my sons and daughters are all adults, I can see the fruit of all the effort and I can assure you in retrospect... it's worth it.

In a healthy family, parents don't do all the work. This has nothing to do with idleness or a lack of willpower—they know that if they deprive their child of hard work and responsibilities, they take away the child's vehicle for growth. Wise parents will provide age-appropriate responsibilities to help their child develop the qualities necessary to be a thriving adult.

***As spiritual parents, our primary job is people development.*** We operate with the conviction that no one can truly grow in Christ apart from service to others. We then design that service on an age-appropriate level—simple tasks for the newly saved and high-level leadership for the more mature.

### Serving God

The most important element a spiritual or natural parent can impart to their child is the element of responsibility. We are called to live responsibly in relationship to God and others and ultimately, we are each responsible to give an account to God Himself. God called each of us for a purpose, and there's nothing more important than discovering that purpose and fulfilling it. We are all responsible to serve the Lord in basic ways—such as reading His Word, prayer, witnessing to friends, etc.—and you are also responsible to serve the Lord in very unique ways He designed specifically for you, according to Ephesians 2:10.

The true spiritual family will help every individual discover their spiritual gifts and calling and help them develop over time, so they can fulfill everything God ordained for them.

### Serving Yourself

Self-government and self-management are two of our main responsibilities as followers of Jesus. We have to learn to manage our time, energy, and money, and we also must learn to manage our thinking, emotions, and interactions with others. In some cases, this means drawing boundaries if we find ourselves vulnerable to manipulation or abuse. That is all part of self-management.

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27). Our devotion to God keeps everything in perspective, but our service to others needs to be guided by the maintenance of our own selves so we won't burn out like sprinters trying to run a marathon.

## Serving Others

For most of us, our service to God will inevitably end up in some kind of service to others, which we commonly call “ministry.” This service to others can take on many different forms and expressions. Sometimes it’s as simple as offering a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus or helping someone in a practical way with money or helping them fix something. It could be more specific as well, such as trying to help someone understand Scripture or teaching them how to pray more effectively. It could also mean praying for them in a way that brings breakthrough in their lives. Service to others can take place at our jobs, in our neighborhoods, or in the church parking lot.

We will be most fulfilled and most fruitful when we are serving others according to the gifts and calling of God in our lives.

The gift of responsibility could be the most important in this series and here’s why. Many pastors are good delegators but most are not good developers. We know how to hand people a mop but we don’t usually take the time to help them grow. The result is a high amount of burnout and many resenting the Church. At the same time, the people you are leading will never develop into the people that Jesus created them to be unless they learn how to serve. As spiritual parents, let us give the gift of responsibility in a way that “inspires” instead of “requires” and let us raise up our spiritual children into full adults who are empowered to change the world.

## 5. The Gift of Destiny

One of the problems in our culture is what some are calling “Failure to Launch.” Many people in their 20s and even 30s are living at home, working a job far below their potential, not in healthy relationships and somewhat aimless. There are a number of cultural factors that are creating this situation. Part of it is due to the breakdown of the family and the traditional structures that once guided people into adult life. Some of it is due to the abdication of parents to help guide their sons and daughters into full adulthood. Having raised seven children, I know how challenging it can be to create a clear “launch pad” for each of my sons and daughters. Yet there is no greater responsibility for a natural parent or in my estimation for a spiritual parent as well.

Healthy parents get to know their sons and daughters according to the unique designs and destinies God gave them. We look for personality styles and types, spiritual gifts as they become visible, and areas of victory and challenge. We look for the kind and *quality* of relationship they have with the Lord. As we study these things, we can learn the design of our children and help aim them like arrows toward the bull’s-eye of ***destiny***.

In a church, pastors and leaders need to learn and study each person they care for. They need to avoid the temptation of cookie-cutter discipleship, where everyone grows in uniform lockstep, and learn to individualize the leadership development process, so every single person in the church can discover his or her design and destiny. In this

way, every church becomes a destiny incubator for the good of all, for the glory of God. Let's look at discovery, development, and fulfillment more closely.

## **Discovery**

Every church is called to be a ***destiny incubator*** for its members. That is what family is all about. With both natural and spiritual children, a first step in parenting children into their destinies is to lead them through the process of discovery. This discovery begins with getting to know them and their history, their family, and how they were raised, and it goes on to include how they came to Christ and the discovery of their spiritual gifts in the Lord. It identifies the God-given dreams and passions the person is carrying as a primary indicator of what their future destiny will be. You can and should structure your church to facilitate this discovery process.

## **Development**

The next step in the process is development. A wise father and mother in the natural will have a set of developmental systems in place so their children can grow. They will rely on the public or private school system as one of those incremental developmental tools, while others will choose homeschooling. Some will provide chores and allowances to help foster a growing sense of development. In the family church, good leaders will constantly be looking at each member and helping them to take the next step of development in the areas of identity, community, responsibility, maturity, and destiny.

## **Fulfillment**

The ultimate goal of every natural parent with their children is to release them into full adulthood; in a similar way spiritual parents must help every son and daughter boldly step into the destiny that God has prepared for them. (Eph. 2:10) A good parent will make sure that the child is fully equipped as they grow into adulthood to be the best they can possibly be in the workplace, home or church. The next generation's success depends on the success of this generation's spiritual parenting. A true family church won't try to hold on to people or hold them back but will cheer them on to the finish line of God's purpose, even if that means they are no longer a part of the church that raised them.

The gift of destiny is a pearl of great price that will enrich your spiritual offspring for a lifetime. Like arrows in the hand of an archer, our children are to be shot forth into a fruitful future. The question is how. I believe that there is no higher purpose for any family or any church than to help each member discover and fulfill the reason they are on this earth. We need to make this the highest priority of our ministries. As we do so, our churches will benefit from the overflow of each person's pursuit of God and the Kingdom will benefit as we send fully equipped sons and daughters transform their worlds for Christ.

To learn more about this topic, check out <http://www.destinyfinder.com/>.

## **Chapter 5**

# **How to Become a Spiritual Parent**

By this point, you understand my main focus: that God loves and works through family. Family is His model in creation, redemption, and restoration, and through the family model He raises up generations who will become spiritual parents in their own right.

But it isn't enough to simply understand this topic; we have to walk it out in practical steps. *How* do we become spiritual parents? The following four steps have helped me in my goals of leading others well, and I know they will help you, too.

### **1. Position yourself in relationship to the leaders above you.**

The first step in becoming a spiritual parent is to first learn to be a true spiritual son or daughter. Many of us weren't fathered or mothered well in our early years in Christ, so we don't really know what good models look like. The first step to overcoming this obstacle is to align with others. Who has God called you to work with? Do you have mentors in your life who will serve as spiritual parents? You can align yourself with them as a spiritual child. Once your heart is aligned with those God has given to help lead you, you will be much healthier to lead others.

In our culture, people don't like to be told what to do. There is a strong resistance to that and the result is often that people don't seek counsel. There is so much lost opportunity when a generation doesn't seek wisdom from the preceeding generation. Yet there is hope. More and more people are recognizing the need for a "life coach" or a mentor of some kind. The best CEOs, athletes and musicians rely on coaches to make them the best they can be.

Who is coaching and mentoring you? Are you modeling this? If not, you can't expect others to embrace it.

I've cultivated my relationships with certain elder leaders—godly men and women I consider to be spiritual fathers and mothers in my life. I've worked hard to build these relationships because they don't happen by accident. I've pursued and served them, knowing that if I position myself this way, I can be a better spiritual parent to those I'm raising up.

### **2. Understand the process.**

My goal as a parent is to serve, not to be served. I want to equip my children to function in every area of life. The five aspects of Jesus—apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher—should be evident in every church and imparted to every believer, and it is the parents' job to see this done. We can teach our spiritual children how to be good



leaders, how to be sensitive to God's presence and power, how to care for other people, and how to be concerned for the lost and have good boundaries with them. We also need to teach them the value and power of God's Word and the biblical principles with which to live out their lives.

To me, this means I need to be a life-long learner. If I'm a parent, I need to be constantly growing in my ability to receive from others and then sharing what I'm learning with those I'm leading.

### **3. Find those you want to walk with.**

I can't parent fifty people at the same time—but I can parent ten to fifteen leaders, who can then pastor fifty people. This is important to understand because the larger the family you're leading, the more careful you'll need to be with your time. You simply won't be able to pour into every person. I'm part of a great church with an anointed leader, but chances are that I'll get only one meeting with him a year because of the church's size. However, I still consider this leader a spiritual father in my life because I extract from him the grace, blessing, and wisdom that parents are supposed to give to their kids. I want to do the same thing with those I'm leading. I pour into those I'm working closely with, and I lead the next level of leaders through them. I am parenting the church, but I'm doing so in conjunction and partnership with other leaders who are carrying my ministry forward.

### **4. Release your kids into committed service.**

Some spiritual parents treat their spiritual children like servants who are there to do their bidding. *This is what I have members of my church for! They serve my vision.* But that isn't true spiritual parenting. True spiritual parenting is the heart of a mother and father that says, "I want to create a platform for my kids to go beyond me. I want to see them excel. I don't want to be their ceiling; I want to be their floor. I want to send them forth into their future and help propel them like an archer with arrows, as the Scripture says. I want to send them forward to a place I could never go." In order to do these things, they need to serve—not because I don't want to do the work, but because practical vehicles of service will help them grow.

Put yourself in a position to help your sons and daughters discover their true identity, gift-mix, and calling in Christ, and then help them begin to develop. It is our responsibility as leaders to help the individuals we're leading understand who they are and help remove the obstacles and limitations that hinder them. Through this we help create a set of growth goals for each person. It's like asking a five-year-old, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Sometimes it's not always clear what the next step is, but we do our best parents to help guide our children through a developmental process to lead them to who they need to become.

## **Five Essential Spiritual Parenting Skills**

As I've studied parenting in the church, I've identified five essential skills every spiritual father and mother needs to have to raise up sons and daughters well. These crucial components will make a huge difference in the lives of your spiritual children.

### **Be Relational**

The first step in any relationship is being *relational*. In many branches of the church right now, leaders tend to set themselves apart, subtly suggesting they are “above” their people or choosing to relate to people through a professional veneer. Western culture longs for authenticity, and if we want to raise up an authentic church that relates to the culture around us, we have to be real people. It is important to shed all veneers and masks, and be honest, open, and transparent with one another in a relational way.

### **Make Covenants**

Relationship by itself needs a structure to contain it, and that structure is covenant. A covenant is similar to a contract but the intention is different. A contract is made to try to prevent the other party from taking advantage of you. It's because you don't trust the other guy...otherwise you wouldn't need a contract. A covenant states what I will do for you and how I will help you, and I am bound to help you. It's to clarify and strengthen a relationship, not avoid a lawsuit.

My commitment to my children needs to be impeccable; there can't be any question about how I feel about them. I love them and am committed to serving them at a level that costs me sacrificially. I live for my children and pour my life into them. As a spiritual parent, embrace covenant with the children you are raising.

In addition, covenant with the other leaders you're walking with. This is similar to a marriage—a husband and wife make a covenant with one another and that covenant eventually produces the healthiest offspring. As a leadership team, you need to come into covenantal relationship with one another, which will produce the kind of updraft of development you want in your people.

### **Reproduce Yourself**

As you build a leadership team that's committed to one another relationally and organizationally, you move into reproducing the next generation. Every church needs to be able to welcome new “babies” in Christ as well as provide growth opportunities for the older children. Unfortunately, many of us end up focusing on one or the other. We build our churches to support believers who have known Christ for years or we build them for seekers—new babies who are still in diapers. Seeker churches bring in a lot of new people, but those people don't necessarily feel developed at the end of the day.

Our goal in raising spiritual families is the same as our goal in raising natural families: We want to nurture our children at every age and help them grow into solid, healthy adults who can raise their own families.

## Think Developmentally

For a few years, all seven of my children were living at home. When the youngest was an infant, the oldest was twenty. I had to customize my parenthood with each one of them, because each child had different needs at different times. I couldn't have seven independent "families" built around each child; I had one family moving forward in God's purposes, with each child developing from one level to the next under my leadership. That is your challenge as a spiritual mother or father—you need to develop a church family that produces developmental outcome.

## Practice Intergenerational Partnership

The purpose of God—that His glory would fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14)—requires that individuals be developed in Him as His sons and daughters, stepping into the fullness of all God called them to be. This happens effectively when you, as a pastoral leader, release the "older" generation in your church to take on the challenge of raising up younger sons and daughters.

In his first epistle, John addresses different levels of maturity. He writes to the "children," whose sins are forgiven; to the "young men," who know God's Word and have overcome the wicked one; and finally to the "fathers," who know Him who is from the beginning. Three generations are presented, and each has something incredible to offer the others. The idea of spiritual generations dovetails with the reality of age. Every church has older and younger saints, spiritual parents and spiritual children. You will have older believers in your church, as well as believers in their teens, 20s, 30s and so forth. How do you work with all of them?

Intergenerational partnership is similar to a large sailing vessel that has multiple large sails and a deep keel. You have a tremendous amount of power to harness the wind—but if you don't have a deep keel, the wind will cause the ship to topple. Older, more mature believers provide a depth of wisdom that will keep the vessel

Unfortunately, a lack of "depth" is why many ministries fail. They have a significant potential for velocity...but not much depth. Your older leaders can act like the keel of a boat and establish a vertical sense of torque. They offer leverage that allows the wind to push hard into the sails without causing the boat to capsize. They have depth, experience and a sense of ballast that goes down into the depths of the water. Only in intergenerational partnership can maximum velocity be realized.

It is essential that every member of your church be a disciple maker. While every person grows from "level" to level, she is calling someone else to join her. If you can build that kind of leadership developmental updraft within your church, you will fulfill the Great Commission by making *disciple makers*, who go out to make more disciples.

You can make an intergenerational, developmental process part of the very foundation of your church. We offer additional teaching on this at <http://www.pastorscoach.com/>.

## Chapter 6

# Family Culture: Values and Priorities

How do we develop a Kingdom culture that will produce the kind of spiritual family we long for? The right kind of culture will produce God's best results in the Body of Christ. Family depends on culture.

It is a lot of work to micro-lead every individual and every aspect of family...there is a better way. A powerful leader will concentrate on building **culture**. Culture is to community what habit is to an individual. If I can build good habits in my personal life, I will do what I do because it is built into my internal patterns and even my biological clock. I don't have to decide whether or not I'm going to read the Bible in the morning, because I wake up wanting to read it. It has become such a habit with me that the desire to read it actually awakens inside of me. Habit works to help us maintain the structures we desire in our lives. In the same way, culture works to maintain the structures of community and keep us "flowing" the way we desire to go.

Kingdom culture is the key to manifesting heavenly family on the earth. Every church, along with each of our small groups and church departments, needs to function as a family. Culture is built on the foundation of values, priorities, and practices. It is an expression of the core things that make us who we are. It is a combination of our symbols, traditions, language, and ideas all brought together in a way that unifies us and connects us to our past, present, and future.

The foundation of culture is **values**. Let's take a look at some of the core values that help form this foundation.

### A Closer Look at Core Values

The following values will help bring out the kind of family expression you're looking for in your church.

#### Intimacy

The value of intimacy is foundational to every family. *Intimacy* implies a quality of relationship in which hearts are shared at the deepest level. We live in a relational universe, and God desires that we would know Him and make Him known. This call to intimacy isn't merely knowing *about* God but actually having personal interaction with Him as we allow Him to search our innermost beings and seek to search out His.

I want intimacy with God, and I also want it with those I'm leading. I don't want to be a distant leader who projects a holier-than-thou attitude, but I want to connect with those I'm leading, because that is what true fatherhood looks like.

## **Integrity**

Simply put, integrity allows you to be on the outside who you are on the inside; nothing about you gives a false impression. Integrity is a key element because the world can smell a hypocrite.

Many churches have great mission and vision statements that aren't supported by the way leaders and members conduct their lives and how they treat their staff or members. This doesn't necessarily have anything to do with bad intentions, but it occurs because the churches haven't matched their internal desires with external outcomes. What do you value at your core? Make sure you value it all the way through your church, from the mission statement to the result.

## **Intentionality**

Intentionality is the identification of a desired outcome and the prioritization of activities so we can achieve that outcome with the highest possible excellence.

Every member of my church is essential to God's purpose and has a divine destiny, and my responsibility as a leader is to help each person grow into that destiny. To do this, I need to be intentional to some degree, or I will find myself leading them accidentally, which limits their ability to discover who God has called them to be. I want to be intentional about discipling the people God has entrusted to my care.

## **Individuality**

Every person is unique. There are over seven billion people on the earth, and not one of us has the same fingerprint. It is amazing how vast and perfect God is in His database. As disciple makers, we need to recognize individuality and customize our discipleship process to suit each person according to her history, gift-mix, calling, passion, and dreams. We need to be able to tune in and know people, customizing our care so we can give people what they need.

## **Interdependency**

Every family depends on the prosperity of its individual members. As a father in the natural and in the spiritual, I consider it my highest purpose to help each individual in my family identify God's design for him and then begin to walk according to that design. I do this not only because I care about the individual, but I also care about the body as a whole. The truth is that I won't be fully myself and achieve all God has ordained for me if I don't help *you* achieve everything God is working for in your life. My value for individuality is rooted in my value for interdependency.

We weren't created to be on our own—we were created to walk and do life together in Christ. We augment one another to the point that, like a completed jigsaw puzzle, the perfect image of Christ is presented to the world.

## What Are Your Values?

Sit down with your leaders and define your values as a church.

- What are the core things by which you determine the relevant worth of one thing compared to another?
- What motivates you from deep within to be who you're called to be?
- What influences the style of what you do and the way in which you do it?

All of these are important value questions. The values I included in this chapter are important to me as a leader, but there are hundreds of others you could choose from instead. I encourage you to do a study and figure out what your core values are. Discover your values, codify them, and come into agreement around them, because out of them emerge your priorities as a church.

## A Closer Look at Priorities and Practices

True parenting depends on healthy culture building. Be very intentional about producing the “ecosystem” you desire in your church. Culture is a fixed reality of human community, and you need to sit back and ask yourself, *is my culture serving my vision or is it serving some other purpose?*

After looking at your values, consider how you are walking out those values as a church—this is about your priorities and practices—what you actually do. How do you do life together? What do you ask of your members? How do you spend your money, time, and talent to bring about a true reflection of godly family in your community?

As you reflect on your priorities, you will find yourself considering more detailed questions: What is the difference between a twenty-minute teaching and an hour-long teaching. Why do we want a fifteen-minute worship set instead of a forty-five-minute worship set? Do we have prayer ministers available at the end of every service and if so, why? Your answers to questions like these will signal what is a true priority to your church.

## What Is Your Lifestyle?

Finally, what kind of lifestyle are you generating on a daily basis in your church? You can actually *cultivate* a specific lifestyle—a pattern of living—within your people that will lead them closer to Christ. This needs to be done with wisdom because you will have to trim down certain activities while promoting others. The more you ask your people to do one thing, the less you'll be able to ask them to do another.

The Kingdom values you possess can work in your congregation to such an extent that family happens naturally. Culture springs out of your vision of true Kingdom values, and it is an incredible asset in helping leadership move forward.

## What's the Application?

The key to applying a certain culture in your church is *public celebration*. Celebrate those who are doing well. From the pulpit, you can say things like, “Bill took time out of his schedule, shared Jesus with Gina, and she came to Christ—let’s celebrate that.” Or, “Francis saw someone with a cast, and she prayed for him, and he was healed. Let’s celebrate that!” We need to share the stories and celebrate all God does, because people will *emulate* and *gravitate* toward what you celebrate. As you share testimonies in church about victories in the marketplace, breakthroughs in neighborhoods, lowering crime rates, etc., people start moving toward those things because they are celebrating with you.

At the same time, learn how to privately and graciously correct those things that are not in line with where you want to go as a family. If every person who comes to your church lays down her own agenda, you’re going to wind up with a mess—no direction at all. When people present ideas and opportunities that aren’t in line with where you’re going, you can pull them aside and say something like, “Thank you so much for sharing, but that’s really not the direction we’re heading. I’d love to spend more time with you and talk in detail about why we’re doing this instead.” That kind of gracious correction communicates with everyone, and it adds another sandbag to the “riverbank,” to keep the water following toward the target.

So in summation, be intentional and careful as you seek to build culture. Understand the power of values, priorities, and practices; the power of testimony and celebration; and the power of gracious correction. In this way, you can steer your church to become the kind of family that will produce strong sons and daughters in Christ. Their lives will be transformed, and they will bring transformation to the world around them.



## Chapter 7

# Family Structures: Leaders and Groups

One of the most important keys to creating and sustaining a sense of family in your church, depends on the building the right kind of leadership team. If family is not happening in your core team, it will be next to impossible to build in the greater congregation.

## Developing Leaders

### 1. Establish “family” among your core leaders.

*You can't give away what you don't have...*

Your core leaders form the parental foundation of your church, so it is important that all of you are on the same page. Be sure you share common values, priorities, and practices. In order for this to happen a lead pastor or head leader must do family with his or her team.

I don't release a leader to father or mother on my behalf if that person is controlling, insecure, or manipulative in the way he leads. I want to make sure those things are weeded out in my leadership core so we can provide loving, grace-filled parenting to the children who are growing up under our leadership and developing into the fullness of Christ.

As the leader, raise up a vision of what a self-producing family model would look like in your church. Share your mission with your team and hold them accountable to follow through in people development. Why? Because you want every leader on your leadership team to have a few people they are developing. If they say, “Yes, I'm committed to developing people,” but they are not meeting with people to develop them, and no one is around to measure their impact, they're playing basketball without a ball or a hoop!

### 2. Build your core with specific roles and responsibilities.

Everyone in your core leadership or even secondary leadership team needs to be functioning as actual leaders.

***A worker is someone who leads in the presence of his or her leader, but a leader is someone who leads in the absence of his or her leader.***

Therefore, a leader would be those who are actually leading a small group or ministry or a department outside the presence of their personal overseer.

As you're working with your leaders, remember they need to have the ability to develop others as a prequalification for leadership. Build this very carefully. If you have people in positions of high leadership without a lot of responsibility and clarity, you may want to challenge them. The goal is to build a church that actually develops people into the fullness of Christ. Therefore, you need to have everyone in your core leadership team on board with that vision, having specific roles and responsibilities to accomplish it.

### **3. Grow your group by enfolding new people.**

Be able to enfold new people and bring them into your church's developmental process. In other words, think inter-generationally, as Jesus did. Among His followers, He built concentrically. He had the three, then the 12, then the 70, then the 120; there were concentric rings of involvement. That is, in essence, what Paul talked about in 2 Timothy 2:2:

*"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*

Four generations are represented in that verse. As a spiritual parent, you are developing sons and daughters who begin as babies in Christ but will grow up into adolescence, become adults, and eventually mature into grandparents. Ultimately, many of them will have to leave your church to fulfill their true destinies, but while you are loving and developing them, they will bring incredible payoff because they are the servants and ministers who are actually making your program happen. But again, you need to hold them loosely, because God may call them beyond your church to start their own families.

### **4. Raise them up into service and ministry.**

This may sound rigid to you, but I don't think people can truly grow in Christ until they're serving others. The bottom line is that you can't actually make a disciple in a classroom. Classrooms are good for presenting information, but they don't work well to transform lives. If you want transformed lives, teach people to work with one another and how to walk with one another through the process of serving Jesus. How? By serving each other.

# **Developing Small Groups**

## **Sustaining “Family” as the Family Grows**

I believe Family Church is the will of God. Yet, if we are successful in our efforts to build true family church, this church will grow larger and larger and will eventually run the risk of becoming a big, impersonal church in which people become subservient to programs. In order to avoid this problem, we need to be strategic as we grow. The Bible gives us a model that may be helpful in such situations. When Abraham and Sarah began the Jewish family, it was fairly manageable for the first two generations. But when Jacob and his wives gave birth to twelve sons, it was time to move from “family” to “tribe” to “nation”.

I do not believe it is necessarily God’s will for every church to become a big church. At the same time, if a church is healthy and thriving, it is likely that others will want to join in and the church will inevitably grow. As a church grows big, the only way to maintain a sense of family is for the church to simultaneously grow “small.”

## **The Power of Small Groups**

I don’t believe it’s possible to do true family church without some kind of small group expression. Scripture talks about two different models of gathering together for “church.” Throughout the book of Acts, they “met publicly” and “from house to house.” They did both. Public meetings provide amazing benefits to believers. We experience the momentum of a large group, the best teachers, the best worship leaders, and the best ministry teams.

All of that is incredible, but we also need another type of gathering in which every member is able to express his or her spiritual gifts. This works best in some kind of small group.

As you build a strong foundation of small groups in your church, keep the following points in mind:

- Every ministry or small group needs a strong team of leaders. Every ministry or small group should offer opportunities to diversify according to the gifts and callings of its members. Leaders need to raise up leaders.
- I recommend that every leader on your team be first and foremost committed to training and releasing an assistant. In this way, development is built into the small group from its very foundations.
- Keep multiplication in mind, so recruit assistants who can grow into leaders, and leaders can grow into becoming overseers.

- All living things grow from the inside out. Start a single small group with your committed core. Do and teach all that you want done and taught. You can't reproduce what you don't have.
- All growing things consume nutrients and increase in quality and quantity. Minister to each individual and confirm his destiny in Christ.
- Allow each person to minister according to her design and destiny.
- All healthy things thrive as they remove impurities and imperfections. God's Word and Spirit reveal areas of needed change and growth.
- Thriving depends not only on our "Yes" to God but our "No" to everything else. All thriving things will ultimately reproduce as they enter maturity.
- Each member needs to reproduce him or herself by recruiting others.
- Each small group needs to multiply and produce other groups. All new beginnings have a promise of ultimate impact. The church multiplies and transforms the world. We do this through creating families that make disciple makers.

## **Chapter 8**

# **Family Succession: The Measure of Success**

Someone once said that the true measure of success is succession. Part of the spiritual life cycle is pouring our lives into emerging leaders in such a way that they can carry the message of the kingdom into the future. As I grow older I have an increasing desire to pour into the next generation and beyond. We need to raise up powerful sons and daughters.

### **More Than Miracles: Sons**

Recently a friend of mine was preaching on miracles and instead of saying signs and wonders, he unintentionally used the phrase “sons and wonders.” What might have been a verbal misstep to me was a profound statement. My friend’s unintentional play on words reminded me that the work of Holy Spirit is not just visible in miracles and divine encounters. He is also visible in the spiritual sons and daughters that we raise up.

### **Envision No Division**

One of the most profound statements of Scripture is found in the final verses of the Old Testament. In Malachi 4:6 the prophet declares that in the last days, *“He (God) will send again the spirit of Elijah and turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons and sons to the fathers, lest God come and strike the earth with a curse.”* We live in a world cursed with division and conflict. When sin first entered the world the immediate result was a separation between humanity and God. The next was a separation between man and woman, followed by brother and brother, and then finally between the generations. Sin is the source of all division and strife.

### **Uniting Generations**

I believe the most harmful division that afflicts humanity is the division between the generations. This division hinders so much progress. Each generation seems to repeat the mistakes of the previous one. We have not humbled ourselves to learn the lessons of our fathers and mothers.

Looking deeper into Malachi he says that as the generations are united it removes the curse from the earth. It’s important for us to remember that most of what Scripture calls the curse is simply the natural consequence of violating the creative order of God. In other words, a curse is not normally a lightning bolt hurled from heaven, but more along the lines of a broken leg from falling off a ladder.

Gravity is a law. When it is violated there's a consequence. Generational unity and integrity is also a law, and its violation also has consequences.

To verify this, look at the statistics surrounding people in prison, people who are bound by alcoholism and immoralities, people struggling with life controlling problems. The majority of these individuals are from broken homes, raised in the absence of a loving family with a father and mother.

## **Orphan Spirit**

Our world is plagued by teenage rebellion. Sons and daughters are being raised to think their parents are idiots. Every TV show and movie emphasizes the view that the only way to freedom is rejecting your parents and pursuing your own ideas. This mindset has infiltrated church culture. Many pastors and leaders have a difficult time raising their spiritual sons and daughters effectively. Some are too controlling and abusive, others abdicate and neglect. The net result in both cases is the spirit of orphan-hood and abandonment. Disapproval fuels generational division.

## **The Good News**

God is at work within biological and spiritual families to restore generational unity. He is moving the hearts of spiritual leaders around the world to pour into the next generation. Fathers and mothers are now equipping and empowering emerging leaders, then getting out of the driver seat. They are releasing emerging leaders to move us forward! They're trusting them with the keys and the title deed of the vehicle. Soon we'll see spiritual sons and daughters coming to the fullness of their purpose in the Lord. Now more than ever spiritual sons and daughters are honoring fathers and mothers. They're positioning themselves to receive all that they can from those who've gone before them.

I want to encourage you, pastor, to do what is necessary to create true *family* within your church, so you can transform individual lives and bring transformation to your region. Make sure you're well aligned with those above you and with God's purposes in His Word. As you recruit others, speak the truth in love to them and help them grow up in all things into the head, which is Christ. Put people in positions of responsibility that will actually draw out their gifts and expose whatever character or maturity weaknesses they may have, so you can help them grow into the people God has called them to be.

## **Congratulations!**

You have completed *Doing Church as Family*. For more information on building your church, creating culture, developing leaders and small groups, and more, visit <https://www.pastorscoach.com/>.