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DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING A
FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MODEL AT THE VILLAGE
CHURCH, FLOWER MOUND, TEXAS

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I dedicate this project to my wife, Ashley. You are my biggest fan,
most helpful critic, and best friend.

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PREFACE

The completion of this project would not be possible without the unwavering support and encouragement of close family and friends. First and foremost, I am grateful for my wife, Ashley, who endured long days and nights taking care of our family while I was away at school. She has been an inspiration through the entire project, and I could not have endured through this process without her by my side. To our sons, Wyatt, Gunnar, and Knox, I pray that what I learned through this project makes me a better and more faithful father.

Second, I would like to thank my immediate family. I am indebted to them for opening up doors to me that I could not have opened up on my own.

Third, I would like to thank the staff and members of The Village Church. The staff's hard work afforded me the opportunity to leave my post when schoolwork beckoned. I had the members of TVC in mind as I read through every source, typed every word, and corrected every margin. I pray the Lord uses this project to further the gospel and make disciples at TVC and beyond.

Fourth, I would like to thank Dr. Joseph Harrod, my faculty supervisor, for his patience, wisdom, and guidance through the research and writing process.

Finally, I would like to thank the former pastors and ministers of Faith Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas, who counseled and guided me toward vocational ministry.

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Lewisville, Texas

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A survey of the Scriptures demonstrates that parents are commanded to disciple their children. A local church that is faithful to Scripture will communicate this biblical vision for family discipleship and equip its members to practice it. The Village Church (TVC) in Flower Mound, Texas lacks a ministry plan for implementing a family discipleship model. This project is designed and intended to address and correct that shortcoming.

Context

The context of this ministry project is the Flower Mound Campus of TVC. Three factors related to this ministry context are pertinent to this project. First, since its replant in 2002 under the leadership of its current lead pastor, TVC has championed parents as the primary disciple-makers of children. From the pulpit, he consistently communicates the biblical reality that parents are principally responsible for the spiritual education and training of children. This conviction is also shared by all the elders, deacons, and ministry leaders at TVC. In fact, between 2002 and 2012 the Next Generation Ministries (birth through 18-year-old) at TVC underwent gradual changes to better consider and equip parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their children.

The greatest leap in this direction came in 2012 when the Next Generation ministries across every TVC campus attended a family ministry conference together.¹ Sparked by a renewed passion for family discipleship, the Next Generation staff met for

¹The D6 Family Conference is an annual Family Ministry conference hosted by Randal House Publishers. TVC Next Generation staff members attended the 2012 conference in Frisco, Texas on September 27th and 28th. For more information, see <https://d6family.com/d6conference/>.

two full days to discuss the success and failures of current efforts to equip parents. During the two-day meeting, it was decided that clear and consistent language for family discipleship was lacking across all ministries. The final product of the meeting was an established Framework for Family Discipleship.² The framework was formalized and presented to TVC leadership. It was approved and adopted immediately and all Next Generation Ministries began implementing the language in every family discipleship resource item and product they created.

A second factor, closely related to the first, was identified following a recent, church-wide survey.³ Parents at TVC were asked the following question: How confident do you feel in your ability to be the primary spiritual influence in your children's lives? Of the 2,232 parents who took the survey and were covenant members, 28 percent answered they were very confident, 27 percent said they were somewhat confident, 6 percent reported being a little confident, and 1 percent felt they were not comfortable at all being the primary spiritual influences in their children's lives. The level of confidence reported by parents who were not members was much less. Their percentages were 14 percent, 19 percent, 8 percent, and 3 percent respectively. Taken alone, these percentages might be considered encouraging and evidence of successful family discipleship equipping and training; however, the percentages are disappointing in light of other findings within the survey. For example, when asked if members feel confident in their ability to share the gospel, 89 percent reported yes, confident. In addition, when asked if they had intentionally and purposely shared the gospel within the past year, 80 percent reported they had shared the gospel within the past year. TVC is capable and has found great success teaching and training its members to comprehend and articulate the gospel.

²The Village Church, *Family Discipleship: Helping Your Household Establish a Sustainable Rhythm of Time, Moments, and Milestones*, (2016), 2, <https://www.tvcreources.net/resource-library/guides/family-discipleship-guide>.

³See appendix 1.

I am confident it can experience this same level of success in the arena of family discipleship and parent equipping.

The third factor related to this project is a transition to a Home Group model of spiritual formation and discipleship in lieu of traditional Sunday school model.⁴ A resurgence of in-home Christian discipleship and formation models—known commonly as *Home Groups* or *Cell Groups*—swept North American evangelical churches during the 1990s.⁵ Two decades later, this movement continues to show signs of growth. For example, a survey of *Outreach Magazine*'s top twenty fastest growing churches in 2016 reveals nineteen of the top twenty fastest growing churches utilize a Home Group or Cell Group model for small group discipleship.⁶ Consequently, the interest and attention regarding Home Group or Cell Group models within the local church has drastically increased in the last twenty years.⁷

One of the most noteworthy differences between a Home Group model of spiritual formation and discipleship and the Sunday school model is the location of the gatherings. Home Groups typically meet in homes whereas Sunday school classes generally occur within local church property. Gathering in homes for religious and spiritual purposes is not a contemporary Christian concept. Biblical and archeological evidence suggests for the first two hundred years of their existence, Christians met in private homes and residences rather than large purposely built church buildings.⁸

⁴Home Groups at TVC are small groups that meet regularly in homes throughout the spring and fall semesters. Made up of people from all generations of life, these groups meet throughout the week for fellowship, care, prayer, accountability, sharing stories, and studying God's Word. They are the established context for discipleship at TVC.

⁵Joel Comiskey, *2000 Years of Small Groups: A History of Cell Ministry in the Church* (Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2014), 237-40.

⁶Jill Lepore, "Outreach 100: Fastest-Growing Churches in America," *Outreach*, September 2016, 103.

⁷A recent ProQuest search of dissertations and thesis related to Home Groups, Cell Groups, and Small Groups produced the following results: 3 studies produced between 1980-1989; 30 studies produced between 1990-1999; 55 studies produced between 2000-2009; and 31 studies produced between 2010-2017.

⁸B. B. Blue, "Acts and the House Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*,

The primacy and prevalence of the house church in early Christianity dissipated in the fourth-century. In 312 CE, Constantine “legalized” Christianity and with this decision came the near demise of early house church gatherings.⁹ Designated and dedicated church buildings supplanted homes as locations of Christian assembly and sacred gatherings.¹⁰

Despite this transition, Joel Comiskey argues, “God has used small group ministry throughout church history to disciple, revive, consolidate, and evangelize.”¹¹ The home as a place of Christian assembly and formation never completely vanished from Christianity. Casual observation suggests North American churches are experiencing a resurgence of this concept. Consequently, church leaders must consider and confront the flurry of questions and implications that accompany this resurgence.

One of the questions often raised within the Home Group model is, “What do we do with the kids?” A unique characteristic of most Home Group or Cell Group models of small group discipleship is the lack of simultaneous, age-segmented programming. Whereas the traditional Sunday school model consists of simultaneous, age-segregated gatherings, typical Home and Cell Groups are often designed and intended solely for adult participation. Therefore, churches operating under this model are faced with an interesting dilemma: the consideration and care of children in Home Groups. The Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas, is one of these churches.

Operating out of an in-home, small group model of discipleship and formation for over fifteen years, TVC has yet to formalize a standard philosophy and consensus regarding the care and consideration of children in groups. Home Group ministers and

ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 2:119.

⁹Comiskey, *2000 Years of Small Groups*, 11.

¹⁰Ibid., 38.

¹¹Ibid.

pastors at TVC are confronted regularly by Home Group leaders with the question, “What do we do with our kids?” According to a recent Home Group questionnaire, only 14 percent of Home Groups at TVC are childless. Eighty-six percent of Home Groups at TVC have at least one child within the group.¹² Nearly nine out of every ten Home Groups at TVC are effected by and must give consideration to the care of children during formal Home Group gatherings. I am convinced that the questions Home Group practitioners have regarding the care and consideration of children during formal Home Group gatherings presents TVC leadership with an opportunity to leverage the Home Group model of spiritual formation and community as a vehicle for equipping parents to disciple their children.

Rationale

The factors mentioned above indicate that TVC is in a position to develop a ministry plan for implementing a family discipleship model. First, the soil for family discipleship to take root is soft and prepared primarily in part to the groundwork the lead pastor has laid over the past decade. Under his leadership, the congregation has embraced the idea of parents as primary the primary disciple makers in their homes. This project will focus on equipping for this task.

Second, based on the high level of success TVC leadership experienced training the congregation to share the gospel, it is safe to conclude that same level of success is possible in the arena of family discipleship. TVC members have proven to be teachable, and I am convinced that implementing a family discipleship model will garner high results.

The third reason for the necessity of this project is the percentage of Home Group leaders interested in incorporating a Family Discipleship Time into the regular

¹²See table 7 on p. 71.

rhythm of their formal Home Group gathering. Fifty-five percent of current TVC Home Group leaders expressed a desire to incorporate children into the rhythm of their Home Group through a Home Group Family Discipleship Time (HGFDT).¹³

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a ministry plan for implementing a family discipleship model at The Village Church, Flower Mound, Texas.

Goals

This project was guided by six goals. Each goal addressed a particular aspect of the project and progressively helped achieve the purpose stated above.

1. The first goal was to investigate and determine current practices regarding the care and consideration of children in Home Groups at TVC
2. The second goal was to assess the current family discipleship practices and perceptions within Home Groups at TVC.
3. The third goal was to develop a training curriculum and method for incorporating Family Discipleship Time within Home Groups at TVC.
4. The fourth goal was to teach the Family Discipleship Time curriculum and method to Home Group leaders at TVC.
5. The fifth goal was to increase the practice and perceptions of family discipleship Time at TVC
6. The sixth goal was to develop a ministry plan for implementing a family discipleship model that leverages Home Groups as a vehicle for training parents in family discipleship.

Achieving each of these goals will increase the understanding of and participation in family discipleship at TVC. The following section explains the methodology that was used to measure and determine the success of the goals stated above.

¹³See table 13 on p. 75.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to investigate and determine current practices regarding the care and consideration of children in Home Groups at TVC. This goal was measured by administering a questionnaire to all active Home Group leaders at the Flower Mound Campus of TVC.¹⁴ This goal was considered a success when at least 100 Home Group leaders complete the questionnaire and its results were analyzed to determine current practices and perceptions regarding children in Home Groups at TVC.

The second goal was to assess the current family discipleship practices and perceptions among parents active in Home Groups at TVC. This goal was measured by administering the Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey¹⁵ (FDPPS) to parents of 12 Home Groups at TVC.¹⁶ This goal was considered a success when at least thirty-five households have completed the pre-FDPPS and its results were analyzed, giving a clear picture and baseline for family discipleship practices and perceptions.

The third goal was to develop a training curriculum and model for meeting for Home Group leaders based upon the Family Discipleship Time element of the Framework for Family Discipleship created by the Next Generation Ministries at TVC.¹⁷ The curriculum had to be adaptable to fit various teaching contexts and formats. The core of the curriculum taught Home Group leaders how to incorporate and execute a Family Discipleship Time into the routine and rhythm of their formal Home Group gathering schedule. This goal was measured by a panel of pastors and Next Generation ministers who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical accuracy, teaching scope and sequence, and

¹⁴See appendix 2.

¹⁵See appendix 3. The Family Discipleship Perception and Practices Survey is copyrighted by Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011). Used by permission.

¹⁶All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

¹⁷See appendix 4.

applicability of the curriculum. This goal was considered a success when the panel deemed the curriculum meet or exceeded at least 90 percent of the sufficient criterion.¹⁸ After the evaluation, if the curriculum scores less than 90 percent, the expert panel's feedback will be used to modify the curriculum. The edited curriculum will then undergo another evaluation by the same expert panel using the curriculum evaluation rubric. This process was repeated until 90 percent of the indicators on the rubric were scored sufficient or above, thus completing the second goal.

The fourth goal was to recruit at least 12 Home Group leaders to participate in the HGFDT curriculum and implement HGFDT into the regular rhythm of their Home Group gatherings. This goal was measured by the participation rate in a Home Group leader class offered, administered, and taught by me. Following the training, Home Group leaders planned and implemented HGFDT into the regular rhythm of their formal Home Group gathering. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 12 Home Group leaders completed the class and each Home Group executed a minimum of three HGFDTs.

The fifth goal was to increase the practice and perceptions of family discipleship in families that participated in HGFDT. This goal was measured by administering the post-FDPPS to the same members of the 12 Home Groups who took the initial survey including the Home Group leaders who attended the class and executed a minimum of three HGFDTs. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-FDPPS scores among parents who participated in HGFDT.

The sixth goal was to develop a ministry plan for implementing a family discipleship model at TVC.¹⁹ This goal was measured by a panel of communications and

¹⁸See appendix 5.

¹⁹See appendix 6.

project management experts who utilized a rubric to evaluate the content, plausibility, scope and practicality of the plan. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators meet or exceed the sufficient level.²⁰ After the evaluation, if the plan scores less than 90 percent, the expert panel's feedback will be used to modify the plan. The edited plan will undergo another evaluation by the same expert panel using the evaluation rubric. This process was repeated until 90 percent of the indicators on the rubric are scored sufficient or above, thus completing the sixth goal.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Children: Persons (minors) under 18 years of age under the legal care and guardianship of one or more adults.

Discipleship: Discipleship is the process of moving an unbeliever or immature believer further into Christ-likeness. In the Scriptures, discipleship is expressed “through the Greek words *mathema* ("following"), *manthanein* ("to follow"), and *mathetes* ("follower"). Faithfulness as a disciple of Jesus Christ is the inevitable result of authentic faith in Jesus Christ (Mark 10:52; Luke 18:35-43; John 8:31).”²¹ Furthermore, Timothy Paul Jones expounds on the process and product of discipleship saying,

Discipleship is a process that includes personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ, as he has been revealed to us in Scripture. Discipleship involves developing perspectives and practices that reflect the mind of Christ. The gospel, expressed and applied in the context of the community of faith, is the center point of discipleship; conformity to Jesus Christ is the goal of discipleship; spiritual development and Christian formation describe progress toward this goal.²²

Family: For this context, family will refer to those persons related by marriage,

²⁰See appendix 7.

²¹Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 85.

²² Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 17.

blood, or adoption, who live together. The shifting and changing nature of contemporary culture has seen a redefining of marriage and family, therefore, it is necessary to ground our definition in the unchanging nature of Scripture. Pulling from biblical text and references to family, Köstenberger defines family as “primarily one man and woman united in matrimony (barring death of a spouse) plus (normally) natural or adopted children and secondarily, any other persons related by blood.”²³

Family discipleship: Family discipleship refers to the conscious, intentional efforts parents make to personally disciple their own children. Steven Houser fuses the biblical idea of mathema (“following”) with family, defining family discipleship as, “the act of training and teaching your family—spouse and children—to follow Jesus”.²⁴

Family worship: Family worship has been defined in many different ways for many different contexts. In this project, it will refer to the intentional inclusion of children in the corporate assembly of the saints for weekend worship at TVC.²⁵

Family discipleship time: Family Discipleship Time is intentional time built into the rhythm of the family's life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about and living out the gospel.²⁶

Home group family discipleship time: For the purposes of this study, *Home Group family discipleship time* (HGFDT) refers to a formal Home Group gathering consisting of intentional discipleship elements led by adults and aimed at children.

²³Timothy Paul Jones, “An Analysis of the Relationship between Fowlerian Stage Development and Self-Assessed Maturity in Christian Faithfulness among Evangelical Christians” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 8-9.

²⁴Steve Houser, “Bringing It Home: What Is Family Discipleship?” *Waiting Out the Rain* (blog), March 17, 2015, accessed July 15, 2015, <https://waitingouttherain.wordpress.com/2015/03/17/what-is-family-discipleship/>.

²⁵To accommodate for the number of attendees, TVC offers multiple worship services each Sunday. Each service is identical in programming and is typically an hour and twenty minutes long. Children are welcome in these services, but may also attend children’s programming that takes place simultaneously.

²⁶The Village Church, *Family Discipleship* (2016), 2. <https://www.tvcresources.net/resource-library/guides/family-discipleship-guide>.

Discipleship elements include, worship through singing, child-appropriate Bible study and lessons, intentional prayer time for children, and various other practices intended to teach and model Christian belief and practice to children.

Formal Home Group gathering: Home Groups meet formally and informally. This project is only concerned with the formal Home Group gathering. A formal gathering is one in which all group members are invited and falls on the normal, recurring rhythm of the Home Group's calendar. Some Home Groups meet formally every week while others meet formally bi-monthly or monthly. Any gathering outside of these parameters would be considered an informal gathering and not applicable for the purposes of this survey.

Home Groups: For the purposes of this project, the terms *Home Group* and *Cell Group* are considered synonymous. Joel Comiskey defines a *cell group* as, "groups of three to fifteen people who meet weekly outside the church building for the purpose of evangelism, community, and spiritual growth with the goal of making disciples who make disciples, which results in multiplication."²⁷ Similarly, TVC defines *Home Groups* as, "[small groups] made up of men and women from all generations of life, these groups meet throughout the week for fellowship, care, prayer, accountability, sharing stories and studying God's Word."²⁸ By definition and practice, TVC Home Groups do not meet on TVC property.

Home Group leader: Home Group leaders function as the main facilitator within Home Groups. The purpose and role of a Home Group leader is to cultivate gospel-centered community. Group leaders fulfill this role by caring for Home Group participants, modeling Christian beliefs and actions, and mobilizing Home Group

²⁷Joel Comiskey, "Cell Basics: What is a Cell Group?" *Joel Comiskey Group*, January 2012, accessed September 15, 2017, http://joelcomiskeygroup.com/resources/cell_basics/en_whatiscellgroup.html.

²⁸"Groups," The Village Church, accessed September 15, 2017, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/connect/groups/>.

participants to Christian ministry and mission.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, participants were required to be active members of a TVC Home Group. Priority was given to active Home Group members in order to equip those with the most influence and commitment to TVC body. Second, the project was limited to 75 weeks from initial survey to final presentation of the ministry plan.

Conclusion

God created two disciple-making institutions: the family and the local church. They must coalesce, working cooperatively, to see “the faith that was once delivered to all” spread to the next generation (Jude 3). Home Groups at TVC present a prime venue where elements of these two institutions intersect, making them ideal candidates for such a partnership to develop and flourish. Therefore, this project leveraged Home Groups at TVC as a vehicle to equip and train parents to fulfill their vital role in the spiritual formation and discipleship of their children. Sadly, the events of Judges 2 are a sobering reminder of what can happen when one generation fails to transmit its faith the next. The need for the local church to partner with and equip parents in the discipleship of their children is imperative lest we see a generation “who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel” (Judg 2:10-12).

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THE FAMILY AND CHURCH AS DISCIPLE-MAKING INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine key biblical and theological foundations for child faith formation. A clear and consistent discipleship formula spans the Old Testament and the New Testament; the Scriptures consistently present the family unit—the home—and the family of God—the church—as indispensable disciple-making institutions. These two institutions constitute a discipleship partnership and display the personal and corporate elements of responsibility the people of God have towards the next generation. Beginning with Deuteronomy 6:4-7, this chapter explores the home-plus-church formula for child faith formation exhibited in four other passages: (1) Psalm 78, (2) House church passages in Acts, (3) Ephesians 6:4, and (4) Titus 2:2-8.

Discipleship in The Greatest Commandment (Deut 6:4-7)

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 presents the most clear and concise argument for the primacy of parental discipleship in the Old Testament. In what is among the most familiar and salient biblical passage to the observant Jew, Moses orders parents to teach God's laws to their children. This model of instruction and discipleship forms the foundation for training the next generation in the way of the Lord throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament.

Few Old Testament passages rise to the level of significance and meaning to the observant Jew as Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Duane Christensen states, "The words of 6:4 are in fact the most familiar words of the entire Bible to the observant Jew, since they are

repeated daily.”¹ The opening phrase of verse 4, “Hear, O Israel” inspires the name by which the entire passage is commonly known by the Jews—the Shema. Samuel Driver believed the Shema contains “the fundamental truth of Israel’s religion” and, “the fundamental duty founded upon it.”² The fundamental truth, according to Christensen, “has to do with the ‘oneness’ of God,” and “the fundamental duty is the response of love which God requires of us.”³ One finds at the heart of the Shema a declaration of God’s nature and a description of his followers’ duty.

God’s oneness and the call to love him through devotion, familiarity, and obedience to his Word, formed the scope of instruction that was to be taught within and outside the home. Christensen makes note of the “pedagogical purpose of the book of Deuteronomy.”⁴ He states, “The content of this book was the primary curriculum in an ongoing program of religious education in ancient Israel.”⁵ Patrick Miller agrees with this assessment saying, “Deuteronomy as a book of instruction is concerned about instruction—its necessity, its processes, its aims, and its results.”⁶

With a clear scope of instruction presented by 6:4-5, Deuteronomy 6:7-9 then explains, according to John Wevers “how these words are to be imprinted in the memory of the community.”⁷ As recipients of God’s commands, parents were charged to “teach them diligently” to their children (Deut 6:7). A close examination of the word *וְהַאֲמַרְתָּ* in the Hebrew reveals a colorful picture of intentionality and repetition that goes beyond a

¹Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, World Biblical Commentary, vol. 6a, (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 137.

²S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), 89.

³Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 143.

⁴Ibid.,

⁵Ibid., 145.

⁶Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation (Louisville: J. Knox Press, 1990), 107.

⁷John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 116.

simple one-time act of instruction. Ajith Fernando suggests that the NLT rendering of 6:7a: “Repeat them again and again to your children” is more accurate.⁸ He emphasizes the necessity of parents repeating often the truths of God’s Word and argues for the home as the primary place of instruction.⁹ Christensen agrees saying, “The commandments were to be the focus of constant discussion inside and outside of the home.”¹⁰ Eugene Merrill develops the idea further by painting the picture of instruction as inscription:

So much so is this the case that the covenant recipient must impress the words of covenant faith into the thinking of his children by inscribing them there with indelible sharpness and precision. The image is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite.¹¹

Wevers observes another possible meaning in the text stating, “The MT orders in colorful fashion לְחַדְּשׁוּ ‘you shall sharpen, hone.’”¹² Doug McIntosh agrees with Wevers, noting, “The text uses a word that is often used to describe the sharpening of a knife upon a whetstone.”¹³ As one sharpens an instrument for effective use through constant repetition, parents are instructed to sharpen their children for the Lord upon the whetstone of this theological truth—Yahweh is our God and Yahweh is one. This repetition and sharpening was to be done “not simply by enforcing them [instructions] as law code, but by making them the fabric of life and conversation.”¹⁴

Moses employs a double merism in 6:7b to illustrate the necessity of constant

⁸Ajith Fernando, *Deuteronomy: Loving Obedience to a Loving God*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 264.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 144.

¹¹Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 167.

¹²Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, 116.

¹³Doug McIntosh, *Deuteronomy*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 85.

¹⁴J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 142.

and continuous education. Daniel Block describes this type of teaching as “spontaneous discussion” and notes it occurs “at every possibly opportunity.”¹⁵ Parents are instructed to teach their children when they sit and walk, and when they rise up and lie down. Noting the paring of these opposite “places and postures,” Merrill suggests, “Teacher and pupil must be preoccupied with covenant concerns and their faithful transmission.”¹⁶ He further adds, “So important is covenant truth that it must be at the very center of all one’s labor and life.”¹⁷ The first command to follow the greatest commandment forms a pattern for family life in and outside of the home. Through word and deed, parents are to pass on a love for God and reverence for his Word to their children.

Discipleship in Congregational Psalms (Ps 78)

The theme of imparting God’s law and words to the next generation as seen in Deuteronomy 6 carries on throughout the literature of the Old Testament. This idea, so central to the people of God, even it found its way into their inspired songs of worship, of which Psalm 78 is a prime example. However, unlike Deuteronomy 6:4-7, which highlights the personal and primary responsibility parents have towards their children, Psalm 78 stresses the collective and corporate obligation of imparting God’s law and words to the next generation.

Concerning form, commentators have difficulty coming to consensus on Psalm 78. Hans-Joachim Kraus admits, “The category of this extensive song is already very hard to determine.”¹⁸ Some argue it is a historical psalm, while others view it as an instructional or wisdom psalm. For example, Frank Hossfeld associates it with other

¹⁵Daniel I. Block, “How Many is God? An Investigation into the Meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4-5,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58. no. 2 (June 2004): 204.

¹⁶Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 122.

historical psalms like Psalms 105, 106, and 136.¹⁹ Kraus agrees saying, “On the basis of its contents, we could designate it a ‘historical psalm.’”²⁰ On the other hand, James Limburg, Willem Gaebelein, and Robert Bratcher identify Psalm 78 as a teaching or instructional psalm. Limburg states, “The opening words indicate that this is going to be a teaching psalm.”²¹ VanGemeren also addresses the introduction stating, “The wisdom motif of vv. 1-4 introduces a didactic psalm.”²² Observing the psalm’s style, Bratcher compares it to other wisdom psalms.²³ Other commentators are comfortable to associating Psalm 78 with both historical and wisdom forms of psalms, seeing no need to isolate it to just one form. John Phillips, for example, argues,

This psalm [78] is one of the Asaph psalms and a maschil psalm, written for instruction. It is also one of the historical psalms, its great purpose being to hammer home to the conscience of the people of God lessons from the past.²⁴

Great consensus exists concerning the purpose of Psalm 78. The psalmist clearly states his intentions in the introduction. Phillips contends the psalmist has found “hidden truth in history,” and “appeals to God’s people to diligently teach their children the truth about God as revealed in all His dealings with them in the past.”²⁵ Marvin Tate’s assessment of the psalms’ purpose coincides with Phillips’. He asserts it has a “stated purpose of educating the next generation.”²⁶ Psalm 78, like Deuteronomy 6, is concerned

¹⁹Frank-Lothar Hossfeld et al., *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 288.

²⁰Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 122.

²¹James Limburg, *Psalms*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 266.

²²Willem VanGemeren, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 504.

²³Robert G. Bratcher and William D. Reyburn, *A Handbook on Psalms*, United Bible Societies Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 680.

²⁴John Phillips, *Exploring Psalms: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002), 643.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 644.

²⁶Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 20 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 284.

primarily with truth transmission to the next generation. Spurgeon argues, “The testimony is only given that it may be passed on to succeeding generations.”²⁷

As with its form, deciding the psalm’s structure proves challenging for some commentators. VanGemeran and Bratcher both make note of this challenge. VanGemeran states, “The structure of the psalm is not easily determined.”²⁸ Likewise, Bratcher says, “It is difficult to provide an outline for the psalm.”²⁹ Richard Clifford, however, confidently dissects Psalm 78 along two major “recitals,” bookended by an introduction and conclusion.³⁰ Clifford provides a convenient table form of his proposed outline.

Table 1. Outline of Psalm 78

Introduction vv. 1-11	
First Recital	Second Recital
Wilderness Events vv. 12-32	From Egypt to Canaan vv. 40-64
-gracious act (vv. 12-16)	-gracious act (vv. 40-55)
-rebellion (vv. 17-20)	-rebellion (vv. 56-58)
-divine anger/punishment (vv. 21-23)	-divine anger/punishment (vv. 59-64)
Sequel vv. 33-39	Sequel vv. 65-72

Tate concurs with Clifford’s outline, stating, “R. J. Clifford, noting the lack of consensus among commentators on the outline of the psalm’s literary structure, has given the psalm a rhetorical analysis with good results.”³¹

Following an introduction, the psalmist recounts the history of Israel, beginning with the exodus out of Egypt to the reign of King David. Bratcher calls it a

²⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (McLean, VA: Macdonald, 1900), 332.

²⁸ VanGemeran, *Psalms*, 591.

²⁹ Bratcher, *Psalms*, 680.

³⁰ Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 73-150*, vol. 2, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), loc. 595, Kindle.

³¹ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 287.

“meditation on Israel’s history.”³² It is a detailed account of God’s deeds and is second in length—behind Psalm 119—of all the psalms.³³ The introduction clarifies the intentions of the psalmist and provides an explanation of the material to follow. Describing the introduction, Limburg writes, “This is not new material but a curriculum that has been passed down from the ancestors.”³⁴

Spurgeon, Tate, and Bratcher connect the overall purpose of Psalm 78 with the instructions given to parents in Deuteronomy 6:4-7. They observe the parallels between the two passages. For example, commenting on Psalm 78:5, Spurgeon notes,

The testimony for the true God was to be transmitted from generation to generation by the careful instruction of succeeding families. We have the command for this oral transmission very frequently given in the Pentateuch, and it may suffice to quote one instance from Deut 6:7.”³⁵

Bratcher recalls the command to teach children in Deuteronomy 6:7 in his comments on Psalm 78:5c-6. He argues the command or “duty” in each passage is similar—one generation is required to obey, and then pass on God’s law and deeds for the people of Israel to the next generation.³⁶ Tate makes a closer connection between the two passages, emphasizing the parallel between “law” and “divine action” referenced by both.³⁷ In Deuteronomy 6:7, parents are instructed to teach their children “these words that I [God] command.” Additionally, they are to recount the “deeds” of the Lord, namely how he rescued the people of Israel out of Egypt and led them to the land of promise (Deut 6:7). Psalm 78 follows this same pattern and content of instruction. Through song, the psalmist commands the congregation not to hide the “glorious deeds” of the Lord from their children and requires the people of God to teach the law of Moses to them (Ps 78:1-6).

³²Bratcher, *Psalms*, 680.

³³Limburg, *Psalms*, 266.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 332.

³⁶Bratcher, *Psalms*, 683.

³⁷Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 289.

Discipleship in House Churches (House Churches in Acts)

Contemporary family discipleship conversations in North America often concentrate around attempts and strategies aimed connecting what occurs in church buildings on the weekend to what takes place in the home during the week.³⁸ Church leaders and practitioners recognize the need to align church and home in order to support and equip parents in their family discipleship efforts.³⁹ The physical divide between the local church building and the home appears to impede biblical family discipleship.

For most of Christian history, formal, corporate worship gatherings have occurred outside of the home; however, for a short period of time during the genesis of the church, the church gathered for teaching, fellowship, and prayer nearly exclusively in homes.⁴⁰ A survey of references to house churches in Acts and a close examination of their practices involving the care and consideration of children will help inform the contemporary family discipleship conversation. Writing about the significance of early house churches, Floyd Filson draws this same conclusion. He states, “The need for making the faith work in daily home life must have been greatly intensified by the almost complete concentration of Christian life, fellowship, and worship in the home.”⁴¹

The first general reference in Acts of Christians gathering in homes for religious purposes occurs in Acts 2:46. Following a description of Pentecost and the addition of three thousand new Christian converts, Luke concludes chapter 2 with what David Peterson describes as, “a portrait of the first Christian church.”⁴² He observes in

³⁸See “D6 Family—A Family Ministry Movement Connecting Church and Home,” D6 Family, accessed March 29, 2018, <https://d6family.com/>; and Tim Kimmel, *Connecting Church & Home*, (Nashville: Randall House, 2013), Kindle.

³⁹Kimmel. *Connecting Church & Home*, 64-65.

⁴⁰Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 1030. Keener observes Jesus’ “house to house” evangelism instructions in Luke 10:5-7 and argues that this pattern formed the basis for Christian expansion through house churches “which became the dominant meeting places for early Christians.”

⁴¹Floyd V. Filson, "The Significance of the Early House Churches," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 58, no. 2 (1939): 110.

⁴²David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand

verses 41-47 that “the narrative shifts from description of particular events on a particular day to a general description of the inner life of the Jerusalem church.”⁴³ In this description of the life of the early church, Luke makes mention of believers “breaking bread in their homes” (Acts 2:46). Darrell Bock argues this reference to eating together is not a description of a “special” meal like the Lord’s Supper or Eucharist but is simply a reference to “regular meals.”⁴⁴ Peterson supports Bock’s assessment and believes the reference to *breaking bread* “refers to the common meals shared by the earliest disciples.”⁴⁵ The common description of the meal reinforces the emphasis of the passage—the location where it occurred. Bock notes, “These believers worship and fellowship together in their everyday environments.”⁴⁶ In his portrait of the early church, Luke does not qualify age or gender of the believers, but Keener suggests, “Given the informal household setting, entire families would be present, though perhaps not seated together as families.”⁴⁷ Therefore, children most likely were present in these early gatherings. Peterson suggests these meals were accompanied with religious and spiritual activity. He writes, “But these meals were doubtless given a special character by the fact that they were associated with teaching, prayer, and praise.”⁴⁸ The perspective Luke provides into early Christian gatherings provides us with a description of both how and where early believer’s practiced their spirituality.

Whereas, Acts 2:46 makes a generic reference to house churches, specific references to Christian gatherings in homes for religious practice and purpose occur

Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009), 158.

⁴³Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 158.

⁴⁴Darrell Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 154, Kindle.

⁴⁵Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 161.

⁴⁶Bock, *Acts*, 153-54.

⁴⁷Keener, *Acts*, 1:1006.

⁴⁸Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 161.

throughout the book of Acts. Beginning with Acts 12:12, the remainder of this section will examine these references from the perspective that activity and practice within early house churches can inform the contemporary family discipleship conversation. In Acts 12:12, after escaping imprisonment with assistance from an angel of the Lord, the apostle Peter “goes to the house of Mary, the mother of John” (Acts 12:12). Luke records that “many” believers were gathered in the home, praying—presumably for Peter—when he arrives (Acts 12:5,12). Much insight into the details and dynamics of this gathering can be inferred from the various descriptions Luke provides. Keener and Sproul conclude that Mary’s house was large. Sproul describes it as, “apparently . . . splendid,”⁴⁹ and Keener argues it was located close to the temple in the wealthier Upper City.⁵⁰ Archeological studies suggest homes in this area of Jerusalem could comfortably accommodate no more than fifty people, providing an estimate of the gathering’s size when Peter arrives.⁵¹ Bock infers Peter is aware of the location of the gathering “suggesting that this is a house church locale.”⁵² Luke records Peter knocking on “the door of the gateway” upon his arrival providing more insight to the nature of the dwelling that housed the gathering (Acts 12:13). Keener argues the gate described in verse 13 was typically found in larger, expensive homes, confirming the belief Mary’s home was spacious enough to host a large number of early believers.⁵³

The first person to respond to Peter’s knocking is a servant girl named Rhoda (Acts 12:13). Bock refers to Rhoda as a “maid” which is another possible translation of

⁴⁹R. C. Sproul, *Acts: St. Andrew’s Exegetical Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 212.

⁵⁰Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1900.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 1902.

⁵²Bock, *Acts*, loc. 10702.

⁵³Keener, *Acts*, 2:1903.

the description Luke uses for her in verse 13.⁵⁴ While it is plausible that Rhoda was a young woman based upon Luke's description, a definite age range is impossible to determine.⁵⁵ If Rhoda was a girl or young woman, the level of her involvement and activity during such an important gathering despite her age is worth noting. Additional information about Rhoda can be inferred through close observation of the text. Keener believes Rhoda is a slave in Mary's household because she came or was sent to the gate when a visitor knocked on the door of Mary's house.⁵⁶ Luke does not specify if Rhoda is a believer or if she was participating in the prayer gathering; however, the act of answering the door alone implies that she was a trusted member of the house and the gathering. Keener recognizes that Rhoda could very well have "betrayed the meeting" had the guest knocking at the gate been someone searching for the escapee.⁵⁷ Luke's brief description of Rhoda and details of her actions the night of Peter's escape lead the reader to believe she was more included and informed than excluded and unaware of the religious gathering in Mary's home.

While it is impossible to determine a definite range for Rhoda's age in Acts 12, another reference in Acts 20 to an early church gathering introduces a character many commentators suggest was indeed a boy or young man. In Acts 20:6, Luke records Paul's arrival at Troas following his departure from Philippi. The stop in Troas is part of a larger journey Paul was making to Jerusalem in hopes that he could be there for the day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16). Based upon the appearance of the pronoun "we" in verse 6, commentators suggest that Luke personally accompanied Paul during this portion of his

⁵⁴Bock, *Acts*, loc. 10728.

⁵⁵C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, vol. 1 (London: T & T Clark, 2004). 584.

⁵⁶Keener, *Acts*, 2:1905.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 2:1940.

overall journey to Jerusalem.⁵⁸ Paul remains in Troas for a total of seven days and on the day before his departure, “the first day of the week”, Luke recounts an incident that took place during a house church gathering (Acts 20:6-7).⁵⁹

Luke records two religious activities occurring during the gathering—breaking bread and Paul’s speech (Acts 20:7). Commentators lack consensus as to the exact nature of the meal the believers shared at the meeting. Thomas, Bruce, and Witherington acknowledge the possibility of it being a common meal, the Eucharist, or a combination of both.⁶⁰ Bock makes no mention of the Eucharist in his observations, referring to the meal as a “community meal.”⁶¹ Barrett agrees with Bock’s assessment stating, “There is no indication in the present passage, unless implied by the phrase itself, that the meal was other or more than a church fellowship meal, accompanied by religious discourse and conversation.”⁶² Additionally, Keener, in his lengthy assessment of Luke’s account of the meeting, does not make mention of the Eucharist as a possible explanation of the meal. He refers to it as, “breaking bread” just as Luke does and associates it with other references appearing in Luke’s writings.⁶³

⁵⁸Bock, *Acts*, loc. 15214; Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 765.

⁵⁹Much debate exists as to the exact day of the week this gathering took place and some commentators stretch to prove that this gathering is the first record of believers regularly meeting on Sunday for worship. Thomas, Barrett, Witherington, and Bruce acknowledge the meeting could have occurred on Saturday evening or Sunday evening depending on Luke’s use of either Greek or Jewish reckoning of days. See Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2011), 568; Barrett, *Acts*, 950; Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1998), 606; Bruce, *Acts*, 425-26. Sproul makes no mention of the possibility for a Saturday evening gathering. He is convinced the meeting occurred on Sunday evening. See Sproul, *Acts*, 338-39. Keener, however, warns against this conclusion for several reasons. First, he argues, “The earliest evidence emphasizes frequent meetings (Acts 2:24; Heb 10:25) much more than it emphasizes the particular day.” Second, Keener notes, “The clearest reference to Christian activity on the first day (1 Cor. 16:1) can be construed as private activity rather than a gathering.” Finally, Luke provides no evidence to conclude this gathering is a regular meeting. On the contrary, it can be assumed the meeting took place on Sunday out of necessity due to Paul’s intended departure the next day. Keener is convinced the meeting began on Sunday evening and concluded Monday at dawn. See Keener, *Acts*, 773-74.

⁶⁰Thomas, *Acts*, 570; Bruce, *Acts*, 425; Witherington, *Acts*, 606.

⁶¹Bock, *Acts*, loc. 15239.

⁶²Barrett, *Acts*, 950.

⁶³Keener, *Acts*, 3:770.

Sharing a meal together was the impetus for the gathering that night, but Paul's lengthy speech and intentions to depart Troas the following day, incentivized the believers who were present to remain through the night (Acts 20:7). According to Bruce, Paul's speech was likely more interactive than a modern sermon—"a conversation rather than an address."⁶⁴ Barrett notes the meaning of 'speech', "Varies between dialogue, discussion between two or more persons, and discussion in which one person *discusses* a matter, as in a sermon or lecture."⁶⁵ Keener observes Paul's discourse was "probably interactive."⁶⁶ The only participant present the night of Paul's lengthy discourse mentioned by name is a "young man" named Eutychus. Luke records him "Sitting at the window" during the speech, only to fall asleep while "Paul talked still longer." (Acts 20:9). "Overcome by sleep", Eutychus tragically falls out of the third story window and dies upon hitting the ground (Acts 20:9). Miraculously, Paul restores Eutychus' life and the meeting continues until Paul departs at dawn (Acts 20:10-11).

Unlike Rhoda in Acts 12, it is certain, based upon the description of Eutychus given in verse 9 and 12 of chapter 20, he was young. Most commentators estimate his age to be between 8 and 14.⁶⁷ Keener agrees that Eutychus is young; however, he notes, "But scholars point out that 'youth' probably specifies him in his twenties, and that he may have simply been the 'child' of someone present."⁶⁸ Following his resuscitation, Luke provides a different description of Eutychus, describing him as a "youth" (Acts 20:12). The HCSB and NASB translate Luke's description as "boy". Keener observes Luke's intentional word choice as an attempt to "reinforce the comparison" of Jesus'

⁶⁴ Bruce, *Acts*, 425.

⁶⁵ Barrett, *Acts*, 951.

⁶⁶ Keener, *Acts*, 3:770.

⁶⁷ Bock, *Acts*, loc. 15239; Witherington, *Acts*, 607; Thomas, *Acts*, 571.

⁶⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 3:781.

resuscitation of a girl on Luke 8:54.⁶⁹ Whether a boy or a youth, one thing is certain about Eutychus, he was an active, younger participant in the gathering. Carolyn Osiek refers to this particular incident and at least four other narrative accounts in Acts as she summarizes the presence and participation of children in early, house-church gatherings:

All of these references to children are found in narrative accounts and do not, therefore, offer direct evidence for the presence and activities of children in house churches. Nevertheless, they reflect the kind of domestic scenes that would have been common experiences for the audience of these accounts, who listened to them in the house churches where children usually lived: children in bed with their parents, falling asleep at late-night worship; urging their parents to provide food; being sent to run errands; easily falling prey to accidents, and so forth. That children were not merely chance witnesses at early Christian meetings but actually expected to be active listeners to early Christian discourse is made clear by the direct address to them (along with other family groupings) in the NT household codes.⁷⁰

Six observations relevant to the contemporary family discipleship conversation of connecting church and home can be made from these early church references. First, the home, not a purposed building or structure, served as the meeting place. Second, throughout Acts, emphasis was placed on the regularity of the meeting, not the specific day the meeting took place. Third, there is little evidence to argue that early gatherings met regularly on Sunday mornings prior to the second century.⁷¹ Fourth, gatherings were informal in nature and centered around a common meal. Fifth, teaching was interactive and conversational. Finally, more evidence exists to suggest children and youth were present and participated in religious activities at these gatherings than evidence to argue they were excluded.

Most of the above characteristics and components of early church gatherings bear striking similarities to those of Home Groups at TVC. Therefore, I argue it is reasonable to suggest the Home Group or Cell Group model of discipleship presents a

⁶⁹Keener, *Acts*, 3:785.

⁷⁰Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, and Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches In Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2005). 71.

⁷¹Keener, *Acts*, 3:773.

strategic opportunity to connect church and home for the purpose of equipping and training parents in family discipleship. By including and incorporating children into the formal Home Group gathering, Home Groups not only more closely resemble early-Christian gatherings; they also become a vehicle for teaching and practicing family discipleship.

Discipleship in the Household Codes (Eph 6:4)

The Old Testament theme of generational faithfulness and faith transmission carries on into the New Testament epistles. Clear parental instruction and examples are found in both the gospels and the epistles. One of the most explicit occurrences appears in the household code section of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

Larry Kreitzer refers to this section of Ephesians (5:15-6:9) as the “*haustafeln*, or household rules,” and states, “Here the duties and responsibilities of parents and children are set out.”⁷² In the ancient world, household codes were present in other writings, but as Peter Williamson points out, “This household code differs from other examples in Greco-Roman and Jewish literature.”⁷³ Williamson provides four arguments to illustrate the uniqueness of Paul’s household code.⁷⁴ First, the introductory admonition for mutual submission was foreign to Roman household norms. Second, Paul addresses subordinate subjects in addition to the heads of households. Third, Paul instructs heads of households to be especially mindful and considerate of the condition of those under his care. Finally, Paul commands everyone in the home to center all their relational dynamics and interactions around the person and work of Jesus—their common link. Similarly,

⁷²Larry Kreitzer, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, Epworth Commentary Series (Peterborough, England: Epworth Press, 1997), 170.

⁷³Peter S. Williamson, *Ephesians*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 179.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

David Powlison identifies the radical nature of Paul’s household code, specifically the demand for mutual submission. He calls this counter-cultural approach to household relationships our “common call” and argues, “It establishes a core attitude of mutuality that threads through every single relationship.”⁷⁵

According to Clinton Arnold, the purpose of this list of duties and responsibilities “is ultimately tied to Paul’s exhortation to ‘watch carefully how you walk’ (5:15).”⁷⁶ Andrew Lincoln agrees with Arnold about the purpose of Paul’s list stating, “It should be remembered that the instructions given are to be seen both as part of the wise and Spirit-filled living that the writer had discussed in 5:15-20 and as coming under the umbrella of the exhortation to mutual submission that had introduced the household code in 5:21.”⁷⁷

Following a command to children in 6:1-3, in verse 4, Paul turns his attention to fathers. Commentators observe and address the use of *πατέρες*, “fathers”, instead of *γονεῖσιν*, “parents,” in verse 4. Lincoln states that the plural use of *πατέρες* “can refer to parents in general and not just fathers, and some suggest that this may be the meaning here.”⁷⁸ Arnold makes the same observation stating, “Although it is possible for ‘fathers’ (*πατέρες*) to be understood here in a generic sense with reference to both parents . . . as the CEV and TEV translate it, Paul is most likely focusing here on the men.”⁷⁹ Tony Merida holds a different posture. He says, “We can apply verse 4 to both parents in general, giving special attention to fathers in particular.”⁸⁰ Merida’s suggestion is in the

⁷⁵David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2003), 61.

⁷⁶Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 411.

⁷⁷Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, World Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 398.

⁷⁸Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 406.

⁷⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

⁸⁰Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2014), 151.

minority as most commentators recognize the emphasis Paul intended with *πατέρες*. For example, Arnold counters this idea stating, “If both mothers and fathers were in view, Paul would have probably use the typical word for “parents” (*γονεῖσιν*), which he used in 6:1.”⁸¹

The emphasis on fathers within this section of the household code reflects the views and practice of family life in the ancient world. “In Jewish as well as in Roman society,” Arnold observes, “fathers were ultimately responsible for the education and discipline of their children.”⁸² Bryan Chapell believes Paul’s precise language and explicit imperatives to the “spiritual head of the home underscores the spiritual challenge and significance of biblical parenting.”⁸³ He develops this idea further by connecting the use of *πατέρες* with God’s relationship to his children. “The inspired echo,” Chapell writes, “makes us understand that we are to nurture our children as God fathers us, and never to sacrifice their good for our own.”⁸⁴ Frank Thielman supports Chapell’s conclusion concerning fathers’ use of their authority over children, saying, “Fathers also have a responsibility to use their authority for the good of their children.”⁸⁵

As to the overall specific instruction given to fathers within this household code, concern is focused on “the proper way to raise children.”⁸⁶ Paul begins his admonition to fathers with a negative command then follows it with a positive. Simpson describes the flavor of Paul’s instruction in 6:4 as a “blend of firmness with gentle treatment.”⁸⁷

⁸¹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 316.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 346.

⁸⁶Kreitzer, *Ephesians*, 170.

⁸⁷E. K. Simpson, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand

The negative command, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger” gives attention to the overall welfare of children—an approach to parenting that was foreign to the ancient world (Eph 6:4a). Arnold observes, “This admonition is nowhere found in the Old Testament and does not have any exact parallel in ancient literature.”⁸⁸ In a time when fathers had absolute power and authority within the home to act and do as they please with little or no external restraints, Paul “reins in this power, urging fathers not to abuse their authority by treating their children in harsh, unfair ways that create resentment and bitterness.”⁸⁹ Instead, fathers must concern themselves with the tone and tenor of their oversight in the home, and “exercise a sensitivity and care in how they interact with their children.”⁹⁰ Paul directs fathers to consider their role within the home through the lens of responsibility versus authority. Lincoln articulates this point masterfully saying, “[Paul] reminds them not of their authority but of their responsibility, which is linked to their Christian faith.”⁹¹

After cautioning fathers to avoid actions that might provoke children to anger, Paul then shifts his instruction to a positive command. Arnold suggests, “God does not tell us merely what not to do for our children. He tells us what to do as well.”⁹² Fathers are directed to “bring them [children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 4:6b). In a clear and salient way, this phrase establishes the pattern and process for discipleship within the home.

Paul begins the phrase recycling an idea he previously used to describe the responsibility a husband has toward his wife. In Ephesians 5:28-29, husbands are

Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1975), 136.

⁸⁸Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

⁸⁹Theilman, *Ephesians*, 347.

⁹⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

⁹¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 409.

⁹²Chapell, *Ephesians*, 320.

commanded to “love their wives as their own bodies” (Eph 6:4b). To help husbands understand this type of love, Paul explains in verse 29 that no one hates his own body but “nourishes” (ἐκτρέφω) it. Arnold observes that Paul uses this same verb to describe the responsibility fathers have toward their children. He writes, “ Here he uses the verb (ἐκτρέφω) in the extended, but commonly used, sense of ‘raising’ or ‘bringing up.’”⁹³ As with a husband’s responsibility to his wife, Chapell argues, “Each father must care for his child as much as he ‘cares’ for his own flesh.”⁹⁴

The type of care fathers are commanded to extend to their children involves many aspects of attention and effort. Richard Coekin emphasizes the duration of the care. He writes, “The words ‘bring them up’ mean to nourish or nurture children. This implies long-term relational care and not rapid mechanistic results.”⁹⁵ Arnold similarly observes, “It [ἐκτρέφω] can also be used of the entire training process of child rearing that extended to adulthood.”⁹⁶ Thielman elects to reference and emphasize the Septuagint’s use of ἐκτρέφω—which it renders as “rearing.” He states, “The ‘rearing’ of children in the Jewish tradition included not only providing for their physical needs, but also showing them affection, and especially teaching them the law of God.”⁹⁷

The Christian care and attention required by fathers is accomplished through the exercise of two nouns Paul uses to qualify the verb ἐκτρέφω. The first is παιδεία, which the ESV translates as “discipline,” and the second is νοουθεσία, which the ESV renders as “instruction.” Concerning these two terms, Chapell notes, “Both of these terms refer to the discipline of children but with slightly different shades of meaning.”⁹⁸ A

⁹³Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

⁹⁴Chapell, *Ephesians*, 320.

⁹⁵Richard Coekin, *Ephesians for You* (New Malden, England: The Good Book Company, 2015), 181.

⁹⁶Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

⁹⁷Thielman, *Ephesians*, 347.

⁹⁸Chapell, *Ephesians*, 321.

survey of other English translations is helpful to see the subtle nuances in these two nouns. For example, the NIV and HCSB translate the first term as “training” versus the ESV’s use of “discipline.” The KJV elects different translations of both terms, rendering the first as “nurture” and the second as “admonition”.

Chapell addresses what is important to note concerning these two terms—what most likely intended by Paul’s choice of them. He writes,

The first term (training) carries the more positive connotation; we are to model, teach, and encourage godly patterns of life. The second term (instruction) contains a slightly negative nuance; we are to warn away from, admonish, and discipline that which is inconsistent with godliness.⁹⁹

A different way to nuance the two terms is to consider them through the lens of deed versus word. παιδεία refers more broadly to the physical action of discipline and child education, while νοουθεσία narrowly refers to oral instruction.¹⁰⁰ The combination of these two contrasting and complementing words captures the full scope of parental discipleship responsibility.

The command to parents, particularly fathers, in Ephesians 6:4 clearly articulates the personal, household responsibility of child faith formation. Through a negative and positive directive, Paul instructs fathers, charging them to take on the role of primary faith influencer.

Discipleship in the Family of Faith (Titus 2:2-8)

As observed in Old Testament passages such as Psalm 78, New Testament passages, such as Titus 2:2-8, also address the corporate and collective aspect of child faith formation and discipleship. In chapter 2 of Paul’s letter to Titus, Paul identifies and exhorts five groups within the church. According to William Mounce, throughout his

⁹⁹Chapell, *Ephesians*, 321.

¹⁰⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

letter to Titus, Paul's concern is "the church's reputation."¹⁰¹ The exhortation for certain behaviors for each of these groups is part of Paul's overall effort to "keep the church above reproach."¹⁰² Philip Towner similarly observes, "Paul's desire to ensure that the emerging church understands the basics of Christian respectability in society."¹⁰³

The groups in Titus 2:2-8 are determined by age and gender, and consist of older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and slaves. Concerning these groups, Raymond Collins observes, "The Pastor writes about all four groups, but the emphasis lies on the training of younger women and younger men."¹⁰⁴ In addition, Collins argues this emphasis "is consistent with one of the overarching concerns of the Pastorals, namely, carrying on the message to the next generation"¹⁰⁵ This passage evidences how the responsibility of discipling the next generation is not limited to parents and the home, but extends to the broader context of the family of faith and local church.

Beginning with older men, each of the four groups is admonished according to behavior and responsibility within the household of faith. Commenting on the nature of Paul's exhortations, Risto Saarinen notes, "Most virtues can be understood in terms of moderation, that is, they avoid harmful extremes and aim at finding the virtuous mean."¹⁰⁶ Paul recognizes the missional impact these ethics have in a pagan society when properly lived out by Christians. Lea draws attention to the repetition of *hina*. He notes, "These *hina* clauses indicate that proper Christian behavior has a significant impact on

¹⁰¹William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, World Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 408.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006), 714.

¹⁰⁴Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 337.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Risto Saarinen, *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon & Jude*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 177.

pagan attitudes toward Christianity.”¹⁰⁷

The responsibility of teaching this proper Christian behavior to the young fell on the old. For example, Paul writes, “They [older women] are to teach what is good, and so train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled” (Titus 2:4-5 ESV). Mounce describes the teaching older women are commanded to practice as “not an official teaching position in the church (1 Tim 2:11-12), but rather informal, one-on-one encouragement.”¹⁰⁸

In the “household code” of Ephesians 5 and 6, Paul is concerned with the biological relationships and responsibilities within the home. Whereas, in Titus 2:2-8, he takes aim at the spiritual family within the household of faith. This family of faith is charged to train and teach the younger generation in the ways of the Lord. Many commentators draw a connection between the list of instructions in Titus 2:2-8 and other New Testament household codes, like the ones found in Ephesians and Colossians. They do not interpret Paul’s approach to discipleship through the church as a threat or challenge to commands that place the mantle of discipleship on the shoulders of fathers. Instead, these two approaches work in unison—the church supporting and supplementing the discipleship efforts of parents within the home.

Conclusion

This chapter examined key biblical and theological foundations for child faith formation and discipleship. Passages including Deuteronomy 6:4-6, Psalm 78, Ephesians 6:4, and Titus 2:2-8 present a home-plus-church formula for the upbringing of children. Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6 explicitly require and expect parents to actively teach

¹⁰⁷Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 296.

¹⁰⁸Mounce, *Ephesians*, 410.

God's Word to their children and train them in the way and teachings of Jesus. Psalm 78 and Titus 2 invite the ecclesial family to proclaim God's faithfulness and teach God's Word to the children and young people in the congregation. These passages illustrate the personal and corporate element of responsibility in the discipleship of children in Christian homes and churches. Therefore, churches and church leaders are to partner with parents to train children up in the Christian faith. As evidenced by narrative accounts of early church gatherings in Acts, Home Group and Cell Group gatherings—household settings where the ecclesial family and biological family combine—present an opportunity for such a partnership to form and flourish.

CHAPTER 3
HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR FAMILY
DISCIPLESHIP

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine historical foundations for family discipleship. A survey of Christian history presents the family as an indispensable disciple-making institution. Although the prevalence of practice and proclamation has fluctuated, the family is presented as the primary agent of influence regarding child faith formation throughout Christian history.

**Historical Foundations for Family
Discipleship**

**Apostolic and Ante-Nicene
Age (30–325 CE)**

Since its inception, Christianity leveraged the family and household as epicenters for evangelism and discipleship.¹ John M. G. Barclay describes the household as, “[the] locus of its [Christianity] routine expression.”² The earliest Christian writings explicitly assign child faith formation and discipleship responsibilities to parents. The canonical household codes in Ephesians 5-6 and Colossians 3—arguably the first instance of child rearing and training instructions in Christian literature—appoint and instruct fathers with Christian parenting responsibilities and guidelines.³ Similarly, early,

¹For a robust treatise of this subject—particularly of the household and evangelism in Acts—see David Matson, *Household Conversion Narratives in Acts: Pattern and Interpretation* (Sheffield: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1996).

²John M. G. Barclay, "The Family as the Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (New York: Routledge, 1997), 76.

³Ibid.

noncanonical writings prescribe this formula for child faith formation. The most ancient of these writings, the *Didache*, originated from oral traditions and was written within a generation following the death of Jesus.⁴ The *Didache* is a collection of sayings, teachings, and prayers aimed at instructing new converts in the way of Jesus. Milavec contends, “The *Didache* represents the first concerted attempt by householders to adapt the way of Jesus to the exigencies of family, of occupation, of home—the very things that Jesus and his wandering apostles had left behind.”⁵ Included in these instructions is a command concerning children and discipleship: “You will not take away your hand from your son or daughter, but from youth you will train [them] in the fear of God.”⁶ Near identical instructions directed at parents also appears in the *Epistle of Barnabas*—another noncanonical document that circulated among early churches in the Ante-Nicene age: “You must not withhold your hand from your son or daughter, but from their youth you shall teach them the fear of God.”⁷

The original author(s) of the *Didache* is unknown and most likely was an assembly of writers as the document “did not belong to or originate with a single individual.”⁸ Likewise, the *Epistle of Barnabas* is anonymous.⁹ These unknown authors held and taught a perspective of parental responsibility and discipleship almost identical to that of the New Testament authors—parents were explicitly and primarily responsible for the faith training of their children. A full survey of Apostolic and Ante-Nicene literature reveals a number of its writers produced forms of instruction concerning the

⁴Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C.E.* (New York: The Newman Press, 2003), vii.

⁵Ibid., ix.

⁶Ibid., 23.

⁷Michael W. Holmes, ed. and trans., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Text and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 174.

⁸Ibid., vii.

⁹Ibid., 174.

training and teaching of children:

Do not cease, therefore, instructing your children, for I know that if they repent with all their heart, they will be enrolled with the saints in the books of life.¹⁰

Then instruct your wives . . . to teach their children with instruction that leads to the fear of God.¹¹

Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and teach them the Holy Scriptures, and also trades, that they may not indulge in idleness. Now the Scripture says, ‘A righteous father educates his children well; his heart shall rejoice in a wise son.’¹²

Interestingly, the instruction from these authors regarding parental responsibility is congruent and appears to originate from the same biblical sources: Ephesians 6:4 and Proverbs 23:13. Early church fathers interpreted these biblical commands as clear evidence of the primary role parents play in the faith training and discipleship of children.¹³

Nicene Age (325–500 CE)

Following the conversion of Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicaea, Christianity experienced a refinement of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. A teaching and practice that remained consistent was the nature and responsibility of child faith training and discipleship. Two different documents from this era expound and develop the biblical commands of Proverbs 23:13 and Ephesians 6:4, echoed by the apostolic fathers, in a much more robust fashion.

The first, and possibly slightly older, is an anonymous document known as the

¹⁰Shepherd of Hermas, *Vision* 1.3.1, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Text and English Translations*, ed. and trans. Michael W. Holmes, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 208.

¹¹Polycarp, *To the Philippians* 4.2, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Text and English Translations*, ed. and trans. Michael W. Holmes, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 136-37.

¹²Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians* 4.5, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Text and English Translations*, ed. and trans. Michael W. Holmes, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 81.

¹³For more on child faith training in the Apostolic and Ante-Nicene age, see Katie Michelle Simmons Laney, “Faith Training of Children During the Apostolic and Ante-Nicene Period.” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

Apostolic Constitutions. Dated by most scholars at 375 CE, the *Apostolic Constitutions* devotes an entire chapter to the training and teaching of children.¹⁴ The *Constitutions* instructs parents to “teach,” “rebuke,” “correct,” “chastise,” “punish,” “bring in to subjection,” and “marry off their children.”¹⁵ Clearly influenced by parental commands in Scripture, the author both refers to and directly quotes multiple verses in the book of Proverbs. Furthermore, the author concludes his instruction with a strong admonition about the responsibility and accountability parents have before God regarding the behavior of their children:

Now, whether this [fornication] happen to them without their parents, their parents themselves will be accountable before God for the judgment of their souls; or whether again by your license they are undisciplined and sin, you their parents will likewise be guilty on their account before God.¹⁶

The second document, John Chrysostom’s (c. 347–407) *An Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children*, is by far the most robust and thorough treatise from antiquity regarding parental responsibility and practice. Chrysostom, a prominent early church father and archbishop of Constantinople, was well known for his oratory and preaching ability. Dated around the late fourth century, *An Address on Vainglory* is homiletic in form and both theological and pragmatic in nature.¹⁷ Laistner recognizes its pragmatism and argues, “It is conceivable that it [*On Vainglory*] was actually delivered before a group of parents.”¹⁸ Despite being childless himself, Chrysostom was acutely concerned with the faith training and religious education of children in the midst of a pagan, secular culture.¹⁹ In the address, he instructs parents to

¹⁴R. Hugh Connolly, trans., *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), xx.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 193-94.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁷John Chrysostom, “An Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children,” in M. L. W. Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture in the Later Roman Empire* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1951), 77.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Gillian Clark, “The Fathers and the Children,” in *The Church and Childhood*, ed. Diana

liken their responsibilities regarding childrearing to that of an artist.²⁰ With the same precision that a painter or sculptor creates and shapes a work of art, he argues parents must, “care for these wonderful statues of ours.”²¹ Examples of the forms of care Chrysostom prescribed includes leveraging meal times by telling biblical stories, singing hymns instead of frivolous songs, and even taking their child to church—“lead[ing] him by that hand.”²² Appropriate Bible story and narrative re-telling accounts for a substantial portion of Chrysostom’s address. In this particular instructional discourse, he displayed astute understanding of cognitive and emotive developmental capabilities of children, suggesting parents should refrain from teaching certain mature biblical narratives and topics—such as hell—until children are older.²³ As evidenced in his writing on the subject, Chrysostom pondered and considered the intricacies of child faith formation.

Central to child faith formation in Chrysostom’s philosophy was the influence and efforts of parents. His writings regarding children and their discipleship consistently points to the home and family as the foremost institution.²⁴ Chrysostom’s biblically formed vision for and practice within the family is best described as an “ecclesial (or churchly) entity wherein adults and children rehearse for membership in the kingdom of heaven.”²⁵ He most clearly articulated this perspective in his homily on Ephesians 5:22-24 stating, “For indeed, the household is a little church.”²⁶ Over a millennium later, the

Wood (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 19-20.

²⁰Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture*, 96.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 105.

²³Ibid., 106.

²⁴Vigen Guroian, “The Ecclesial Family: John Chrysostom on Parenthood and Children,” in *The Child and Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 62.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶John Chrysostom, “Homily 20,” in *On Marriage and Family*, trans. Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson (Crestwood, KY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986), 57.

great reformer Martin Luther would almost precisely echo these same words as a clarion call to the church to recover biblical parenting and child faith formation.

Medieval Age (500–1400 CE)

Despite explicit theological and pragmatic instruction from the early church regarding parental responsibility and family discipleship practice, the medieval record is dismal. Several historians and theologians note the decline in family discipleship and scarcity of medieval writings and materials directed towards parents regarding the faith formation and discipleship of children.²⁷ Wren, writing about family discipleship in late ancient and medieval households observes, “No major medieval theologian seems to have produced work exclusively devoted to the subject of spiritual training in the context of a family.”²⁸ Unfortunately, the loud chorus championing parents to disciple their children waned in the middle ages.

With limited family discipleship material supplied by church hierarchy, Wren contends, “Discipleship within the family seems to have been promoted primarily by local priest and revolved around parents and godparents teaching their children basic doctrinal statements and prayers.”²⁹ He attributes the decline in family discipleship practices during this era to multiple factors including, high illiteracy rates, an increase in monasticism, poorly trained and ill-equipped clergy, and an overemphasis and

²⁷See Christina L. H. Traina, “A Person in the Making: Thomas Aquinas on Children and Childhood,” in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 104; David Herlihy, “Medieval Children,” in *Essays on Medieval Civilizations*, The Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures, XII, ed. Bede Karl Lackner and Kenneth Roy Philip (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 109-41; Janet L. Nelson, “Parents, Children, and the Church in the Earlier Middle Ages,” in *The Church and Childhood*, ed. Diana Wood (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 82; and Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson, “Family Ministry Models,” in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 159.

²⁸C. Michael Wren Jr., “Among Your Company at Home: Family Discipleship in Late Ancient and Medieval Households,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 105.

²⁹Wren, *Among Your Company*, 111.

misunderstanding on the rite of baptism as a means to salvation.³⁰ A shocking late-medieval practice regarding baptism illustrates how far the church had drifted from orthodox understanding and instruction regarding parental responsibility. Prior to 1564 in England, church law prohibited parents from attending their child's baptismal rite.³¹ Insofar as the rite was viewed as the means of entrance into the holy practice of the church and God's Kingdom, physical, natural parents were replaced with spiritual parents—godparents.³² Only the godparents were admitted to the baptism, as the presence of the natural parents would have tainted the entire ceremony.

Interestingly, perhaps the most robust and pragmatic medieval source on Christian parenting originated outside of the established clergy. Dhouda (804–843), a noble Frankish mother, lived in the ninth century and wrote numerous instructional letters to her teenage son, William.³³ Unable to be physically present to teach and disciple him in the way of Jesus, she wrote to him, hoping her words would guide him to the path of righteousness. Known collectively as *Liber Manualis*, Dhouda's letters contain charges, advice, admonitions, and encouragement for William as he seeks to mature in the Christian faith. Topics of her instruction include, loving God, seeking God, the Trinity, prayer, friendship, respect for elders, gifts of the Holy Spirit, forgiveness, testing of faith, persecution, and how to study the Bible.³⁴ Sadly, the uniqueness of this medieval source illustrates the disheartening state of family discipleship in the Middle Ages.

³⁰Wren, *Among Your Company*, 108-09.

³¹William Coster, "From Fire and Water: The Responsibilities of Godparents in Early Modern England," in *The Child and Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 305.

³²*Ibid.*

³³Janet L. Nelson, "Parents, Children, and the Church in the Earlier Middle Ages," in *The Church and Childhood*, ed. Diana Wood (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 94.

³⁴Dhouda, *Handbook for William: A Carolingian Woman's Counsel for Her Son*, trans. Carol Neel (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

Reformation Age and The Puritans (1400–1800 CE)

After centuries of near silence and sparse instruction from the church regarding family discipleship, a reinstitution of the family and household as the axis of Christian education, expression, and formation accompanied the Reformation.³⁵ Indeed, “the spiritualization of the household,” as argued by Christopher Hill, was a significant hallmark of the Protestant Reformation.³⁶ Two factors—one theological and the other practical—contributed to this resurgence. First, an emphasis on the priesthood of the believer paved the way for parents to consider themselves priests, and as a note in the Geneva Bible read, “preachers” in the home.³⁷ Furthermore, the role and authority of the priest was diminished which further empowered and “elevated the authority of lay heads of households.”³⁸ Second, mass printing and the availability of printed sermons, books, tracts, and a new genre of literature known as household manuals, provided parents with ample material and training in family discipleship.³⁹ Witte and Good account for sixty-one different household manuals published during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁴⁰ Hill notes these readily available materials were “aimed precisely at assisting laymen of the industrious sort in their semi-priestly duties, a kind of protestant lay casuistry.”⁴¹

The great German Reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546) wrote extensively

³⁵“How, alas! Have Christian homes degenerated since then in family piety! They received a reviving impulse in the Reformation; yet even this was meteor-like, and seemed but the transient glow of some mere natural emotion.” From Samuel Philips, *The Christian Home* (1859), loc. 487-89.

³⁶Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1991). 429-30

³⁷Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 429.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 432.

³⁹For more on household manuals, see John Witte, Jr. and Heather M. Good, “The Duties of Love: The Vocation of the Child in the Household Manual Tradition,” in *The Vocation of the Child*, ed. Patrick McKinley Brennan (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 266-94.

⁴⁰Witte, *The Duties of Love*, 292-93.

⁴¹Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 442.

about family discipleship and the spiritualization of the home. After rejecting Roman Catholic theology and the monastic lifestyle, Luther married a former nun and the two went on to raise at least ten children in their own home.⁴² Unlike his medieval predecessors, Luther believed producing godly offspring amounted to the highest aim of marriage:

The best thing in married life, for the sake of which everything ought to be suffered and done, is the fact that God gives children and commands us to bring them up to serve Him. To do this is the noblest and most precious work on earth, because nothing may be done which pleases God more than saving souls.⁴³

Luther also rejected the medieval philosophy of the sacred-secular divide.⁴⁴ For Luther, the home was just as sacred and family life just as spiritual as the cathedral. He encouraged the home to be a place of spiritual training, faith formation, and Christian practice. He refers to parents as apostles, bishops, and priests to their children.⁴⁵ Practical advice from Luther regarding parenting came in the form of “duties”. According to Strohl, he instructs parents to, “provide the sacrament of baptism for infants, to form children in the true faith as they mature, to attend to their education for vocation, and to provide them with a suitable spouse in a timely fashion.”⁴⁶

Arguably, Luther’s greatest and most enduring contribution to family discipleship is his Small Catechism. Originally published in sections beginning in January of 1529, the Small Catechism was Luther’s response to a perceived crisis within

⁴²C. Jeffrey Robinson Sr., “The Home is an Earthly Kingdom: Family Discipleship Among Reformers and Puritans,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 116.

⁴³Martin Luther, “Sermon on Married Life,” quoted in Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 239.

⁴⁴Jane Strohl, “The Child in Luther’s Theology: For What Purpose Do We Older Folks Exist, Other Than to Care for . . . the Young,” in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 139.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 140.

⁴⁶Strohl, *The Child in Luther’s Theology*, 140-41.

Christianity during the Reformation.⁴⁷ During personal visits to congregations in electoral Saxony and Meissen between 1528 and 1529, Luther found their theological state abysmal. The laity was uneducated in basic Christian belief and untrained in basic Christian practice.⁴⁸ In his preface to the Small Catechism, Luther held the clergy primarily responsible for the crisis.⁴⁹

Compelled to correct heresies, challenge superstitions, and combat Biblical illiteracy that plagued the laity, Luther employed catechesis—an ancient form of oral Christian instruction.⁵⁰ In late 1528, beginning with the Ten Commandments, he systematically taught through and then transcribed catechisms for the Apostles Creed, the Lord’s Prayer and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These five subjects compose the five sections of the Small Catechism and each section was originally produced and printed on separate broadsheets.⁵¹ The preface mentioned above, clearly addressed to clergy, was added after the broadsheets were collected and published in booklet form. The original audience and intended recipients of Luther’s Small Catechism however, was heads of households. A subtitle, appearing at the top of each broadsheet read, “In the plain form in which the head of the family shall teach them to his household.”⁵² Based on this line of instruction, Pederson argues, “Luther expected

⁴⁷Phillip E Pederson, ed., *What Does This Mean? Luther’s Catechisms Today* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979), 18-20.

⁴⁸“The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith. . . . As a result, they live like simple cattle or irrational pigs and, despite the fact that the gospel has returned, have mastered the fine art of misusing all their freedom.” From Martin Luther, “The Small Catechism for Ordinary Pastors and Preachers,” in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 347-8.

⁴⁹“Unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. . . . O you bishops! How are you going to answer to Christ, now that you have so shamefully neglected the people and have not exercised your office for even a single second!” From *Ibid.*

⁵⁰For more on the history and origins of catechesis, see J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), Kindle.

⁵¹Kolb, *The Book of Concord*, 346.

⁵²Pederson, *What Does This Mean?*, 36.

parents to take responsibility for the Christian nurture of their own children.”⁵³ Wengert agrees:

The Small Catechism functioned as a family book, a book for the household. Luther even named it not ‘Small Catechism’ but *Enchiridion*, a Greek word that means handbook. Would that modern translations could be titled *A Handbook for the Christian Household*, because Luther was making the claim that everything a Christian needs for salvation and for everyday life was contained in this book.⁵⁴

Clearly, Luther did not invent catechesis; however, his unique experience as both theologian and father enabled him to produce material suitable for both church and home.⁵⁵ The Small Catechism gained enormous popularity following its publication; an estimated one hundred thousand copies were printed within forty years after its release.⁵⁶ Along with *On the Bound Will*, Luther considered it his most significant and important accomplishments.⁵⁷

Continuing along the trajectory of their Reformation forbearers, perhaps no other group took the spiritualization of the home and parental duties of discipleship more seriously than the Puritans.⁵⁸ Puritan authors routinely describe family discipleship concepts such as household duty, household religion, and household devotions.⁵⁹ They

⁵³Peterson, *What Does This Mean?*, 36.

⁵⁴Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther’s Catechisms: Forming the Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 20.

⁵⁵Wengert notes, “Luther was the first theologian in one thousand years who witnessed the development of his own children.” *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁶Packer, *Grounded in the Gospel*, loc. 1127.

⁵⁷“Regarding the plan to collect my writings in volumes, I am quite cool and not at all eager about it because, roused by Saturnian Hunger, I would rather see them all devoured. For I acknowledge none of them to be really a book of mine, except perhaps one *On the Bound Will* and the Catechism.” From Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works: Letters III*, vol. 50 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 172-73.

⁵⁸For family discipleship perceptions and practices within other streams of the Reformation see Barbara Pitkin, “The Heritage of the Lord: Children in the Theology of John Calvin,” in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 160-93; Keith Graber Miller, “Complex Innocence, Obligatory Nurture, and Parental Vigilance: The Child in the Work of Menno Simons,” in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 194-226.

⁵⁹Anthony Fletcher, “Prescription and Practice: Protestantism and the Upbringing of Children: 1560-1700,” in *The Church and Childhood*, ed. Diana Wood (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 331.

also made popular family discipleship terminology, including “family religion,” “family worship,” and “family reformation.”⁶⁰

Well known Puritans including William Gouge (1575–1653), Richard Baxter (1615–1691), Matthew Henry (1662–1714), and Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) explicitly charged their congregations and fellow clergy to make family discipleship a priority. William Gouge ministered in London as a lecturer and rector at St. Anne Blackfriars for nearly 50 years.⁶¹ A popular preacher, Gouge was also a prolific author. His largest work, a commentary on the book of Hebrews, totaled over one thousand pages and was originally published in three volumes.⁶² His second largest work, *Of Domestic Duties*, is nearly seven hundred pages in length; it is perhaps the longest single treatise on the duties and dynamics of the Christian household.⁶³ Based on Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and divided into eight sections, *Of Domestic Duties*, addresses the various members and roles within the household including (1) the entire family, (2) marriage, (3) wives, (4) husbands, (5) children, (6) parents, (7) servants, and (8) masters.⁶⁴

Gouge, in very clear fashion, assigns child faith formation responsibly primarily to parents. He contends, “The responsibility and office of parents put them under an obligation to teach their children piety, for they are made watchmen over their children.”⁶⁵ Furthermore, anticipating objection to his position, Gouge provides seven arguments supporting parental responsibility over professional clergy responsibility. His arguments included (1) strong biblical evidence and support, (2) parental authority, (3)

⁶⁰Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 431.

⁶¹Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007), 285.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 287.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 288.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, ed. Scott Brown and Joel R. Beeke, vol. 3, *A Holy Vision for Raising Children* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013), loc. 1825. Kindle

the need for daily interaction and instruction which only the parent can provide, (4) parental insight and intimacy with their children, (5) parental familiarity, (6) parental love, and (7) practicality.⁶⁶ Gouge notes that a single minister cannot possibly instruct well the many children under his care. “It is therefore required,” he says, “that each parent instruct his own children.”⁶⁷

Not only does Gouge command parents to disciple their own children, he provides practical instruction as to how it can be done. He offers eight “directions” for parents to teach their children “true piety.”⁶⁸ First, he establishes Bible as the foundation for all “principles of piety.” Second, he suggests early exposure to the Bible through family reading. Third, he prescribes daily catechesis. Fourth, he encourages parents to leverage daily interaction and occurrences for religious training. Fifth, Gouge recommends that parents expose children to the ordinances as a means of discipleship and instruction. Sixth, he tells parents are to recount the great works of the Lord to their children. Seventh, he orders parents to select “religious” teachers to reinforce parental instruction and influence. Lastly, Gouge reminds parents that their actions are just as important as their words and instruction. He argues that in addition to teaching godliness, it is necessary to model it for one’s children.⁶⁹ According to Beeke, *On Domestical Duties* is still relevant today and presents “timeless” parenting advice.⁷⁰

Richard Baxter, a Nonconformist who ministered in Kidderminster for nearly twenty years, was also firm in his convictions towards parental family discipleship

⁶⁶Gouge, *Godly Home*, loc. 1825.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid., loc. 1853.

⁶⁹Ibid., loc. 1855-1903.

⁷⁰Beeke, *Meet the Puritans*, 288. Additionally, Beeke notes that Gouge acknowledged and addressed modern concepts including companionable marriage, child and adolescent psychology, and child-abuse.

duties.⁷¹ For example, he considered the neglect of household prayer and Scripture reading to be a sin worthy of church discipline.⁷² During his pastorate in Kidderminster, he ordered his church leaders and fellow pastors to have a “special eye upon families” in order to hold fathers accountable to this responsibility.⁷³ Baxter personally visited many homes during the course of his ministry in Kidderminster to ensure households were practicing spiritual disciplines together.⁷⁴ He met with each family for an hour and provided counsel and resources for their edification—generally a book he authored.⁷⁵ The home visits proved to be effective and fruitful evidenced by Baxter’s own account of his time in Kidderminster:

On the Lord’s-days there was no disorder to be seen in the streets, but you might hear an hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons as you passed through the streets. In a word, when I came tither first there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name, and when I came away there were some streets where there was not passed one family in the side of a street that did not so, and that did not, by professing serious godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity.⁷⁶

Written between 1664 and 1665—three years after the end of Baxter’s ministry in Kidderminster—*A Christian Directory: Or, Sum of Practical Theology and Cases of Conscience* contains entire sections devoted to practical family discipleship instruction.⁷⁷ Baxter directs parents to hold family worship in their homes twice each weekday.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Baxter dedicates an entire chapter describing how families are to devote

⁷¹Beeke, *Meet the Puritans*, 62.

⁷²Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, ed. William Brown (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 100-101.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Beeke, *Meet the Puritans*, 63.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Richard Baxter and J. M. Lloyd Thomas, *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, ed. N. H. Keeble (London: Dent, 1974), 79.

⁷⁷Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2000, 1845), 3.

⁷⁸Ibid., 467.

themselves to spending the Sabbath together in worship, prayer, and rest.⁷⁹

In addition to offering practical family discipleship instruction for parents, Baxter protested certain church practices and laws that deprived fathers of their parental authority regarding spiritual and religious matters. Published in 1689—two years before his death—*The English Nonconformity, As Under King Charles II and King James II: Truly Stated and Argued* presents what is likely Baxter’s final and fullest argument regarding the Nonconformist controversy.⁸⁰ In this work, Baxter articulates many of his contentions with the Church of England, some of which he believed prohibited and hindered parents from fulfilling their biblical duties. For example, Baxter argues fathers, not church patrons, should have the right and freedom to choose which congregation his family would join and which pastor and teacher his children would sit under. Citing the concept of “Family-government” and its antecedence to “Princes or States Government,” Baxter argues, “If no man may justly choose for my children, a tutor, a trade, a physician, or diet, or clothing, rather than myself, nor may impose husbands or wives on them, much less may any chose for them against my will and my choice, an office on which their salvation is specifically concerned.”⁸¹ Baxter also protested the church practice of prohibiting parents from attending and participating in their child’s baptismal rite.⁸² Instead of abdicating the parental commitment and responsibility of Christian education and training to godparents, as was the custom in medieval baptismal rites, Baxter prescribes a different approach. He describes this Nonconformist approach to child baptism as such:

But the usual way of Nonconformists is to elude the canon, and to agree privately

⁷⁹Baxter, *Practical Works*, 470-73.

⁸⁰William Orme, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: With a Life of the Author, and a Critical Examination of His Writings* (London: Mills, Jowett, and Mills, 1830), 639.

⁸¹Richard Baxter, *The English Nonconformity, As Under King Charles II and King James II: Truly Stated and Argued* (London: The Bible and Three Crowns, 1689), 170.

⁸²Baxter, *The English Nonconformity*, 186.

with the godfathers to be but witnesses or seconds, and that the parent himself will be there present, and when the questions are put to the godfathers, will show his consent by bowing, tho' he may not speak.⁸³

Matthew Henry, another Nonconformist English minister well known for his commentary on the whole Bible, was also strong proponent of family discipleship. Most notably, his commentary on 1 Corinthians 16:19, proposes—possibly incorrectly—the phrase οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίᾳ refers exclusively to the family belonging to Aquila and Priscilla.⁸⁴ “It is very probable,” Henry, argues, “that the family itself is called the church in the house.”⁸⁵ Although debatable, Henry’s interpretation of οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίᾳ clearly formed his theological and philosophical foundation of family discipleship.

In 1704—the same year he began work on his commentary on the whole Bible—Henry delivered and published a sermon promoting family discipleship entitled *A Church in the House*.⁸⁶ Beginning with 1 Corinthians 16:19 as the primary text, the sermon outlines the nature, motives, benefits, and specific applications of discipleship in the home. The following paragraph best captures the thesis and purpose of the sermon:

Masters of families, who preside in the other affairs of the house, must go before their households in the things of God. They must be Prophets, Priests, and Kings in their own families, and as such they must keep up family-doctrine, family-worship, and family-discipline. Then is there a church in the house, and this is the family-religion that I am persuading you to.⁸⁷

Much of what Henry taught regarding family discipleship can be traced and credited to the practices of his father, Rev. Philip Henry. Matthew Henry was profoundly impacted

⁸³Baxter, *The English Nonconformity*, 187.

⁸⁴In *A Church in the House*, Henry presents two interpretations of οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίᾳ. The first, and most widely accepted, interprets it as a meeting or gathering of Christians in the home for public worship. See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 835. The second—Henry’s preferred interpretation—argues it refers to Aquila and Priscilla’s household. Henry writes, “But others think it is meant only of their own family, and the strangers within their gates, among whom there was so much piety and devotion, that it might well be called a church, or religious house.” From Matthew Henry, *A Church in the House* (Peterborough: H&E Publishing, 2018), 1.

⁸⁵Matthew Henry, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, vol. 9 (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1873), 242.

⁸⁶Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 327-28.

⁸⁷Henry, *A Church in the House*, 11.

and shaped by the family discipleship efforts of his father, evidenced by the entire chapter he devotes to “Domestic Religion” in his father’s biography.⁸⁸ The chapter personally details the family discipleship experience of Matthew Henry as a child under his father’s leadership, and provides a rare perspective into eighteenth-century Christian family life. For example, Henry describes the morning and evening family worship experiences his father instituted noting the format, flow, elements, and effect of his father’s efforts.⁸⁹ In addition to the technical elements, Henry also describes the qualitative aspects of his father’s family discipleship efforts, best captured in the following account:

He managed his daily family worship so as to make it a pleasure, and not a task, to his children and servants; for he was seldom long, and never tedious in the service: the variety of duties made it more pleasant; so that none who joined with him had reason to say, "Behold, what a weariness is it!"⁹⁰

Like many of his Puritan contemporaries, Henry anticipated and wrote often of revival. He believed and argued an increase in “family religion,” and that alone, would bring about the spiritual and religious revival his contemporaries desired to experience.⁹¹ Decades later, on the other side of the Atlantic, Jonathan Edwards would connect these same two subjects—family discipleship and revival—in a personal letter written to a fellow minister.⁹²

Edwards, a New England Congregationalist minister and theologian, often considered the last great Puritan, was a strong proponent and practitioner of family

⁸⁸J. B. Williams, *Memoir of the Rev. Philip Henry by His Son Rev. Matthew Henry, the Commentator* (New York: American Tract Society, 1853), 78-111.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 93-95.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 100.

⁹¹Matthew Henry, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Matthew Henry; (His Unfinished Commentary Excepted;) Being a Collection of All His Treatises, Sermons, and Tracts, as Published by Himself: And A Memoir of His Life*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: A. Fullarton and Co., 1855), 248.

⁹²Jonathan Edwards, “An Account of the Revival of Religion in Northampton 1740-1742.” in *Jonathan Edwards on Revival* (East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 1965), 158.

discipleship. Known for employing strong language and graphic imagery in his sermons, Edwards admonishes parents to be as concerned about the “welfare of children’s’ souls” as they were about their physical well-being.⁹³ Additionally, he employs scare tactics, similar to those found in famous sermons such as *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, in certain sermons directed at parents regarding their neglect of parental obligations.⁹⁴ For example, Brekus notes, “In a sermon based on Ephesians 6:4, he [Edwards] asked them [parents] to imagine how they would feel if their children died young,” and were destined to Hell due to their neglect of parental duties and lack of discipleship in the home.⁹⁵ It is possible Edward’s employed this alarmist preaching method and style to combat changes he observed in the Puritan family and lifestyle during his tenure in pastoral ministry.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, social, economic, and philosophical factors were reshaping the familial landscape and threatening the traditional Puritan way of life. Brekus points to three particular pressures: “the growth of the market economy, the breakdown of the patriarchal family, and especially the new Enlightenment faith in human reason.”⁹⁶ The market economy took fathers out of the home, off of the farm, and into factory. Concurrently, children, often in search of employment or more land to farm, began to depart from home and leave parental authority earlier than previous generations. In 1758, at the age of 54, Edward’s died, and by the end of the eighteenth century, so had the dominance of Puritan lifestyle in New England.⁹⁷ Consequently, family discipleship practices and perceptions decreased, and the idea of the home as a “little church” began

⁹³Jonathan Edwards, “Sermon on Psalm 139:23” quoted in Catherine A. Brekus, “Children of Wrath, Children of Grace: Jonathan Edwards and the Puritan Culture of Child Rearing” in *The Child and Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 321.

⁹⁴Bunge, *Child and Christian Thought*, 321.

⁹⁵Ibid., 321-22.

⁹⁶Ibid., 306.

⁹⁷Brekus, *Children of Wrath, Children of Grace*, 324-25.

to fall out of prominence.⁹⁸

Modern Age (1800–Present)

The overall family discipleship conversation shifted in nineteenth-century writings. Due to the aforementioned decline in practice, Jones observes, “The emphasis of descriptions of family worship tend to shift from descriptions of how family worship should occur to discussions of how family worship had declined coupled with calls for recovery of the practice.”⁹⁹ Two notable forerunners of this era were James Hamilton and James Alexander. Hamilton, a Scottish minister, produced a pamphlet in 1843 titled “The Church in the House.”¹⁰⁰ His twenty-three-page family worship primer urges and instructs parents in family worship.¹⁰¹ Beginning with an interrogation regarding the current family discipleship practices (“Do you worship God with your children?” “Is there a Church in your house?” “Would he [God] find you commanding your children and your household, and teaching them the way of the Lord?”), Hamilton lists four benefits of practicing regular family worship.¹⁰² After an argument to convince his reader of the benefits of family worship, Hamilton provides “plain directions” for family worship including singing, reading Scripture, and prayer.¹⁰³ Finally, he concludes his case with an emotional appeal to fathers:

And, in the meanwhile, let your united worship be so frequent and so fervent, that when you are taken from their [children] head, the one whose sad office it is to supply your place, as a priest of that household, shall not be able to select a chapter or a psalm, with which your living image and voice are not associated, and in which you, though dead, are yet speaking to them.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸Jones, *Family Ministry Models*, 163.

⁹⁹Jones, *Family Ministry Models*, 165.

¹⁰⁰James Hamilton, “*The Church in the House*” (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1843).

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 3-10.

¹⁰³Hamilton, *The Church in the House*, 10-17.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 22-23.

James Alexander, a Presbyterian minister in New York, cites Hamilton's above work in his book *Thoughts on Family Worship*, published that same decade in 1847.¹⁰⁵

Alexander's "small" book is a thorough and robust treatise on family worship totaling nearly two hundred and sixty pages.¹⁰⁶ Samuel Philips, Andrew Murray, and Henry Cope also produced noteworthy family discipleship works during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁰⁷

In addition to numerous works and writings regarding family discipleship, two noteworthy family discipleship models emerged within the North American church during the modern era—Samuel Dike's *Home Department* and Margaret M. Sawin's *Family Cluster*. In short, both Dike (1839–1913) and Sawin (1922–1995) desired to see an increase in the level of spiritual activity and discipleship in the home and family. They believed new programs and methods were necessary to equip parents for the task of family discipleship. Unfortunately, both movements were short-lived; however, a close examination of their history, purpose, organization, methods, and demise informs the contemporary family discipleship conversation.

By the late nineteenth century, associations, societies, committees, and classes dominated the religious landscape of North America.¹⁰⁸ Dike, a Congregational minister in Vermont and member of The National Divorce Reform League (NDRL)—later renamed The National League for the Protection of the Family (NLPF)—believed these

¹⁰⁵James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847), 3.

¹⁰⁶Alexander describes his work as "small"; however, it was one of the most significant and lengthy specific pieces on the subject to date.

¹⁰⁷See Samuel Philips, *The Christian Home* (January 1860): 1. *Literary Reference Center* (accessed May 7, 2018); Andrew Murray, *The Children for Christ: Thoughts for Christian Parents on the Consecration of Home Life* (New Kensington, England: Whitaker House, 1887); Henry F. Cope, *Religious Education in the Family* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1915).

¹⁰⁸Mark Senter describes this era as the period of Associations (1824-75) and Youth Societies (1881-1925). Mark H. Senter, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010). 95-188.

associations and societies were drawing attention and energy away from the family and discouraging family discipleship. In the 1898 annual report of the NLFP, Dike wrote the following regarding his concern:

One institution, however, holds the ground more universally than any other, though much of its strength may have gone to build up others [societies, classes, and committees]. This is the family. But, while receiving much in return for all that is done for it, the Family has not yet had anything like the care and inventive skill which have given us that remarkable succession of societies, classes, and committees within the local church that have marked the history of the Church for a century. Its own powers for constructive work have been greatly neglected.¹⁰⁹

A strong proponent and advocate of the home and family, Dike describes the family as a “great natural instrument of religion,” and contends, “The most effective work of religion and education depend on the Family to an immeasurable degree.”¹¹⁰ Indeed, he devoted much of his writing to the reinstitution and preservation of the family as “a place for religious and moral discipline.”¹¹¹ Dike argues societies, classes, and committees were pulling religious training and activity out of the home and into the church in the same way the industrial revolution and market economy pulled industrial training out of the home and into the factory.¹¹² Instead of rejecting these programs outright, Dike introduced a model for family discipleship and ministry that leveraged the most prominent church program of the late nineteenth century—the Sunday school.

Dike named his model The Home Department of Sunday school, and in 1885 The Congregational Sunday School Society officially adopted it “for the purpose of securing the study of the Bible and inducing religious activity in the home.”¹¹³ Dike’s

¹⁰⁹Samuel W. Dike, *The National League for the Protection of the Family: Abstract of Annual Reports 1898* (Montpelier: Vermont Watchman and State Journal Press, 1898), 14.

¹¹⁰Samuel L. Dike, “The Family in the History of Christianity,” Lecture at American Institute of Christian Philosophy, Asbury Park, NJ, July 27th, 1885; Samuel W. Dike, *The National Divorce Reform League: An Abstract of its Annual Reports 1885* (Montpelier: Vermont Watchman and State Journal Press, 1885), 3-4.

¹¹¹Dike, *NLFP: Abstract of Annual Reports 1898*, 14.

¹¹²E. M. Fergusson, *Church-School Administration* (New York: Revell, 1922), 125.

¹¹³M. C. Hazard, *Home Classes or the Home Department of the Sunday-School: Its History, Purpose and Plan, Organization, Methods, Requisites and Difficulties* (Boston: Congregational Sunday-

model was simple. Using material and quarterlies provided by the church, Home Department members pledged “to spend not less than a half-hour each Sunday in the study of the Sunday school lesson for the day.”¹¹⁴ By leveraging the format and materials of the Sunday school, Dike believed “he could do something towards introducing the systematic study of the Bible in the home.”¹¹⁵ Instead of relying on a Sunday school teacher to instruct and form children according to the Scriptures, the Home Department championed parents to disciple their children. Interest in Dike’s model was widespread and adoption was swift. Unfortunately, Dike’s original intention and purpose for establishing the Home Department was lost in 1886 when his idea was assimilated into another Sunday school invention—the Home Class.¹¹⁶

The Home Class of the Sunday school was the idea of W. A. Duncan, another Congregationalist minister and contemporary of Dike. Duncan’s idea, while similar to Dike’s, had a foundationally different purpose. In 1881, Duncan witnessed a woman teaching Sunday school lesson to a group of boys and girls on her front porch. Curious, he further investigated the situation and learned the children lived too far from the church to attend a Sunday school class. The experience inspired Duncan to extend “the boundaries of the Sunday school movement to the farthest reach of the parish,” and led to the creation of the Home Class.¹¹⁷ This motivation—expanding the reach and size of Sunday school departments—differed from Dike’s Home Department’s motivation. Dike made the distinction clear in a pamphlet he published in 1904 titled, “The Beginnings of

School and Publishing Society, 1895). 27-28.

¹¹⁴Hazard, *Home Classes*, 29.

¹¹⁵Ibid. 28.

¹¹⁶M. C. Hazard, *Home Classes and the Home Department of the Sunday-School: History, Purpose and Plan, Organization, Methods, Requisites and Difficulties*, rev. ed. (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1906), 40.

¹¹⁷Hazard, *Home Classes*, 9-10.

the Home Department of the Sunday School.”¹¹⁸ In the pamphlet, Dike argues that his Home Department is not merely a modification or development of Duncan’s Home Classes (Duncan’s idea appears to predate Dike’s), but something entirely different.¹¹⁹ The intent of the Home Class was to increase Sunday school attendance and scope, whereas the genesis and purpose of the Home Department was to increase family discipleship.

Dike’s 1904 pamphlet successfully convinced his denomination and academia to properly credit his idea as distinct from Duncan’s; however, the Home Department, according to Hazard, “never realized the supreme purpose for which it was formed.”¹²⁰ In the revised (1906) edition of *Home Classes and The Home Department of the Sunday-School*, Hazard identifies the cause:

The Home Department, however, did not in all respects follow its first outlines. The development emphasized the family less and the individual more. The securing of the study of the Bible by the family, as a family, in almost all instances proved to be impracticable. In those families where there was the disposition, the children already were in the Sunday-school and parents were encouraging them in the study of Scriptures. In other cases the parents were too indifferent or too sensible of their own unfitness to undertake it.

The union with Duncan’s Home Class idea was the beginning of the end for Dike’s Home Department. Churches primarily adopted the model as a means to increase their Sunday school reach and rosters, not as a strategy to encourage family discipleship. Speaking to its demise, Jones and Stinson note, “The Home Department dwindled to a

¹¹⁸“Review of *The Beginnings of the Home Department of the Sunday School*,” in *Hartford Seminary Record* 14 (Hartford, CT: Hartford Seminary Press, 1904), 78.

¹¹⁹Addison P. Foster. “Sunday School Matters,” *The Advance*, June 4, 1903.

¹²⁰Hazard, *Home Classes*, 32. It is worth noting that the preface of Hazard’s revised (1906) edition of *Home Classes and the Home Department of the Sunday School* states, “Since its first [1895] issue new things have come to light and others are seen with clearer vision. Particularly it has seemed that a fuller statement is needed of the origin of the first Home Department, as it was conceived and introduced by Dr. S. W. Dike, of its union with Dr. W. A. Duncan’s Home Class in 1886, and of the part borne in its development by Dr. A. E. Dunning and the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society.” In the second edition, Hazard alters the title from *Home Classes or The Home Department to Home Classes and The Home Department*. Additional edits were made to second edition to properly credit Dike and distinguish his idea from Duncan’s.

literature distribution ministry to shut-ins and, in the end, expired completely.”¹²¹

Nearly one hundred years after the institution of Dike’s the model, another New York minister and religious educator, Margaret M. Sawin, developed and implemented a new strategy aimed at equipping parents, discipling children, and strengthening families—The Family Cluster Model.¹²² In the late 1960s, after studying current religious education practices and methods in the local church, Sawin became convinced the predominant Sunday school model was insufficient.¹²³ She argued classroom instruction, while effective for religious *education*, is less effective in regards to religious *nurturing*.¹²⁴ “Religious education,” she contends, “cannot be taught effectively without a foundation of religious nurturing.”¹²⁵ Sawin believed that foundation is best established in the home by parents, because religious nurturing requires a strong interpersonal relationship between the instructor and the student.

Sawin, like Dike before her, was a strong proponent of the family as a disciple-making institution. Her professional work and study convinced her of the significance the family in the faith formation process. She maintains, “In my developmental studies of the manner in which humans evolve in a faith process, I became aware that the family has a profound influence on the nurturance of a religious belief system; yet the church does very little to help families and parents in their task of nurturing.”¹²⁶ In 1969, she accepted

¹²¹Jones and Stinson, *Family Ministry Models*, 169.

¹²²While Sawin’s model appears to be the first, similar models emerged in the 1970s. These models have become collectively termed “Family Growth Groups.” For a description of other models, see Douglas Andrew Anderson, “Guidelines for the Theory and Practice of the Family Growth Group in the Local Church” (PhD diss., Boston University, 1973), 194-240.

¹²³Margaret M. Sawin, *Family Enrichment with Family Clusters* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1979), 26.

¹²⁴*Ibid.* Sawin defines religious education as, “Formalized teaching about a specific religious belief structure.” She defines religious nurturing as, “Learning from the combination of informal life experiences and word meanings which interpret such experiences.”

¹²⁵Sawin, *Family Enrichment with Family Clusters*, 26.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*

the position of Minister of Education at the First Baptist Church of Rochester, New York, determined to address this shortfall.¹²⁷ Instead of eliminating insufficient programs and practices within the church, Sawin took the same approach as Dike; she expanded them to more effectively minister to the family.

The Family Cluster Model Sawin developed and first implemented at First Baptist Church of Rochester, New York, was built around a vision she describes as “that of developing family education in the church to facilitate interpersonal religious growth of members within the family unit.”¹²⁸ She defines a Family Cluster as:

A group of four or five complete family units which contract to meet together periodically over an extended period of time for shared educational experiences related to their living in relationship within their families. A Cluster provides mutual support, training in skills, which facilitate the family living in relationship, and celebration of their life and beliefs together.¹²⁹

The “shared experiences,” called Cluster Sessions, consist of approximately five different experiential elements: pre-session activities, a common meal, singing, a structured educational experience, and a conclusion or evaluation.¹³⁰ Each element has intentional purpose and contributes to the overall goals of the session. According to Sawin, religious education is a basic goal of the Family Cluster. She describes the goal: “To provide a joint experience where adults share their concerns regarding the meaning of life’s experience [and] . . . children can deal existentially with their real world experiences and check them out amidst the group’s support and value system.”¹³¹

In 1970, under Sawin’s leadership and care, two different clusters were established within her congregation. One of the clusters consisted of four nuclear families and the other was made up of five nuclear families. In 1971, the total number of active

¹²⁷Sawin, *Family Enrichment with Family Clusters*, 27.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid., 48.

¹³¹Anderson, *Guidelines*, 199-200.

clusters at the First Baptist Church of Rochester, New York grew to five; by 1972, other churches in the area began implementing her model.¹³² Anderson notes that by 1973, Sawin's model "attracted national attention across several Protestant denominations."¹³³ Throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s, Sawin and others continued to publish material and promote the model.¹³⁴ It appears, however, by the middle of the 1980s, interest in Sawin's Family Cluster model plateaued; in 1990, Sawin stopped providing and distributing Family Cluster material.¹³⁵

Two possible factors account for the decline of the Family Cluster model: (1) assimilation into another, comprehensive movement, and (2) resistance from competing programs. The Family Cluster model originated during the Family and Marriage Enrichment era of the 1970s and 80s.¹³⁶ Sawin's model was just one of dozens of new programs designed to strengthen and enrich family life. While Sawin's model did not survive, many programs did, including various versions of family camps and marriage retreats. Many of these contemporary enrichment programs employ the pioneering concepts and experiences Sawin developed for her model.

Additionally, Sawin's model challenged and experienced opposition from another, more established religious-educational model: the Sunday school. Sawin recognized the potential resistance to her model and emphasized the need to consider the

¹³²Sawin, *Family Enrichment with Family Clusters*, 29.

¹³³Anderson, *Guidelines*, 198.

¹³⁴See Margaret M. Sawin, "An Overall View of the Family Cluster Experience: Historically, Leadership-wise, Family-wise," in *Religious Education* 69, (March - April 1974) 184-192, ATLA Religion Database; Margaret M. Sawin, *Hope for Families* (New York: William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1982); Del and Trudy Vander Haar, "Family Cluster Education," in *Facing the Future: Church and Family Together*, ed. Gary Collins (Waco, TX: Books, 1976), 43-59.

¹³⁵In 1976, Sawin established Family Clustering Inc. to resource and train churches interested in implementing the model. The company was dissolved in 1990 and has remained inactive.

¹³⁶For more on this era, see Herbert A. Otto, "Marriage and Family Enrichment Programs: An Overview of a Movement," in *Marriage and Family Enrichment: New Perspectives and Programs*, ed. Herbert A. Otto (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 11-27.

systematic context of cluster within the entire church's educational program.¹³⁷ Edward Thornton, Sawin's colleague, reports, "[The Family Cluster] involves the implicit redefinition of the purpose of the church," and warned of "major confrontation."¹³⁸ The Sunday school's educational monopoly created resistance, making it difficult for Sawin's model to gain wider practice in Protestant churches.

The Home Department and Family Cluster models were strategic attempts to equip and provide parents with the resources and support needed to fulfill their biblical responsibility: child faith formation and discipleship. Unfortunately, both were short-lived, movements. Their concepts and ideas, however, proved to be effective means of increasing family discipleship practices and perceptions through local church efforts. Perhaps the models themselves were not flawed; could context and timing be blamed for their failure? When the Home Department and Family Clusters were introduced, religious education and spiritual formation primarily occurred within the church. The dominant educational program was the Sunday school. Not only did it segregate ages, thereby separating family members, but it also concentrated discipleship within a classroom. In an effort to equip parents and encourage family discipleship, Dike and Sawin's models expanded the Sunday school's reach physically and demographically; they pulled religious education and discipleship into the home and across generational lines.

Similarly, the very successful contemporary Home Group or Cell Group movement pulls religious education and spiritual formation outside of the church, and into the home. However, they do not generally encourage intergenerational activity. By all observations, the Home Group or Cell Group movement appears to be gaining momentum within North American churches. With slight modifications, it is possible that this movement can be leveraged as a powerful vehicle for equipping parents for family

¹³⁷Anderson, *Guidelines*, 209.

¹³⁸Ibid.

discipleship.

Conclusion

This chapter examined historical foundations for family discipleship. Supporting the biblical model described in chapter 2, historical evidence suggests God calls parents, equipped by the church, to disciple their children. Early Christianity, particularly the house-church era, practiced and promulgated a biblical home-plus-church prescription for child faith formation. Church leaders and clergy partnered with parents, encouraging and equipping them in family discipleship. Unfortunately, this biblical balance of child faith formation experienced periods of dissymmetry, particularly during the Middle Ages and early modern era. During these two periods in Christian history, child faith formation appears to have been concentrated within the church, led and executed primarily by professional clergy. Instead of fulfilling a supportive and supplemental role for parents and the home, the church overstepped its bounds and as a result, family discipleship perceptions and practices suffered.

Fortunately, following the middle ages, through the writings and efforts of family discipleship champions such as Martin Luther, Richard Baxter, Matthew Henry and Jonathan Edwards, Christ's church course corrected and the home-church balance recovered. A second family discipleship resurgence appears to be on the horizon following the decline during the early modern era. Pioneers like James Alexander, James Hamilton, Samuel Dike, and Margaret Sawin paved the way for contemporary and future family discipleship advocates. Although the emphasis of the family's role and significance in child faith formation has fluctuated, the family discipleship thread weaves its way, unbroken, through all of Christianity's two thousand year history.

CHAPTER 4

MINISTRY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 established a theological and historical foundation for child faith formation, namely a home-plus-church model of discipleship. Churches are to partner with and equip parents, supporting them in their biblical responsibility of discipling their children through family discipleship. The purpose of this project was to develop a ministry plan for implementing a family discipleship model at The Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas. This chapter summarizes the implementation of the ministry project designed to leverage Home Groups at TVC as a vehicle for equipping and training parents in family discipleship. Six key goals of the project included determining current practices regarding the care and consideration of children in Home Groups, developing and teaching a curriculum for HGFDT, pre- and post-course surveys, and developing and evaluating a ministry plan for implementing HGFDT to the majority of Home Groups at TVC. The implementation of the project began on July 20, 2017, and continued through January 20, 2019.

Summary of Project Goals

This project was structured around six goals. The first goal was to investigate and determine current practices regarding the care and consideration of children in Home Groups at TVC. This goal was measured by administering a questionnaire to all active Home Group leaders at the Flower Mound Campus of TVC.¹ This goal was considered a success when at least one hundred Home Group leaders completed the questionnaire.

¹See appendix 2.

The second goal was to assess the current family discipleship practices and perceptions among parents active in Home Groups at TVC. This goal was measured by administering the pre-FDPPS to parents of twelve Home Groups at TVC.² This goal was considered a success when at least thirty-five households completed the FDPPS.

The third goal was to develop a training curriculum and model for meeting for Home Group leaders based upon the Family Discipleship Time element of the Framework for Family Discipleship created by the Next Generation Ministries at TVC.³ A panel of pastors and next generation ministers used a rubric to evaluate the biblical accuracy, teaching scope and sequence, and applicability of the curriculum.⁴ This goal was considered a success when the panel deemed the curriculum meet or exceeded at least 90 percent of the sufficient criterion.

The fourth goal was to recruit at least twelve Home Group leaders to participate in the HGFDT curriculum and implement HGFDT into the regular rhythm of their Home Group gatherings. This goal succeeded when a minimum of twelve Home Group leaders attended and completed the class, and each Home Group executed a minimum of three HGFDTs.

The fifth goal was to increase the practice and perceptions of family discipleship in families that participated in HGFDT. This goal was measured by administering the FDPPS to the same members of the twelve Home Groups who took the initial survey including the Home Group leaders who attended the class and executed a minimum of three HGFDTs. This goal succeeded when the t test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-FDPPS scores among parents who participated in HGFDT.

²See appendix 3.

³See appendix 4.

⁴See appendix 5.

The sixth goal was to develop a family discipleship ministry plan that leverages Home Groups at TVC as a vehicle for training parents in family discipleship.⁵ A panel of communications experts and content strategists utilized a rubric to evaluate the content, plausibility, scope, and practicality of the plan.⁶ This goal succeeded when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators meet or exceed the sufficient level.

Goal 1 Results

The first goal of this project was to investigate and determine current practices regarding the care and consideration of children in Home Groups at TVC. On January 20, 2017, a meeting occurred with the Groups Pastor at TVC to discuss the possibility of partnering with his department as part of this ministry project. He agreed that the care and consideration of children in Home Groups was a weakness in the overall philosophy of Home Groups, and that this partnership would be mutually beneficial. He gave consent and permission to send a questionnaire to all current Home Group leaders at the Flower Mound campus of TVC.

The questionnaire included twelve multiple-choice questions, two data-gathering questions, and one open-ended item. The questionnaire was created and distributed through the online survey company Survey Monkey. Survey items were designed to determine current practices regarding the care and consideration of children in Home Groups. The first six questions collected information related to general Home Group dynamics. These questions applied to all Home Groups, regardless of the presence of children in the group. They gathered data related to Home Groups' gathering regularity, location, curriculum content, numerical size, and participant age.

⁵See appendix 6.

⁶See appendix 7.

Questions 7 through 13 collected information regarding the presence and practice of children in the Home Group. These questions did not apply to Home Groups without children. They were designed to gather information regarding children and the formal Home Group gathering.

On August 23, 2017, the questionnaire was electronically sent through email to every Home Group leader at the Flower Mound campus. A total of 307 individual invitations went out.⁷ Zero emails bounced back, and four individuals chose to opt out of the Survey Monkey distribution list. The questionnaire closed to responses on September 13, 2017. A total of 139 individuals responded to the questionnaire. One hundred and twenty-eight respondents completed the entire questionnaire and eleven individuals partially completed it.

One hundred forty respondents answered question 1. Seven percent have been leading for less than six months. Nine percent have been leading between six months and one year. Seventeen percent have been leading between one year and two years. Twenty-one percent have been leading between two years and three years. Forty-six percent have been leading for more than three years. Approximately half of all respondents have been leading for more than three years. Table 2 displays the complete results of question 1.

One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered question 2. Eleven respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. Of those who answered, 61 percent reported their group meets weekly. Twenty-six percent reported their group meets bi-monthly.

⁷The majority of Home Groups at TVC are led by married couples, hence the greater number of individual invitations—307—versus the total number of Home Groups—170. Home Group leaders were instructed to complete only one survey response per Home Group.

Table 2. Tenure of Home Group leaders

Q1. How long have you been leading your Home Group?	Number of Responses
Less than six months	10
Between six months and one year	12
Between one and two years	24
Between two and three years	29
More than three years	65

Thirteen percent reported “other.” The majority of respondents who answered “other” reported their group meets three weeks out of the month. The majority of Home Groups at TVC meet every week. Table 3 displays the complete results of question 2.

Table 3. Frequency of formal Home Group gatherings

Q2. What is the frequency of your formal Home Group gatherings?	Number of Responses
Weekly	79
Bi-monthly	33
Other	17

One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered question 3. Eleven respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. Of those who answered this question, 19 percent reported their rhythm is best described as Bible study. Twelve percent reported their rhythm is best described as Elder-Led Prayer and Bible study. Twenty-eight percent reported their rhythm is best described as Fellowship Meals and Bible study. Thirty-four percent reported their rhythm is best described as Fellowship Meals, Elder-Led Prayer, and Bible study. Six percent reported their rhythm is best described as other. “Other” responses included a variety of meeting types such as worship, men’s and women’s accountability groups, and service opportunities. The majority of Home Groups have a variety to their monthly rhythm. Less than a quarter repeat the same format and type of meeting each week. Table 4 displays

the complete results of question 3.

Table 4. Rhythm of monthly Home Group gatherings

Q3. What best describes the monthly rhythm of your formal Home Group gatherings?	Number of Responses
Bible Study	25
Elder Led Prayer and Bible Study	16
Fellowship Meals and Bible Study	36
Elder Led Prayer, Bible Study, & Fellowship Meals	44
Other	8

One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered question 4. Eleven respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. Of those who answered this question, Seventy-three percent reported they use sermon-based or TVC provided study guides for curriculum. Thirteen percent reported they use a group-selected book or study for curriculum. Three percent reported they have no formal curriculum in place. Eleven percent responded with “other.” The majority of those who answered “other” use a combination of sermon-based and group-selected books or studies. By far, the majority of Flower Mound Home Groups use TVC-provided study guides or sermon-discussion for their curriculum content. Table 5 displays the complete results of question 4.

Table 5. Curriculum content of formal Home Group gathering

Q4. Historically, what best describes the curriculum content of your formal Home Group gathering?	Number of Responses
Sermon-based or TVC provided study guide	94
Group self-selected book or study	17
No formal curriculum	4
Other	14

One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered question 5. Eleven

respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. Of those who answered this question, 96 percent reported a house best describes the location of their formal Home Group gathering. Three percent reported that a public meeting space best describes the location of their formal Home Group gathering. One Home Group chose other and described their location as a public meeting space. Zero groups reported meeting in an apartment. Zero groups also reported meeting on TVC facilities. The overwhelming majority of Home Groups at the Flower Mound campus meet formally in homes. Table 6 displays the complete results of question 5.

Table 6. Location of formal Home Group gathering

Q5. What best describes the location of your formal Home Group gathering?	Number of Responses
Apartment	0
House	124
Public meeting space	4
TVC campus/building	0
Other	1

Question 6 was not a multiple-choice question. It asked for the average adult attendance count of the formal Home Group gathering. One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered this question. Eleven respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. The average attendance count of all Flower Mound Home Groups is twelve adults. The largest group reported an average of twenty-six adults. The smallest group reported an average of five adults.

One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered question 7. Eleven respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. Of those who answered this question, 86 percent reported Home Group members do have children. Fourteen percent reported their Home Group is completely childless; not a single Home Group member currently has a child under eighteen years old. Table 7

displays the complete results of question 7.

Table 7. Children in the Home Group

Q7. Do any Home Group members have children under 18 years of age?	Number of Respondents
Yes	111
No	18

One hundred twenty-two respondents answered question 8. Eighteen respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. This variance is most likely due to the fact that Home Groups without children intentionally skipped this question. Some childless groups chose to answer this question by responding with a “0” in each of the age groupings. Of the 122 respondents who answered this question the largest age grouping is preschool with an average of five children of this age in each Home Group. The second largest age grouping is elementary with an average of four children of this age in each Home Group. The third largest age grouping is middle school with an average of two children of this age in each Home Group. The smallest age grouping is high school with an average of 1.6 children of this age in each Home Group. The total number of all children represented by these 122 Home Groups is 1,162. Table 8 displays the complete results of question 8.

Table 8. Age ranges of children in Home Group

Q8. For each of the age ranges below, approximately how many children are in your Home Group?	Combined number of children
Preschool	477
Elementary	394
Middle School	164
High School	127

One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered question 9. Eleven

respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. Of those respondents who answered this question, 53 percent reported children do not participate at any of the formal Home Group gatherings. Thirty-eight percent reported children do participate at formal Home Group gatherings. Nine percent selected “Does Not Apply-No Children in Group.” According to this data, the number of groups electing to exclude children from all of their formal Home Group gatherings exceeds those that include children. Table 9 displays the complete results of question 9.

Table 9. Children’s presence and participation

Q9. Are children present and do they participate at any of the formal Home Group gatherings?	Number of Respondents
Does not apply-No children in our group	12
Yes	49
No	69

One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered question 10. Eleven respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. Of those respondents who answered this question, 42 percent reported parents are individually responsible for childcare/babysitting. Thirteen percent reported the question does not apply because their group does not have children. Thirteen percent reported the Home Group collectively finds and outsources childcare/babysitting. Eight percent reported that older children in the Home Group watch and care for children while the Home Group is meeting. Six percent reported that adult members of the Home Group take turns caring for children while the Home Group is meeting. Nineteen percent reported that their Home Group’s method for childcare/babysitting was not one of the options listed. The explanations provided by most of those who chose “other” fell into one of two categories. Either the children in the group are old enough to manage and supervise themselves while the Home Group is meeting, or the group meets in such a way

that one week men in the group are responsible for childcare and one week women take on the responsibility. Nearly half of all Home Groups require individual parents to acquire and afford childcare in order to attend the formal gathering. Table 10 displays the complete results of question 10.

Table 10. Childcare when children are not present

Q10. When children are not present during formal Home Group gatherings, what best describes their care?	Number of Respondents
Does not apply-No children in group	17
Parents are responsible for childcare	54
Home Group collectively finds childcare	16
Adult members of the group take turns watching children	8
Older children in the Home Group watch the children	10
Other	24

One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered question 11. Eleven respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. Of the 129 respondents who answered this question, 47 percent reported that children are present and participate only during portions of the gathering that do not require a formal lesson or study (Elder-Led Prayer and Fellowship Meals/Dinners). Twenty percent reported the question does not apply because either their group is childless or their group does not include children in any of its formal gatherings. Six percent responded that children are present during the entire gathering and participate in the same manner as adults in the Home Group. No special modifications are made for children in these groups. These special portions include children’s devotionals and lessons. Twenty-one percent said children are present during other portions of the Home Group gathering that were not listed as options. The majority of the explanations for this response fell into one of three categories. Respondents chose this answer because their children do not attend any portion of the formal Home Group gathering. The children were very young and

either sleep during the gathering or remain near parents the entirety of group time. The majority of groups that elect to include their children do so during gatherings that do not require a formal lesson. Children are participating, but only a small percentage participates in intergenerational Bible study. Table 11 displays the complete results of question 11.

Table 11. Children’s participation in Home Group

Q11. When children are present during formal Home Group gatherings, what best describes their participation?	Number of Respondents
Does not apply-no children in group	26
Children are present during the entire gathering and participate in the same manner as adults in the group (No special modifications made for children).	8
Children are present and participate during portions of the gathering designed specifically for them (Children’s devotional/lesson).	7
Children are present and participate only during portions of the gathering that don’t require a formal lesson or study (Elder Led Prayer & Fellowship Meals/Dinners).	61
Other	27

One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered question 12. Eleven respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. Of the 129 respondents who answered this question, 59 percent reported they do not use the family disciple materials provided for Home Group gatherings. Twenty-eight percent said the question does not apply because their group is childless. Seven percent reported they do not use the material and they were unaware it was provided. Seven percent reported they use the material during formal Home Group gatherings. Unfortunately, there are more respondents unaware the material existed than respondents who use the material. Table 12 displays the complete results of question 12.

Table 12. Utilization of TVC family discipleship resources

Q12. When children are present during formal group gatherings, does your Home Group utilize the Family Discipleship Resource material provided in Home Group Curriculum and/or Weekly Family Discipleship Resources provided by Little Village and Kids Village?	Number of Respondents
Does not apply-no children in group	36
Yes	8
No	76
No and I was unaware that these materials were available	9

One hundred twenty-nine respondents answered question 13. Eleven respondents skipped this particular question or did not complete the entire survey. Of the 129 respondents who answered this question, 55 percent said they are interested in implementing a Family Discipleship Time into the regular rhythm of their Home Group gathering. Forty-five percent said they are not interested. Table 13 displays the complete results of question 13.

Table 13. Interest in HGFDT

Q13. Would you be interested in implementing a “Family Discipleship Time” into the regular rhythm of your Home Group?	Number of Respondents
Yes	71
No	58

The final item asked respondents to provide any additional information regarding children in your Home Group that would be helpful. Fifty-six respondents answered this optional open-ended item. Eighty-four respondents chose not to provide additional information or did not complete the entire survey. The feedback and information gathered from this open-ended item qualified some of the quantifiable data from the survey. For example, approximately ten respondents who exclude children entirely from their formal Home Group gatherings do so because they view the presence

of children in group gatherings as a distraction or hindrance to the purpose of their group time. Another highlight from question fourteen was the number of Home Groups that desire to incorporate children more frequently and intentionally but expressed a lack of knowledge as to why they do not.

This questionnaire was designed to gather data and information regarding two categories Home Groups at the Flower Mound campus of TVC. The first category was the general dynamics of Home Group gatherings. The second category was the care and consideration of children in Home Groups. Analysis of the data revealed relationships between Home Group gathering dynamics and the care and consideration of children in groups. The first finding was that the longer a Home Group leader has been leading his or her group, the less likely the group invites children to participate in any aspect of its formal gathering. Home Group leaders that have been leading between six months and a year have the highest probability of including children in the formal Home Group gathering.

The second finding was that groups that meet weekly are more likely to include children and allow them to participate in the formal Home Group gathering. Groups that meet bi-monthly are less likely to allow children to participate in the formal Home Group gathering. The third finding is that groups that have more variety in the monthly rhythm of their formal group gathering are more likely to include children in their formal Home Group gathering. Home Groups that meet for Bible study only are the least likely to incorporate children in their formal Home Group gathering. The fourth finding was that Home Groups with mostly younger children are more likely to allow them to participate in the formal group gathering than Home Groups with mostly older children.

The final findings are the characteristics of Home Groups most likely to incorporate children through portions of the formal Home Group gathering designed specifically for them. Groups that meet weekly, incorporate variety into their monthly

meeting rhythm, have Home Group leaders that have been leading for less than two years, have mostly preschool and elementary age children, and utilize the family discipleship resources provided by the church are the most likely to incorporate Bible studies and devotionals for children into their formal Home Group gatherings.

Overall, this goal was successfully accomplished. One hundred twenty-eight Home Group leaders completed the questionnaire, thereby surpassing the goal of one hundred respondents. The data gathered from this study is the first of its kind at TVC. The Home Group staff gained vital information and insight into actual Home Group practice and dynamics that will allow them to better serve and equip Home Group leaders. The data and findings related to children in Home Groups provided the information needed to move forward towards a ministry plan for family discipleship at TVC.

Goal 2 Results

The second goal of this project was to assess the current family discipleship practices and perceptions within Home Groups at TVC. This goal was measured by administering the pre-FDPPS to parents in twelve Home Groups at TVC. The FDPPS was selected as the instrument of use due to its strong internal consistency reliability and popular preference in family discipleship studies and research.

On December 6, 2017, an email invitation for a HGFDT training went out to the seventy-one Home Group leaders who responded positively to question 13 of the Home Group leader questionnaire: “Would you be interested in implementing a Family Discipleship Time into the regular rhythm of your formal Home Group gathering?” Twelve Home Group leaders registered for the training and provided a roster of parents represented by their Home Group. Demographics for each household were compiled through the church’s digital membership database. The 12 Home Groups represented 61 families with at least one child. Of the 61 families, the median number of children was

two and the average number of children 2.47. The 61 families contained a total of 149 children. The oldest child living at home in these families was 18 years and the youngest child at the time of the questionnaire was ten months old. The average age of all 149 children was 5.7 years old. Survey participants were recruited from these 61 families.

On January 29, 2018, the pre-FDPPS was electronically sent through email to the 61 households represented by the 12 Home Groups mentioned above. A total of 105 individual invitations went out.⁸ Two emails bounced back and one individual chose to opt out of the Survey Monkey distribution list. The survey closed to responses on February 26, 2017. A total of 45 individuals responded to the survey. Forty-four respondents completed the entire survey and one individual partially completed it. Of the 44 respondents, 25 had to be excluded from the final analysis for one of three reasons: (1) they did not complete the post-FDPPS, (2) they did not provide identical personal identification numbers (PINs) for both surveys, or (3) they failed to participate in at least three HGFDTs. Unfortunately, discarding 25 five survey surveys brought the number of responses below the target quantity set by the second goal. In all, 19 participants were included in the study.

The survey consisted of 16 items were designed to determine family discipleship perceptions and practices. Items 1 through 8 required participants to evaluate family discipleship related statements based on a Likert-type scale.⁹ These items evaluated parents' beliefs, convictions, and attitudes towards family discipleship. The results of items 1 through 8 from the 19 valid responses were as follows.

⁸The FDPPS was sent to sixty-one households. Participants were instructed to complete one survey per household. All households consisted of a husband-wife couple. Some couples provided individually unique emails while others provided a shared email, hence the greater number of individual invitations.

⁹Items 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 are reversed-scored for analysis purposes.

Table 14. Pre-FDPPS items 1-8

Survey Item (N responses)	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule. (19)	2	2	1	6	3	5
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while. (19)	4	3	5	3	3	1
3. The church is where children should receive most of their Bible teaching. (19)	9	9	0	1	0	0
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me. (19)	11	8	0	0	0	0
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together. (19)	10	7	2	0	0	0
6. Parents, particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children. (19)	0	0	0	0	3	16
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others. (19)	11	7	1	0	0	0
8. My church has helped me develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth. (19)	0	1	1	9	6	2

Overall, respondents scored positively regarding family discipleship perceptions. Results were scored using a scale of 1–6 for analysis purposes. The overall mean score for items 1 through 8 was 5.02. Participants responded most positively to item 6: Parents, particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children. The mean for this item was 5.83. On average, parents responded least positively to item 2. The mean for this item was 3.92. Items 3, 4, 6, and 7 addressed the specific biblical mandate for the primacy of parental discipleship. Except for one negative answer to item 3, all 44 respondents affirmed this

biblical mandate.

Questions 9 through 16 required participants to report the frequency of various family discipleship related activities and exercises. Table 15 contains the results of each survey question.

Table 15. Pre-FDPPS questions 9-16

Survey Question (N responses)	Zero	Once	Twice	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	More than 7 times
9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children? (19)	1	0	2	4	5	7
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together, with the television, music and other similar media turned off? (19)	0	1	1	4	6	7
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children? (19)	0	0	3	1	4	11
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities? (19)	0	1	1	3	5	9
13. How many times in the past month has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship times in our home? (19)	0	1	4	4	4	6
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development? (19)	0	1	4	3	5	6
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to	10	4	2	1	1	1
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development? (19)	5	4	5	3	1	1

Results were scored using a scale of 1–6 for analysis purposes. Overall, respondents scored positively regarding family discipleship practices—although less positively than questions family discipleship perceptions. The overall mean score for questions 9 through 16 was 4.15—compared to 5.02 for questions 1 through 8. Participants responded most positively to question 11: “How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?” The mean for this question was 5.17. Overall, parents responded least positively to question 2: “How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?” The mean for this question was 1.89.

This goal was partially accomplished. The pre-FDPPS effectively assessed the current family discipleship practices among select Home Groups at TVC. Unfortunately, due to the discarding of invalid surveys, this goal was not completely accomplished. Thirty-five respondents were needed to accomplish this goal. Ultimately, only 19 respondents had usable data.

Goal 3 Results

The third goal of this project was to develop a training curriculum and method for incorporating Family Discipleship Time within Home Groups at TVC. Curriculum conceptual development began on August 3, 2017. Immediately following the aforementioned conversation with the Home Group Pastor on July 20, 2017, an unexpected invitation was extended to introduce the concept of incorporating children into the formal gathering through a HGFDT to newly forming Home Groups. Fifteen minutes of instruction time was allotted during the second week of Group Connect on October 8, 2017.¹⁰ Although this instruction time did not constitute the time and space

¹⁰Group Connect is a four-week workshop designed to introduce adults to the philosophy, methodology, and practice of Home Groups at TVC.

necessary to train Home Group leaders to incorporate HGFDT, it provided an audience and space to write and refine what would eventually become the training curriculum developed for this project. In addition to the October 8th presentation, a condensed version of the curriculum was presented during the November 12th Group Connect. The final version was completed on January 3, 2018.

The curriculum is composed of 6 sections lasting a total of 80 minutes. The training coincided with Sunday morning worship services, which are also 80 minutes in length. The shortest section, the welcome and introduction, requires 5 minutes. The longest section, the HGFDT, requires 28 minutes. Following the welcome and introduction, participants hear a 10-minute lecture regarding the biblical and theological foundations of childhood. Next, they watch a 5-minute video explaining the biblical foundation of family discipleship followed by a section detailing TVC's framework for family discipleship. Then, participants are introduced to HGFDT and its various elements. Lastly, participants have 15 minutes to practice developing their own HGFDT through a workshop exercise.

Unfortunately, an expert panel was not secured in time and the curriculum was not evaluated before its implementation. On November 19, 2018 an expert panel was formed to review and evaluate the curriculum. The panel consisted of four individuals: (1) an elder and Home Group Pastor with a Doctor of Educational Ministry from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, (2) a children's minister from a Southern Baptist mega-church, (3) a pastor with a Doctor of Philosophy from the Southern Baptist Seminary, and (4) a Professor of Student and Family Ministry with a Doctor of Philosophy from Southwestern Theological Seminary. The panel used an evaluation rubric to review and assess the curriculum based on its biblical faithfulness, scope, methodology, and practicality. Reviewers responded to eight questions with a score of either insufficient, requires attention, sufficient, or exemplary. Table 18 contains the results of the panel's evaluation.

Table 16. Evaluation of HGFDT curriculum

Evaluation Criteria	Insufficient	Requires Attention	Sufficient	Exemplary
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.	0	0	3	1
The content of the curriculum is hermeneutically sound.	0	0	2	2
The curriculum sufficiently covers the topic of Family Discipleship	0	0	4	0
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it addresses	0	0	3	1
The curriculum makes use of various learning styles and approaches.	0	0	3	1
The curriculum sequences content properly	0	0	0	4
The curriculum challenges participants to practice and implement acquired skills.	0	0	3	1
At the end of the class, participants will be able to organize and implement a successful HGFDT on their own	0	0	2	2

According to the panel, the curriculum’s strongest feature was its methodology. All four experts said the sequencing of its content was exemplary and they offered no suggestions or improvements. Reviewers gave two suggestions regarding the use of various learning styles. One reviewer suggested incorporating more group discussion around content and practice. Another reviewer suggested organizing the scenes in the HGFDT video around the HGFDT elements—play, sing, read, and pray.¹¹

According to the panel, the curriculum’s weakest aspects were its biblical faithfulness and scope. Regarding biblical faithfulness, one reviewer recommended

¹¹Adapted from Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 44-50.

utilizing additional passages of Scripture to demonstrate that the family is primary concerning discipleship. He suggested providing Old Testament and New Testament examples that demonstrate that the coming together of the generations is God's normative pattern for His people. Another reviewer suggested expanding the section on the theology of children. Reviewers found the curriculum hermeneutically accurate and sound offering no suggestions or improvements. Two of the reviewers suggested improving the scope of the curriculum by including examples and elements more suitable for families with older children and non-nuclear or non-traditional families. One reviewer said that while the curriculum sufficiently covered the topic of family discipleship within the context of a Home Group, little attention was given to what family discipleship looks like in individual homes. He was concerned that it might not translate into individual homes because families need to know specific plans that work in their contexts.

The panel found the curriculum to be practical. One reviewer expressed slight concern over the quantity of material and time allotted for the training. He said the class time might need to be lengthened. The only other critique regarding practicality was a suggestion to consider different age groups of children. The reviewer noted that most of the examples and videos highlighted preschool age children.

The aforementioned suggestions were incorporated into the curriculum after the training. A group discussion activity was added to section one. Participants are given a biblical passage and instructed to discuss how the passage highlights the inclusion of children into the religious activity or observance mentioned in the passage. Another group discussion activity was added at the beginning of section 5. Participants share and discuss the current demographics of their group and practices regarding the care and consideration of children. The HGFDT video was not reshot or edited; however, additional narration was added to incorporate the play, sing, read, and pray format of HGFDT. A selection of biblical examples—four from the OT and four from the NT—of intergenerational religious gathering and activities was added to section 2. Examples and

suggestions for including middle and high school students were added to section 5.

Special mention to single-parent and non-traditional homes was added to section 5.

This goal was only partially met due to the failure of securing an expert panel to evaluate the curriculum before teaching it. Although the curriculum exceeded the ninety percent sufficient criterion upon its initial evaluation, I was unable to incorporate the expert panel's recommendations and suggested improvements before its implementation.

Goal 4 Results

The fourth goal of this project was to recruit at least 12 Home Group leaders to participate in the HGFDT training and implement HGFDT into the regular rhythm of their Home Group gatherings. As previously stated as part of the second goal, following the Home Group leader questionnaire, 12 Home Groups responded to an invitation to incorporate children into the formal Home Group gathering through a HGFDT. They were given the option to register for one of two trainings occurring on January 7, 2018, or January 14, 2018. The training coincided with TVC church services on Sunday morning, beginning at 11:15 a.m. and concluding at 12:45 p.m. Five group leaders registered and attended the January 7 training date, and 7 group leaders elected to attend and were present for the training on January 14.

The training began with brief introductions and each participant was asked to share their motivation and hopes for the training. Every participant expressed a desire to incorporate and be more intentional with the children in his or her Home Group. They also expressed past and current frustrations and difficulties their group has faced concerning children and childcare. The overwhelming hope for the training as expressed by the participants was a strategy and plan to make their Home Group a place where children can be included and disciplined.

Following a welcome and introductions, the formal training time began by

establishing a biblical and theological foundation for childhood. The goal of this section was to impress upon the Home Group leaders the worth, dignity, and value of children. The curriculum is designed to convince participants of the importance and urgency of child faith formation and discipleship through inclusion into religious activities and observances.

The next section examined the biblical formula for child faith formation. Discipleship, according to Scripture, is designed and intended to first and foremost occur in the home. This section answered the following question: What is the role of the family in discipling children? At this point in the training, participants were enlightened to the overall thesis and main purpose of the training, namely how the training will explore how Home Groups can be leveraged as a place for parents to practice and grow in their family discipleship knowledge and experience.

The fourth section of the training introduced and explained TVC's framework for family discipleship: Time, Moments, and Milestones. This framework was created to provide parents at TVC with common language and tools necessary to implement family discipleship elements and practices in their own homes. The curriculum gave particular attention to the elements of Family Discipleship Time because they constituted the foundation of what Home Group leaders would be incorporating in their HGFDT. The elements of a Family Discipleship Time are play, sing, read, and pray.

The fifth section of the training expanded each of the HGFDT elements, providing examples, resources, and practical advice for executing each one within the Home Group setting. This section concluded with general best practices for conducting a HGFDT. This section of the training required the most time to cover. The sixth and final section of the training was comprised of a workshop activity. Participants were given 15 minutes to develop their own HGFDT elements based on an assigned passage of scripture. This section allowed participants to immediately put into practices the skills and knowledge they acquired in the first five sections of the training. Additionally, this

activity provided participants with the necessary material to execute their first HGFDT. Following the training, participants received an email reminder to provide a roster of all the parents represented by their Home Group.

Overall, this goal was successfully accomplished. Twelve Home Group leaders participated in the training, and all twelve leaders executed the minimum requirement of three HGFDTs over the course of the project.

Goal 5 Results

The fifth goal of this project was to increase the family discipleship practice and perceptions within families that participated in HGFDT. This goal was measured by administering a post-FDPPS to the same 61 households that took the pre-FDPPS. The post-FDPPS was identical to the pre-FDPPS. On June 6, 2018, the post-FDPPS was electronically sent through email to the same 61 households that received the pre-FDPPS. A total of 102 individual invitations went out. Two emails bounced back and zero individuals chose to opt out of the Survey Monkey distribution list. A reminder email was sent on June 18, 2018. The questionnaire closed to responses on July 18, 2018. A total of 40 individuals responded to the questionnaire. One individual partially completed the survey. Thirty-nine respondents completed the post-survey. Of these 39, 28 respondents completed both surveys and provided matching PINs. Unfortunately, not all 28 were included in the final analysis.

Goal 5 required that participants attend a minimum of 3 HGFDTs. Due to an oversight, the information needed to evaluate this aspect of the goal was not collected. To maintain anonymity, a third-party was recruited to survey all the original 44 pre-FDPPS respondents to obtain their PIN and the number of times their family attended a HGFDT during the 6 months. Of the 28 matching pre- and post-FDPPS surveys, 19 were ultimately included in the final analysis. These 19 respondents completed the pre- and post-FDPPS, used identical PINs, and attended a minimum of 3 HGFDTs. Three

respondents were excluded because they failed to attend at least 3 HGFDTs and 6 respondents failed to provide their HGFDT attendance number. The results of the post-FDPPS are provided in tables 17 and 20 below. Table 17 contains item 1 through 8 responses and deals with family discipleship perceptions.

Table 17. Post-FDPPS items 1-8

Survey Items (N responses)	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule. (19)	0	0	2	5	6	6
2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while. (19)	6	8	1	3	1	0
3. The church is where children should receive most of their Bible teaching. (19)	11	7	1	0	0	0
4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me. (19)	9	10	0	0	0	0
5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together. (19)	14	5	0	0	0	0
6. Parents, particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children. (19)	0	0	0	0	3	16
7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others. (19)	10	9	0	0	0	0
8. My church has helped me develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth. (19)	0	1	3	6	6	3

Results were scored using a scale of 1–6 for analysis purposes. Overall, family discipleship perceptions scored positive among respondents. The overall mean score for items one through eight was 5.26. Participants responded most positively to item 6:

“Parents, particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.” The mean for this item was 5.83. Participants responded least positively to item 8: “My church has helped me develop a clear plan for my child’s spiritual growth.” The mean for this item was 4.33.

Item 1 experienced the greatest change in means between pre- and post-surveys—a positive difference of 0.78948 points. Pre- and post-survey participant responses to item 2 are displayed in table 18 below.

Table 18. Item 1 pre- and post-FDPPS responses

Respondent	Pre-FDPPS	Post-FDPPS
R1	4	5
R2	3	4
R3	6	6
R4	4	6
R5	2	4
R6	6	6
R7	4	4
R8	4	4
R9	6	6
R10	4	4
R11	6	6
R12	1	5
R13	5	5
R14	6	6
R15	5	5
R16	5	5
R17	1	5
R18	2	3
R19	4	4
Average Score	4.10526	4.89474

A t-test for dependent samples of item one indicated a significant positive change in participants’ desire to begin home-based family devotions or discipleship time

($t_{(18)} = 2.515$, $p = .0175$). The results of t-test for dependent samples of pre- and post-survey responses to item one are displayed in table 19 below.

Table 19. Results of item 1 t-test for dependent samples

	Pre-test total	Post-test total
Mean	4.10526	4.89474
Variance	2.76608	0.87719
Observations	19	
Pearson Correlation	0.61382	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	18	
t Stat	2.61557	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00876	
T Critical one-tail	1.73406	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.01752	
T Critical two-tail	2.10092	

Table 20 contains questions 9 through 16 responses and deals with family discipleship practices. Overall, family discipleship practices also scored positive among respondents. The overall mean score for items 1 through 8 was 4.24. Participants responded most positively to questions 11 and 12. The mean for both of these questions was 5.22. Participants responded least positively to question 15. The mean for this question was 2.17.

The overall success of the fifth goal was measured by inputting the results of the nineteen pre- and post-FDPPS into a t-test for dependent samples formula. The totals of participants' responses are displayed in table 21.

Table 20. Post-FDPPS questions 9-16

Survey Question (N responses)	Zero	Once	Twice	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	More than 7 times
Q9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children? (19)	0	0	1	3	8	7
Q10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together, with the television, music and other similar media turned off? (19)	0	1	2	3	4	9
Q11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children? (19)	0	1	1	3	2	12
Q12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities? (19)	0	0	2	2	4	11
Q13. How many times in the past month has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship times in our home? (19)	2	1	2	4	6	4
Q14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development? (19)	0	1	7	2	3	6
Q15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church? (19)	8	3	5	1	1	1
Q16. How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development? (19)	8	0	5	3	0	3

Table 21. Sum of pre- and post-FDPPS results

Respondent	Pre-FDPPS	Post-FDPPS
R1	73	76
R2	76	72
R3	77	79
R4	71	74
R5	59	58
R6	91	89
R7	66	73
R8	54	57
R9	89	94
R10	72	71
R11	88	84
R12	73	86
R13	75	74
R14	73	75
R15	77	83
R16	78	80
R17	69	79
R18	61	64
R19	82	81
Average Score	73.89474	76.26316

Analyzing the above results, the mean score rose from 73.89474 to 76.26316—a difference of 2.36842 points. A t test for dependent samples indicated a positive change in participants overall family discipleship perceptions and practices ($t_{(18)} = 2.307$, $p = 0.033$). Consequently, the fifth goal was successfully met due to positive statically significant different in the pre- and post-survey scores among parents who participated in HGFDT. The results of the t test for dependent samples of pre- and post-survey responses are displayed in table 22.

Table 22. Sums of t-tests for dependent samples

	Pre-test total	Post-test total
Mean	73.89474	76.26316
Variance	95.09942	91.76023
Observations	19	
Pearson Correlation	.89299	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	18	
t Stat	2.3071	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.01657	
T Critical one-tail	1.73406	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.03315	
T Critical two-tail	2.10092	

Goal 6 Results

The sixth goal of this project was to develop a ministry plan for implementing a family discipleship model at TVC that leverages Home Groups as a vehicle for training parents in family discipleship. The goal was to be measured by a panel of communication experts and content strategists who utilized a rubric to evaluate the content, plausibility, scope, and practicality of the plan. Conceptual development of the plan began on November 20, 2018.

The plan consists of 5 sections including promotion, training, deliverables and resources, measurement, and goals. The first section detailed a two-pronged promotion strategy that targets two different audiences: (1) new Home Group leaders and (2) current Home Group leaders. The first plan is a specific, targeted approach. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Home Group Pastor granted permission to share the HGFDT and model for incorporating children at every monthly Group Connect. Every new Home Group leader and Home Group member hears a fifteen-minute introduction to the HGFDT concept, and is challenged to consider implementing this model into the regular rhythm of their Home Group. Following the presentation, Home Group leaders receive an email invitation to register for the next HGFDT training. The second plan involves a

more general approach and is designed to reach current Home Group leaders. Every October, as part Family Worship Weekend, the HGFDT video is to be shown as part of the worship service.¹² This video, which was created for the HGFDT curriculum, will serve as a promotion and introduction piece to the congregation at large. In addition to the worship service showing, the HGFDT video will also be posted to TVC Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. Immediately following Family Worship Weekend, an email invitation is to be sent to any Home Group leaders who are not currently implementing HGFDT. The email will contain information and a registration link to attend the next HGFDT training scheduled for the following January.

The next section of the plan involves training and implementation. Home Group leaders are to be trained in HGFDT through a semi-annual HGFDT training and workshop. At the beginning of every semester –January and September—Home Group leaders interested in incorporating HGFDT can register for and attend the training. Following the training, they will receive an implementation email and subsequent status emails to ensure the implementation goes smoothly. Every six months, Home Group leaders will be contacted to determine the number of HGFDTs their group has executed over the course of the semester.

Section 3 catalogues each deliverable produced and required by the plan. The deliverables include the HGFDT curriculum, the HGFDT handout, a preschool and elementary ministry glossary of terms and definitions, a preschool memory verse calendar, links to various TVC worship albums, and three videos.

Section 4 details how the execution, implementation, and overall success of plan is to be measured. The execution of the plan is to be determined by measuring the total number of Home Groups that have adopted the HGFDT model. The implementation

¹²Family Worship Weekend occurs semi-annually and serves as a stake-holder weekend for encouraging and welcoming children into the main corporate gathering. Programming for elementary age children is canceled, requiring first through fifth-graders to attend the Sunday corporate gathering.

of the plan is to be determined by measuring the quantity of unique HGFDTs each individual Home Group conducts. Finally, the overall success of the plan is to be determined by administering and comparing pre- and post-tests from each household participating in HGFDT through their Home Group.

Section 5 outlines the plan's three goals. The first goal will be considered successful when 50 percent of TVC Home Groups are participating in HGFDT by 2021. The second goal will be considered successful when Home Groups participating in HGFDT execute a minimum of three HGFDTs each semester. The third and final goal will be considered successful if the t-test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

An expert panel was secured to review the plan on January 14, 2019. The panel consisted of 4 individuals: (1) a creative director with over 6 years of experience working in a mega-church, (2) a communications coordinator, (3) a content strategists with 2 years of experience in a mega-church and 2 years in the marketing private sector, and (4) a video producer with over 12 years of experience in a mega-church environment. The panel used an evaluation rubric to review and assess the plan based on its content, plausibility, scope, and practicality. Reviewers responded to 8 items with a score of either insufficient, requires attention, sufficient, or exemplary. Results of the panel's evaluation are provided in table 18.

According to the panel, the curriculum's strongest aspects were its simplicity, goals, and feasibility. Regarding its simplicity, one reviewer noted the clear connection between Home Groups and family discipleship. The panel did not suggest improvements for the plans feasibility or goals. They all agreed that the plan was realistic and had reasonable goals. Concerning the deliverables, one reviewer suggested making design improvements to the HGFDT handout and preschool and elementary glossary of terms and definition.

Table 23. Evaluation of ministry plan

Evaluation Criteria	Insufficient	Requires Attention	Sufficient	Exemplary
Content: The plan is easy to understand. It's not overly complex or excessive.	0	0	1	3
Content: The plan's resources and deliverables are well produced and appealing.	0	0	3	1
Plausibility: The plan takes into account the church's resources and limitations.	0	0	3	1
Plausibility: The goals of the plan are realistic and attainable.	0	0	1	3
Scope: The plan considers and takes into account traditional and non-traditional families.	0	0	1	3
Scope: The plan involves various departments, ministries, and leaders within TVC.	0	1	2	1
Practicality: The plan is feasible.	0	0	1	3
Practicality: The goal of the plan is measurable.	0	1	1	2

One reviewer commented on the cohesiveness of the deliverables and found them aesthetically appealing. Reviewers agreed that the plan is plausible and takes TVC's current limitations into consideration. One reviewer noted the advantage of leveraging a current resource and environment (Home Groups) as part of the plan.

According to the panel, the scope and measurables were the weakest aspects of the plan. Both "requires attention" marks came from these categories. Reviewers felt the plan considered and addressed preschool and elementary-age children; however, the plan did not take into account middle school and high school age children. One reviewer suggested developing additional resources, such as a glossary or definitions of student ministry terms.

The other "requires attention" mark came from the practicality category,

specifically regarding the plans goals and measurables. The quantity of Home Groups is easily measurable, therefore easy to goal set. Reviewers discussed the challenge of measuring family discipleship; however, as one reviewer commented, “Family discipleship is fluid and looking at the arriving point isn’t necessarily the focus, but building a rhythm and habit is.” One reviewer suggested adding qualitative interviews of the Home Group leaders as part of the assessment.

Overall, this goal was successfully accomplished. The plan leverages an existing TVC program—Home Groups—to equip parents in family discipleship. Ninety-four percent of the plan’s rubric evaluations indicators meet or exceed the sufficient level. According to the expert panel, the plan is plausible, measurable, feasible, and its deliverables are robust and aesthetically pleasing.

Conclusion

My overall assessment of this entire project is that four project goals were successfully completed and two of the project goals were partially completed. The two partially completed goals—goals four and five—did not, in my opinion, invalidate or discredit the project’s overall outcome and argument. Regarding the third goal, the HGFDT curriculum met 100 percent of the sufficient criterion upon initial review by the expert panel and did not require modification. Minor additions were made according to the panel’s suggestions; however, these additions did not significantly alter the curriculum in any way. Regarding the fifth goal, enough households completed to post-FDPPS to provide a sample size that accurately represented the TVC Home Groups that contain children.

Moving forward, the ministry plan provides a clear process for incorporating the HGFDT into the overall culture and practices of TVC. Over 50 percent of adult members actively participate in Home Groups at TVC. Therefore, this approach to equipping parents will reach and influence the majority of parents as more and more

Home Groups adopt this model of meeting.

CHAPTER 5

MINISTRY PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

The final chapter summarizes my evaluation of this ministry project. The overall evaluation includes evaluations of the projects purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. This chapter also outlines modifications and improvements to the project for maximum effectiveness. Finally, this chapter includes my theological and personal reflections on the project.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a ministry plan for implementing a family discipleship model at TVC. The purpose is consistent with the overall biblical formula for child faith formation—a biological family and ecclesial family partnership. According to Scripture, specifically passages such as Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Psalm 78, Ephesians 6:4, and Titus 2:2-8, parents are primarily responsible for the discipleship of their children. The church is a supportive, supplemental agent in the process. This project models that formula and mirrors other efforts made throughout Christian history to equip parents.

Furthermore, the project's purpose is supported by descriptive historical accounts of early church gatherings found in various passages of Acts. Although these accounts are not prescriptive in nature, the presence and participation of children during these early, in-home gatherings suggest and encourage the same approach to children within contemporary Home Group or Cell Group models of spiritual formation. TVC is not the only church that will benefit from this project. By all accounts, the Home Group

model appears to be growing in popularity among North American churches, presenting more opportunity for the overall concept, purpose, and effect of this project to expand beyond the walls of just one local church.

Finally, I must address the use of the term “strategic” in the title of this project. Ultimately, this project is better characterized as a “ministry” plan. Chapters 1 and 4 note this alteration. Although the project involved a creative and comprehensive plan to reach and equip the majority of parents at TVC, it was not designed to produce a traditional “strategic” planning document.

Evaluation of Project Goals

Aligning with the project’s purpose, the project goals were fitting, appropriate, effective. In order to accomplish the stated purpose, the project focused on six goals: (1) determining current practices regarding the care and consideration of children in Home Groups, (2) assessing current family discipleship perceptions and practices, (3) developing and (4) teaching a curriculum and method for HGFDT, (5) increasing family discipleship perceptions and practices, and (6) developing and evaluating a ministry plan for implementing HGFDT to the majority of Home Groups at TVC.

Goal 1: Home Group Survey

The Home Group survey was intended to measure and establish current Home Group practices regarding the care and consideration of children.¹ This goal was necessary for two primary reasons: the overall project required (1) permission and approval to influence and interact with leaders outside of my scope of influence, and (2) identification of Home Groups leaders interested in the idea of including children into their formal Home Group gathering.

While my title, Family Minister, allows me to interact with parents beyond my

¹See appendix 2.

direct scope of oversight, prior to this project, I did not have the authority to directly influence and adjust the Home Group strategy at TVC.² This particular goal was the necessary step to initiate the entire project. In fact, the project truly began with the initial meeting with the Home Group Pastor. During this meeting, I was able to cast a vision for a fruitful and mutually beneficial partnership between my department and his. As a minister to the next generation, I care deeply about how the church perceives them. Prior to this project, as evidenced by the survey conducted for the first goal, within the context of the Home Group gathering, many adults considered them to be more of an obstacle and a distraction. The Home Group staff and department as a whole did not promulgate this opinion and provided suggestions to care for children well; however, more work was needed. Scripture promotes and studies validate the benefit of intergeneration religious activity and this first goal helped pave the way for that to be a reality within Home Groups at TVC.³

I considered the Home Group survey was successful for multiple reasons. First, over 90 percent of Home Group leaders responded to the survey. The number of responses exceeded both my expectations and the expectations of the Home Group Pastor. Second, the data gathered was the first of its kind at TVC. Never had our Groups team conducted this broad and thorough of a survey of its Home Groups. The data was so invaluable, they invited me to present my findings and analysis to their entire team. Finally, the survey provided TVC leadership with real and specific data regarding the care and consideration of children within Home Groups. Prior to this survey, the only information and knowledge we had concerning this area was anecdotal. Now, the Home

²As Family Minister, I have direct oversight of our Elementary and Preschool Departments. Meaning I oversee the preschool and elementary staff and all programs and decisions related to children and the families of children within that age-range.

³See Holly Catterton Allen, “A Qualitative Study Exploring the Similarities and Differences of the Spirituality of Children in Intergenerational and Non-intergenerational Christian Context” (PhD diss., Biola University, 2002).

Group staff has real, raw Home Group data to analyze and leverage.

Goal 2: Pre-FDPPS Survey

The second goal was to assess the current family discipleship practices and perceptions within Home Groups at TVC. I leveraged the data from the first goal and identified a pool of Home Group leaders interested in participating in the HGFDT aspect of project. This pool of 61 families produced a final total of 19 valid FDPPS responses.

I hoped to find a relationship between family discipleship perceptions and family discipleship practices. I assumed that participants who scored high on the perception items would also score high on the practices questions. This was not the case. Perception scores were, on average, 6.47 points higher than family discipleship practices scores. One participant had a 19-point difference between perception and practice scores.

In general, participants think biblically regarding family discipleship. Every participant affirmed the accurate biblical statements, or denied the biblically inaccurate statements, in items 3, 6, and 7. On average, they scored higher on these three items than any other items on the survey—5.33, 5.83, and 5.56 respectively. Participants scored lowest on items 1 and 2. Item 1 asked participants if they prioritize family devotional or worship times. Participants scored an average of 4.11 points on this item. Item 2 asked participants if they would like to do regular family discipleship in the home but cannot because they are too busy. The average score for this item was 3.94.

Additionally, I was encouraged by how parents responded to questions 9 through 16. Every parent surveyed reported they implement at least some regular family discipleship practices into their family's routine. In fact, of all the elements and practices listed only one—the number of times per week the family ate a meals together—received a “Zero” response. Every respondent practiced all of the other family discipleship elements at least once.

After analyzing the pre-FDPPS, I discovered it would be difficult to drastically

increase the participants' family discipleship perceptions. On a 1–6 scale, they averaged a 5.03 prior to any training or instruction. Although this high score was encouraging, a lower score would have allowed for a greater potential increase in the post-FDPPS. Contrarily, the average family discipleship practices score was lower; therefore, it presented an opportunity to see more drastic increases or decreases.

Goal 3: Curriculum Development and Evaluation

The third goal required that I synthesize aspects of the research for chapter 2, research, child growth and development, and family discipleship elements and methods. I designed the curriculum to address and answer five questions: (1) What is the proper theological understanding of childhood, (2) what are the biblical foundations of family discipleship, (3) what is TVC's framework for family discipleship, (4) why should family discipleship be incorporated into the Home Group gathering, and (5) how can I successfully execute a HGFDT in my Home Group?

I was very pleased with the overall makeup of the expert panel assembled to evaluate the curriculum. The individuals represented a broad array of professional expertise and practical experience. The children's minister provided necessary insight into child development and helped refine the family discipleship elements portion of the training. The Home Group Pastor helped me evaluate and consider the curriculum through the perspective of the Home Group leader. The family ministry professor provided specific insight and opinions regarding the practicality of the curriculum. Finally, the pastor/elder provided helpful theological insight and advice.

Based on participant feedback and the questions they asked during the training, the only section I would modify is the discussion regarding child safety. Participants were very concerned and sensitive to the risk and necessary precautions one must take anytime adults and children interact in close proximity. Although the curriculum addressed this topic and provides specific instructions and advice for ensuring child safety, a more

robust treatment of this topic and additional resources would be helpful.

Goal 4: Teach HGFDT Curriculum

The fourth goal required that I teach the HGFDT curriculum to at least twelve Home Group leaders. The minimum number of Home Group leaders registered for the training. Prior to the training, participants received reminder emails. Fortunately, all twelve participants arrived and I was able to commence the training at the scheduled time. Based on informal observation, student participation, and casual conversations following the training, the participants enjoyed the training. The timeframe was ideal—not too long and not too short. I was able to sufficiently cover every section during the allotted time. The pace of the training felt appropriate. Although, participants had time at the end of the training to develop their own HGDFT, more time to refine it, they would have been welcomed more.

Interestingly, prior to the training, some of the participants had either already been incorporating children into their Home Group's formal gatherings. They expressed both particular excitement and appreciation for the timeliness of the training. I was encouraged to learn that with or without this training, these Home Group leaders were determined to more intentionally involve children in their Home Group.

Another noteworthy revelation occurred during the HGFDT elements section of the training. As part of the overall HGFDT ministry plan, I wanted to make planning and preparing the various HGFDT elements as simple and easy as possible. Therefore, instead of asking Home Groups to create their own material for the play, sing, read, and pray elements, I suggested utilizing TVC family discipleship material. Discouragingly, nearly half of the training participants were completely unfamiliar with these resources. They did not know the materials existed, were available to parents, and updated on a weekly basis. I was very discouraged by this discovery. These participants were not casual attendees or guests to TVC. They were Home Group leaders and members of the

church. If they were unfamiliar with these materials, the casual attendee was certain to be as well. Hopefully this project serves as a promotional tool for TVC family discipleship material and resources. If Home Groups utilize these materials for the HGFDT elements, parents will be exposed to their availability and proper implementation.

Following the training, I emailed every participant, thanking them for their attendance. The email contained the handout material and a few other resources I produced for the training. It also reminded them to update me on the success of their first HGFDT.

Goal 5: Post-FDPPS

The fifth goal was to increase family discipleship practices and perceptions among the project participants. As mentioned in chapter 4, I received valid responses from 19 of the original 61 households representing by the participating Home Groups. I was disappointed in the final count, which prevented me from successfully completing two of my goals. The majority of the invalid responses were because respondents did not provide identical PINs for the pre- and post-FDPPS. A handful of other responses were invalid because respondents did not answer a necessary follow-up question regarding the number of HGFDTs they attended. I employed additional strategies to recover some of the invalid surveys, like utilizing a third-party to communicate with respondents; however, I was ultimately not able to secure the number I had originally hoped to receive.

Nevertheless, the 19 participants provided enough information and data to make a statistically significant claim regarding the effectiveness of the HGFDT strategy. Since the value of the t stat (2.3071) is larger than the t critical two-tail value (2.10092), it can be stated that HGFDT participation made a difference. Furthermore, since the p-value (0.03315) is less than $p=.05$, I can definitively say that the difference was not due to random chance.

Finally, as discussed in chapter 5, item 1 of the FDPPS experienced a

statistically significant mean increase between the pre- and post-FDPPs. This item required respondents to interact with the statement, “I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.” This finding is noteworthy. It appears there was a positive relationship between participation in HGFDT and an increase in family discipleship prioritization in the home.

Goal 6: Ministry Plan

The final goal of this project was to develop ministry plan for implementing the HGFDT model at TVC.⁴ At the inception of this project, TVC had approximately 150 active Home Groups. That number has increased over the past three years, and currently, an average of four new Home Groups are launched every month. Only twelve Home Groups participated in this project. In order to be effective, a comprehensive implementation strategy for the HGFDT model had to expand beyond these twelve groups.

The ministry plan developed consisted of a plan for recruiting and training existing Home Group leaders and future Home Group leaders. The close partnership I developed over the course of this project with the Home Group staff enabled this plan’s implementation. I currently have the opportunity to introduce the HGFDT strategy and model to every new Home Group. Personally, it is a very rewarding experience, and I am grateful for the time and audience.

The expert panel assembled to evaluate the strategy provided excellent feedback and suggestions. Their input regarding the goals and measurable was particularly helpful. Based on the difficulties I experienced with the quantitative data, I agree with the panel’s suggestion to add qualitative data through individual interviews. While I did receive informal qualitative feedback from Home Group leaders such as

⁴See appendix 6.

summary emails, pictures of their HGFDT, and hallway conversations, I did not create an instrument to capture this data.

As of January 24, 2019, I have had the opportunity to execute components of the strategy. On October 28, 2018, the HGFDT video was shown in the sanctuary before the entire congregation as part of the Family Worship Weekend. Over four thousand people watched the video across all three worship services. The following week, on November 1, 2018, I sent an email to every Home Group leader (except the twelve who participated in this project) inviting them to register for a HGFDT training in January of 2019. Twelve leaders registered for and attended the training on January 13, 2019. To my knowledge, at least one of the 12 Home Groups already implemented their first HGFDT. The leader emailed a positive report along with pictures of their time together.

Strengths of the Project

The greatest strength of this project was its feasibility. Instead of creating and requiring an additional class or venue for parents to receive family discipleship training, this project leverages an already existing venue—the Home Group. In my fifteen years of experience working with families and parents in the local church, I have found parent participation to be the most challenging aspect of family ministry. Parents are busy, and their schedules are full. Asking and requiring them to give additional time to something as important as family discipleship training is challenging. This project accounts for that reality by incorporating the training into commitments they have already made. At TVC approximately 38 percent of all members actively participate in a Home Group. As more groups adopt the HGDFT model, more parents will be exposed to and have the opportunity to practice family discipleship. Additionally, incorporating family discipleship training into pre-existing community groups versus a classroom environment affords greater accountability and opportunity for encouragement. Parents will practice family discipleship in community with other parents and adults with which they have

preexisting relationships. Furthermore, this model, and the relationships formed as parents practice family discipleship, will continue as long as the Home Group exists.

A second strength of this project was its implementation plan. The project not only effects change in its participants, it includes a feasible plan for church-wide implementation and adoption. Clear steps are provided to extend and measure the impact of the project beyond the experimental group.

Weaknesses of the Project

This project had two noteworthy weaknesses. The first was the lack of single-parent household representation. Although the 61 households that formed the sample pool were diverse in aspects like size, age, and ethnicity, they were not diverse in marital status. All 61 families that participated in the project were two-parent homes. According to the US Census Bureau, the national average of single-parent homes is 23 percent.⁵ The only TVC data I could locate regarding single-parent or divorced homes was in 2014 church-wide survey. According to the survey, 5.49 percent of respondents were divorced. Although this survey data (divorced versus married status) does not give a precise description of single-parent homes, it is much lower than the national average. Based upon the assumption that the percentage of single-parent homes would be in close range of the percentage of divorced homes, this project needed at least one single-parent household to accurately represent that demographic.

A second weakness of this project was the survey methodology. First, too much time passed between the Home Group survey and the HGFDT invitation and training. While I achieved the HGFDT participation goal of twelve groups, I was

⁵US Census Bureau, "The Majority of Children Live With Two Parents, Census Bureau Reports," The United States Census Bureau, Accessed January 23, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2016/cb16-192.html>.

disappointed that a larger percentage of the seventy-one interested groups would have actually registered and participated in the training. I attribute some of this lack of participation to the time period in between the Home Group survey and my invitation to register for the training. The survey closed on September 13, 2017 and the invitation to register for the HGFDT training did not go out until December 6, 2017. Had I had capitalized on the momentum and positive response to the Home Group survey, I believe more Home Group leaders would have registered for the training.

Second, many of the FDPPS responses were useless because respondents did not provide the identical PINs for the pre- and post-survey. Although I received 49 and 35 responses from the pre- and post-survey respectively, only 28 were useful. The other 17 respondents either did not fill out the post-survey or provided a different PIN. Due to the extended time frame between pre- and post-surveys, I anticipated that respondents would forget their pre-survey PIN. Therefore, I provided a prompt in the surveys to guide them and remind them of the PIN. However, it appears that some respondents elected not to follow the prompt and came up with their own system for choosing a PIN. It is unfortunate that so many of the surveys had to be excluded from the project.

Finally, an oversight on my part in the post-survey required me to perform additional work that could have easily been avoided. The third goal required participants to attend a minimum of three HGFDTs. Unfortunately, I did not include a question in the post-FDPPS to determine the number of HGFDTs each respondent participated. In order to determine the quantity of HGFDTs respondents attended, I recruited a third-party to survey each respondent the following two questions: (1) What was the PIN you submitted for the pre- and post-surveys? (2) How many HGFDTs did you attend? The third-party then provided the PINs and corresponding attendance record. I had to exclude 6 participants from the final data because they failed to respond to the third-party's email. While I had their FDPPS data, I was not able to determine how many HGFDTs they attended.

What I Would Do Differently

In light of the above weaknesses, I would incorporate five modifications to achieve maximum project effectiveness. First, I would add the following additional question to the post-survey: “How many Home Group Family Discipleship Times did your family attend? This would save valuable time and effort during the data analysis phase. Including this question would also eliminate the third-party element of data collection.

Second, I would encourage both spouses to complete the pre- and post-FDPPS. Originally, I felt it would be redundant to ask a married couple to respond to a survey regarding family discipleship practices. My assumption was that both husband and wife would respond similarly to items and questions about practices that occur in their home. Upon further reflection, I believe this was a false assumption and requiring only one survey per household limited by response rate.

Third, I would shorten the length of time between the Home Group survey and the invitation to participate in the HGFDT training. Instead of waiting three months, I would invite the Home Group leaders to the training a maximum of three weeks following the survey. Although I secured the minimum number of Home Group leaders needed to accomplish the fourth goal, it is possible more leaders would have registered for the HGFDT training had the invitation gone out earlier than it did.

Fourth, I would add a control group to further validate the data. While the experimental group is participating in HGFDT, I would assemble and survey a control group of households not participating in HGFDT Home Groups not implementing HGFDT. The two groups would take the pre-FDPPS and post-FDPPS and I would compare the results. If the control group did not see an increase in family discipleship perceptions and practices, I could make a stronger argument regarding the positive influence of the HGFDT.

Finally, I would utilize a survey software or process than enables respondents

to receive a copy of their completed survey. This would have eliminated the challenge I experienced with non-matching PINs. Respondents had difficulty remembering their PINs, which resulted in the discarding of multiple surveys. Had respondents remembered their PINs, I would have completely fulfilled the fifth goal.

Theological Reflections

Chapters 2 and 3 of this project proved to be the most challenging and rewarding. Although these chapters required more than a year to write, my understanding of the theological and historical foundations of family discipleship are exponentially greater due to the research. For example, my appreciation of and interest in early church practices and gatherings greatly increased as I sought to understand how early Christians considered and cared for children. I was so intrigued by these early believers and their practices, I gathered an excessive amount of material regarding this topic—too much to incorporate all of it into this project.

Reformation-era family discipleship perceptions and practices proved to be another enlightening theological aspect of the research. Prior to the research I conducted on this era, I was unaware of significance the spiritualization of the home played in reforming the Church. The amount of energy and attention major reformation players like Martin Luther and John Calvin gave to equipping parents surprised me. More specifically, I became more informed of their emphasis on catechesis and work to produce practical discipleship resources. As a result of this discovery, I include and utilize a modern catechism as part of my personal family discipleship strategy.

Finally, the theological, biblical, and historical research helped me form three theological principles regarding children I now employ and share anytime I get to teach on childhood: (1) Children are people—not almost people or nearly people, (2) children are a blessing—not a burden, and (3) children present us with an opportunity—not an obstacle.

The first principle focuses on their humanity, dignity, and worth. Children are made in the image of God. They have that identity and the dignity that accompanies it at conception. This theological reality should affect the manner in which we view and treat them. I incorporated this principle into the HGFDT training by saying, “If Home Groups are a ministry to people, not just adults, then children should be considered members and participants of those Home Groups.

The second and third principles address the proper attitude with which adults are to receive children in ministry settings and environments. Jesus received and welcomed little children as part of his ministry and care towards people. He did not consider them to be a distraction, burden, or obstacle to the work he had been called to do. Churches are to have this same attitude. Children are not an obstacle to the work and ministry of Home Groups. They are people in need of the benefits of gospel-centered community and we should welcome them in as such. These theological discoveries regarding children have challenged and reformed my personal beliefs and interactions with them. I now see and consider their personhood and humanity, and all that entails, before I acknowledge their life-stage and limitations. Young children are people, complete with hopes, desires, emotions, and needs of their own.

Personal Reflections

This project was birthed out of a desire to see parents better equipped for family discipleship through the local church. In 2007 I became the Middle School Minister at TVC; I knew TVC could and had to do a better job equipping parents. After various failed attempts prior to this project, I began to wonder if a completely new approach was necessary. Then, in 2013, my wife and I had our first child. At the time, we were leading a Home Group and after a few months, found that leading and attending Home Group consistently with a young child was challenge. We were not alone in that feeling. Other parents in our Home Group began to express the same sentiment.

Consistent Home Group attendance for parents with young children can be financially challenging. Childcare is expensive and even if a family has an arrangement that is free, it can still be difficult to arrange with consistency.

Feeling the pressures of childcare arrangements, our Home Group began to reconsider how we structured our meeting and gathering. We started to ask what it could look like to include the children. This would not only ease the childcare burden, but it would also bring our children into the Home Group experience. After dialogue and debate, our Home Group settled on a gathering rhythm that included a once-a-month family night. On family night everyone attended. Adults and children came to read, sing, and pray together. This night quickly became my group's favorite Home Group gathering. Our Home Group grew closer together and became more familial in feel through the incorporation of the family night.

This personal experience was the genesis of this project. As I reflected on how my Home Group's family night benefited the children in our group, I also began to notice how the parents in our group seemed to be growing in their confidence and ability to teach and lead the children. I began to wonder if the Home Group setting, particularly one that incorporated children, could be a venue for training parents in family discipleship. At the same time this concept was forming, I began the professional doctoral program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The idea to leverage Home Groups as a vehicle for family discipleship training seemed like one worth seriously pursuing.

This pursuit was only confirmed by two particular discoveries I made during my research for chapter 3. First, I found that the idea to leverage a preexisting program within the church to equip and train parents in family discipleship was not original to me; it had been attempted, although unsuccessfully, in the early-twentieth century. Samuel W. Dike, a Congregational minister in New England, developed a model that leveraged Sunday school as a vehicle for increasing family discipleship perceptions and practices.

After a few years of success and adoption, his idea, known as the Home Department, ultimately lost momentum and faded out of existence.

The second noteworthy discovery I made during my historical study of family discipleship was Margaret M. Sawin's Family Cluster Model. Nearly one hundred years after Dike's Home Department, Sawin attempted to strengthen families and equip parents through a program similar to my HGFDT model. Sawin, a religious educator, argued that the traditional Sunday school model alone was not a sufficient strategy for child faith formation. She argued that it lacked an informal, experiential aspect of discipleship, which she termed "religious nurturing." Her solution to this Sunday school deficiency was to gather small groups, or "clusters", of families in homes for a structured time of religious activities and family discipleship. Sawin's "Family Clusters" were nearly identical to my HGFDT both in purpose and structure. Sawin's model, while effective, was short-lived. After studying these two family discipleship strategies, I became more convinced that HGFDT could be an effective and enduring way to equip and train parents.

As the project progressed, and families began to experience and participate in HGFDT, the feedback confirmed this belief. Parents reported an increase in family discipleship confidence and ability. Dads, some of whom had never led a family devotional before, shared their experience of leading a devotional for the group with me. They were anxious prior to, and even during the devotional, but found it to be a life-giving and positive experience. Home Groups leaders sent me pictures and summaries of their HGDFTs. The photographs were touching and meaningful. They also became an inspiration and motivation to finish the project as the research and writing began to take a toll on me.

Aside from striving to be a godly husband and father, this project has been my most challenging and rewarding endeavor to date. As I reflect on this four-and-a-half year journey, it is amazing to think about how much my personal environment has changed.

For example, when I started in 2015, my oldest son had just hit the one-year mark. Less than a month ago, we celebrated his first successful bike ride without training wheels. Furthermore, the Lord has blessed my wife and I with two additional children over the course of this project. The sleepless nights that come with caring for newborns increased the challenge of completing this project; however, the experience and knowledge I gained from the work has helped me establish a better foundation for my young family. Ultimately, the knowledge acquired over the course of this project has made me a better father—and that perhaps, is the most substantial of all outcomes.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to develop a ministry plan for implementing a family discipleship model at TVC. My overall assessment is that this project accomplished the stated purpose and goals. Based on the received data, informal feedback, and assessment efforts, the goals were met. The Home Group is a suitable and effective vehicle for family discipleship training and equipping. Incorporating children into the Home Group gathering through HGFDT provides parents a place to practice family discipleship. My hope is that this proven plan has a Kingdom impact at TVC and beyond as additional churches recognize its potential and implement its ministry plan.

APPENDIX 1

2014 VILLAGE CHURCH ANNUAL SURVEY RESULTS

The following select data was gathered from the 2014 Village Church annual survey. The survey was given to all worship service attendees on Saturday, February 8, 2014 and Sunday, February 9, 2014. Five thousand six hundred and seventy-three individuals participated in the survey.

2014 VILLAGE CHURCH ANNUAL SURVEY

Table A.1. Parents' confidence in spiritual influence over children

How confident are you in your child's spiritual influence? n=2,323	Nonmember	Not sure	Member
A little confident	8.43%	6.45%	6.09%
N/A	54.86%	71.77%	38.31%
Not confident at all	3.01%	2.42%	1.02%
Somewhat confident	19.46%	13.71%	26.84%
Very confident	14.24%	5.65%	27.74%

Table A.2. Do you know how to share the gospel?

Do you know how to share the gospel? n=2,323	Nonmember	Not sure	Member
No	8.07%	8.96%	1.60%
Not sure	22.22%	29.03%	9.35%
Yes	69.71%	62.9%	89.05%

Table A.3. Within the past year, have you shared the gospel?

Within the past year, have you shared the gospel? n=2,323	Nonmember	Not sure	Member
No	32.2%	33.06%	27.34%
Yes	67.8%	66.94%	79.31%

APPENDIX 2

HOMEGROUP LEADER QUESTIONNAIRE: CHILDREN IN GROUPS

The following questionnaire was administered to Home Group leaders at the Flower Mound Campus. The questionnaire was electronically sent through email to every Home Group leader at the Flower Mound campus. A total of 307 individual invitations to the questionnaire were sent on August 24th. Zero emails bounced back and four individuals chose to opt out of the Survey Monkey distribution list. The questionnaire closed to responses on September 13th. A total of 139 individuals responded to the questionnaire. One hundred and twenty-eight completed the entire questionnaire and 11 individuals partially completed it. According to the Home Group pastor at the TVC, there are presently 170 Home Groups actively meeting at the Flower Mound campus.

HOME GROUP LEADER QUESTIONNAIRE: CHILDREN IN GROUPS

This survey will help TVC better support Home Groups regarding how we care for and consider children

Agreement to Participate: I am conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for my doctoral project. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completing this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

***Formal Home Group Gathering:** Every group meets formally and informally. A formal gathering is one in which all group members are invited and falls on the normal, recurring rhythm of the Home Group's calendar. Some Home Groups meet formally every week while others meet formally bi-monthly or monthly. Any gathering outside of these parameters would be considered an informal gathering and not applicable for the purposes of this survey.

* 1. How long have you been leading your current Home Group?

- Less than 6 months
- Between 6 months and 1 year
- Between 1 and 2 years
- Between 2 and 3 years
- More than 3 years

* 2. What is the frequency of your formal Home Group gatherings?

- Weekly
- Bi-Monthly
- Other (please specify)

* 3. What best describes the monthly rhythm of your formal Home Group gatherings?

- Bible Study
- Elder Led Prayer and Bible Study
- Fellowship Meals and Bible Study
- Elder Led Prayer, Bible Study and Fellowship Meals
- Other (please specify)

* 4. Historically, what best describes the curriculum content of your formal Home Group gathering?

- Sermon-based or TVC provided study/guide
- Group self-selected book or study
- No formal curriculum
- Other (please specify)

* 5. What best describes the location of your formal Home Group gathering?

- Apartment
- House
- Public Meeting Space
- TVC Campus
- Other (please specify)

* 6. What is the average adult attendance of your formal Home Group gathering?

* 7. Do any Home Group members have children under 18?

- Yes
- No

8. For each of the age ranges below, approximately how many children are in your Home Group?

Preschool (Birth-4 yrs)

Elementary (5-10 yrs)

Middle School (11-13 yrs)

High School (14-18 yrs)

* 9. Are children present and do they participate at any of the formal Home Group gatherings?

- Does Not Apply-No Children in Group
- Yes
- No

* 10. When children are NOT present during formal Home Group gatherings, what best describes their care?

- Does Not Apply-No Children in Group
- Parents are individually responsible for childcare/babysitting.
- Home Group collectively finds and outsources childcare/babysitting.
- Other (please specify)
- Adult members of the Home Group take turns caring for children while Home Group is meeting
- Older children in the Home Group watch and care for children while Home Group is meeting.

* 11. When children ARE present during formal Home Group gatherings, what best describes their participation?

- Does Not Apply-No Children in Group
- Children are present during the entire gathering and participate in the same manner as adults in the group. (No special modifications made for children)
- Children are present and participate during portions of the gathering designed specifically for them. (Children's devotional/lesson)
- Children are present and participate only during portions of the gathering that don't require a formal lesson or study (Elder Led Prayer & Fellowship Meals/Dinners)
- Other (please specify)

* 12. When children are present during formal gatherings, does your Home Group utilize the Family Discipleship resource material provided in Home Group Curriculum and/or Weekly Family Discipleship Resources provided by Little Village and Kids' Village?

- Does Not Apply-No Children in Group
- Yes
- No
- No and I was unaware that these materials were available/provided

* 13. Would you be interested in implementing a "Family Worship Time" into the regular rhythm of your Home Group? Family Worship Time is a strategic Home Group meeting designed to intentionally include and disciple children, while also teaching and equipping parents how to practice Family Discipleship.

- Yes
- No

14. Please provide any additional information regarding children and your Home Group that you believe would be helpful.

APPENDIX 3

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

The following instrument is the Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey. The instrument's purpose is to assess parents' current level of family discipleship knowledge, confidence, and practice. It contains sixteen family discipleship related questions and items. Items one through eight required participants to evaluate family discipleship related statements based on a Likert-type scale. These items evaluated parents' beliefs, convictions, and attitudes towards family discipleship. Questions nine through sixteen required participants to report the frequency of various family discipleship related activities and exercises.

The Family Discipleship Perception and Practices Survey is Copyright © Timothy Paul Jones, Family Ministry Field Guide (Indianapolis, Ind.: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011). Used by permission.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

Thank you for taking the time to complete this anonymous Family Discipleship Survey. Your responses will assist a doctoral research project I am completing through The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help The Village Church better equip and train parents to disciple children. The research is being conducted by Matthew McCauley for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will provide opinions and information regarding your personal family discipleship perceptions practices. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will you name be reported, or you name identified with your responses.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. In order to give you the freedom to answer as honestly as possible, this survey will be anonymous. At the end of the survey, you will be asked to choose a four-digit PIN to identify your test and use that same number to identify your post-survey so that your pre-survey and post-survey results may be compared. Only one response is needed per household.

*Inventory is a modified form of The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey by Timothy Paul Jones, Ph.D. <http://www.wesleyan.ord/wph/fmfg/survey>

Date: _____

Four Digit PIN: _____

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer by using the following scale.

SD = strongly disagree

D = disagree

DS = disagree somewhat

AS = agree somewhat

A = agree

SA = strongly agree

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. I prioritize consistent family discipleship time—Bible reading and prayer—in my family’s schedule. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. I would like to do consistent family devotional or Bible-reading in our home, but our family is just too busy for that right now. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. The church is where children should receive most of their Bible teaching. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. Parents—and particularly fathers—have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. My church has helped me to develop a plan for my child’s spiritual growth. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past week have I prayed aloud with any of my children?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	>6
10. How many times in the past week has my family eaten a meal together, with television, music, and other similar media turned off?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	>6
11. How many times in the past month have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	>6
12. How many times in the past month have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	>6
13. How many times in the past two months has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	>6
14. How many times in the past two months have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	>6
15. How many times in the past year have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	>6
16. How often in the past year has any church leader made contact with me to help me engage actively in my child's spiritual development?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	>6

APPENDIX 4

HOME GROUP FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME CURRICULUM

The following curriculum was developed to teach Home Group leaders at TVC how to incorporate and execute a Home Group Family Discipleship Time into the routine and rhythm of their formal Home Group gathering schedule.

HOME GROUP FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME CURRICULUM

Home Group Family Discipleship Time Curriculum

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Learning Outcomes/Goals:

- Primary
 - Home Group leaders will understand biblical and theological foundations of children/childhood.
 - Home Group leaders will understand biblical foundations of family discipleship.
 - Home Group leaders will understand and articulate the hope/purpose of conducting a Home Group Family Discipleship Time.
 - Home Group leaders will know the elements of a successful Family Discipleship Time.
 - Home Group leaders will practice/workshop creating and planning a Home Group Family Discipleship Time.
 - Home Group Leaders will implement and conduct a successful Home Group Family Discipleship Time.
- Secondary
 - Home Group leaders will know where to locate LV and KV resources
 - Home Group leaders will become familiar with LV and KV language and definitions

Outline: 6 Sections (80 mins)

1. Welcome and Introduction (5 mins)
2. Biblical and Theological Foundation of Childhood/Children (10 mins)
3. Biblical Foundation for Family Discipleship (10 mins)
4. Framework for Family Discipleship: Time, Moments, Milestones (12 mins)
5. Home Group Family Discipleship Time (28 mins)
6. Workshop (15 mins)

1. Welcome and Introductions

I want to welcome everyone to this training workshop. You're here because you lead a Home Group and have a desire and interest to be more intentional about the care and consideration of the children in your Home Group. Before we begin the training, let's go

around and introduce ourselves. Please share your name, and how long you've been leading your Home Group.

2. Biblical and Theological Foundation of Childhood/Children

Let's start with a theological foundation of children and childhood.

Question: *How would you define "child" & "childhood?" If an alien came down to Earth and asked why there are smaller, less mature versions of you (adults) crawling and stumbling around, what would you say?"*

What/how are we to think of a child, of Children, biblically?

- In the OT children are **esteemed**: Kostenburger gives five examples:
 - Every human being is created in the image of God
 - Children ensure the perpetuation of humanity and the fulfillment of the divine mandate to subdue and cultivate the earth
 - Conception of children was ultimately a product of divine action and hence a sign of God's favor.
 - Children as an important economic asset
 - The belief that in a sense parents live on in and through their children
- In the NT children are elevated as examples of Kingdom citizens. Gundry-Volf highlights five ways Jesus' teaching and practice elevated children.
 - He blesses them and teaches that the reign of God belongs to them. Mk 10:13-16
 - He makes them models of entering the reign of God. Mk 10:15
 - He makes the models of greatness in the reign of God. Mt 18:1-5
 - He gives the service of children ultimate significance as a way of receiving himself. Mk 9:33-37
 - He is acclaimed by children as the "Son of David." Mt 21:14-16

Three big biblical takeaways regarding children that should shape our perception of them:

- **Children are whole people.** Not almost people, future people, nearly people. They are not "other". They have the same foundational spiritual needs, wants, desires as adults. They are born into sin, same need for salvation through Jesus and capable of saving faith. Ps 139
- **Children are a blessing,** not a burden. Ps 127:3
- In the context of ministry, **children present an opportunity to engage** not an obstacle to overcome. Mt 19:13-15

Throughout the Old and New Testament, when we read of religious gatherings, activities, rituals, feasts, and significant spiritual milestones, it is common to find some mention or acknowledgement of children. Their presence and participation at these gatherings was intentional for and integral to their faith formation.

Group Discussion: Partner up with another Home Group leader and read through the biblical passage I assign you. Consider and examine how children were included and incorporated into the religious activity or observance mentioned in the passage.

Exodus 12:25-27

And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. (ESV)

The Passover meal served as a milestone for the people of Israel. The expectation was that children were present and participated as the practice served as a spiritual formation experience and teaching opportunity.

2 Chronicles 20:13-15

Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. And he said, “Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's.’ (ESV)

Facing fierce enemies, Jehoshaphat calls all of Judea to fast and seek help from the LORD. They gather--men, women, and children--in the new court of the temple to worship and petition the LORD. Jahaziel preaches to the entire assembly. The presence of children emphasizes their significance and expected participation in the “gathered community”.

Nehemiah 8:1-3

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. (ESV)

Upon completion of the wall, in Nehemiah 8 the people of Israel assemble for what may be “a careful description of the liturgical ritual of public worship in the post-exilic time.” The interesting phrase “all who could understand” most likely referred to children. During this religious observance, people gathered on the square (versus the Temple)

where women and children were allowed and participated in worship of the LORD through the reading and hearing of the Book of the Law.

Joel 2:15-16

*Blow the trumpet in Zion;
consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
gather the people.
Consecrate the congregation;
assemble the elders;
gather the children,
even nursing infants.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her chamber. (ESV)*

“Consecrate the congregation” is a specific directive meaning, “hold a sacred religious meeting”. Joel’s prophecy is warning and call to repentance. The explicit mention of children--even nursing infants--communicates the communal nature of the nation’s guilt before the LORD. They were to be present at the meeting and expected to participate in the corporate fast/religious observance.

Acts 1:14

All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women (and children) and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. (ESV)

A fifth century manuscript (Codex Bezae) adds “and children” to the description of those present in the activity of the early church. A scribe most likely added these words as Luke probably did not include them in his original manuscript. W. A. Strange argues the addition shows “that Christians in the early church, like that scribe, expected children to be present at worship.”

Acts 20:7-12

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, “Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.” And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted. (ESV)

There is debate on the exact nature of this gathering. Some argue it was a regular, weekly gathering of believers on the Lord's Day (Sunday) similar to modern weekly gatherings. There is no explicit evidence to suggest that this gathering was regular and consistent, but it most likely did occur on Sunday and consisted of teaching and a fellowship meal. Based on the two descriptions of Eutychus, he was likely between the ages of 8 and 14 years old. Eutychus was certainly present at this gathering and did his best to participate in Paul's lengthy discourse.

Ephesians 6:1-3

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." (ESV)

Colossians 3:18-22

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. (ESV)

The household code sections in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 6 give strong evidence for the presence and participation of children in early church gatherings. Paul's instruction is specific to all parties who would have been present at the public reading of his letters-- fathers, mothers, children and slaves.

A survey of religious gatherings and assemblies in the Scriptures reveals a surprising number of explicit references to children. What makes these accounts even more significant is that these children were welcomed into and participated in these gatherings during a period of time that was very hostile and unfriendly to children. For example, the overarching view of children and childhood in the Greco-Roman world was negative-- even to the point of them lacking full personhood and humanity. It was in this context that Jewish and early Christian circles intentionally and specifically invited children into some of their most sacred spaces.

If these things are true (esp. Children as a blessing to families and the community at large), what is the opportunity? The opportunity is discipleship, bringing up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. How? What's the biblical formula for this?

3. Biblical Foundation for Family Discipleship

Question: *When someone asks you to share your testimony or your "story", how or where do you typically begin?*

Video: **What is the Role of the Family in Discipling Kids?**
(<https://vimeo.com/215220400>)

This class will explore how TVC Home Groups can be leveraged as a place for parents to practice and grow in their family discipleship knowledge and experience. Specifically their ability to practice Family Discipleship Time.

First, let's talk about TVC's Framework for Family Discipleship and what we mean by Family Discipleship Time.

4. Framework for Family Discipleship: Time, Moments, Milestones (10 mins)

The Framework for Family Discipleship helps structure your discipleship and gives you clarity and support, regardless of what your family looks like. This simple framework can fulfill its function in any and every possible family makeup, including those with grandparents, single parents, foster or adopted children, blended or shared-custody families, those with disabilities, differences in children's and parents' ages and nuclear families.

- Family Discipleship Time – Creating **intentional** time built into the **rhythm** of the family's life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about and living out the gospel.
- Family Discipleship Moments – **Capturing** and **leveraging** opportunities in the course of everyday life for the purpose of gospel-centered conversations.
- Family Discipleship Milestones – **Marking** and **making** occasions to **celebrate** and **commemorate** significant spiritual milestones of God's work in the life of the family and child.

Our focus, as we consider how Home Groups can be a place where parents can practice and learn Family Discipleship, will be Family Discipleship Time:

What is Family Discipleship Time? Video (<https://vimeo.com/215220341>)

Intentional: Planned and designed. Family Discipleship Time should not be a surprise to your family and children. Just as you schedule mealtimes, bedtimes, nap times and playtimes, Family Discipleship Time should be planned and scheduled.

Without some regularity and structure and purpose, it is one of those things that we assume we are doing but never actually do.

Rhythm: Regular, consistent. A part of what you do.

Consistent father-led, family-led worship (time) is one of the best, steadiest, and most easily measurable ways to bring up children in the Lord's discipline and instruction.

To summarize: Family Discipleship Time

- Intentionality: designing the times (planning and purpose)
- Rhythm: designating the times (committed and consistent)

Family discipleship time is about cultivating spiritual maturity in your household through loving, gospel-centered relationships. It isn't exclusively about formal teaching, although that can certainly play a role. It's planned time that is intentionally dedicated to the spiritual growth of your family. You may utilize rhythms and gathering points that already exist in your household, like going to church services together, eating a meal together, commuting to school or work, getting ready for the day or getting ready for bed.

Elements of a Family Discipleship Time:

- Play
- Sing
- Read
- Pray

We will cover these in more detail later as we describe how they can function within the Home Group setting.

Transition: What role can Home Groups play in the equipping of parents for Family Discipleship and consideration/inclusion of children?

Children in Home Groups: A Proposed Model for Meeting

“What do we do with the kids?”

It is common for Home Groups at TVC to wrestle with this question. Thankfully, the TVC Groups department provides a handful of very helpful and practical solutions. I would like to propose an additional solution that intentionally includes children in the Home Group gathering. It involves combining the vision of Family Discipleship Time and the Home Group context/gathering...**A Home Group Family Discipleship Time**

As we consider children in Home Groups I want to do an exercise together: *Everyone close your eyes. I want you to picture/imagine your Home Group in your mind. A typical night. Where are you, what are you doing together as group. What is the feel and dynamic of the group and the room. Sit in that for a little bit and let that picture play out in your mind.*

Now I want you to introduce children in to the picture. What just happened to your Home Group...to that time? What changed? What do you feel now?

Many, perhaps most of us, have a mental model, picture of Home Groups that is not conducive and not friendly to children. It's not that children ruin Home Groups. Could it

be that our idea, our mental model of Home Groups need to change in order to better accommodate children?

So what could/should that time, when they are included, look like?

Children obviously cannot be present for every moment of every gathering, but I argue it is a loss and a miss if children are excluded from all the rich discipleship activity of the Home Group. I contend there is a happy medium between complete inclusion and complete exclusion of children in Home Groups.

What follows is a series of suggested models for meeting that considers all people in Home Groups and provides intentional discipleship and evangelism opportunities for every age and stage.

Model A:

- Week 1: Elder Led-Prayer, All-Adult Gathering, Etc.
- Week 2: Women's Accountability/Study
- Week 3: Men's Accountability/Study
- Week 4: Family Discipleship Time

The advantage of this model is that child care is outsourced only once a month versus multiple times per month. Single-parent homes can utilize other members of the group during men's and women's accountability/study nights.

Model B:

- Week 1: Elder-Led Prayer
- Week 2: Adult Gathering
- Week 3: Family Discipleship Time
- Week 4: Adult Gathering

The advantage of this model is that even with the addition of a Family Worship Night, adults are still afforded two meetings a month for study, etc.

Model C: Semi-Monthly Gathering

- Week 1 or 2: Adult Only Gathering
- Week 3 or 4: Family Discipleship Time

The introduction of a Family Discipleship Time affords children in the Home Group a place and space where adults are modeling and teaching gospel-living. It is essentially a Family Discipleship Time done in community with multiple families and adults. What we ask and encourage parents to do for Family Discipleship Time, we can now encourage them to try and practice in community. Parents and other adults get practice and children in Home Groups get to participate and experience group-life.

5. Home Group Family Discipleship Time

Discussion Questions: Let's get a better understanding of your current Home Group dynamics.

- What is the makeup, demographic of your Home Group?
- How many kids, ages?
- What does your current Home Group practice and rhythm look like when it comes to children and their care?
- What drew you to this class, idea of incorporating kids through a Family Discipleship Time?
- And similarly, what is your hope coming out of it?

Intro: My hope. Two fold.

- First is the charge to incorporate children in groups: Home Groups are a central and vital part to what we as TVC do when it comes to making disciples-- particularly the idea of gospel-centered community. My conviction is that children should be a part of the Home Group equation for their formation and discipleship. They need to see and know that the Christian life and church participation and belonging is more than just attending service on a weekend. This is of course the same message we preach to adults in our congregation. A side benefit to incorporating children into Home Groups is that it can cut back on the frequency of babysitting and outsourcing childcare that comes with Home Group participation. We have seen at TVC that need for babysitting and childcare can be a hindrance and barrier to Home Group participation for young families.
- Second is the hope that this regular, consistent experience and exposure to Family Discipleship Time will encourage and equip parents to do the same in their own homes with their own children. As parents in your group who may have never seen disciple-making in the home, or tried it on their own will see it, learn how to do it, and be encouraged to make it a more regular part of their home. We can offer Family Discipleship Classes and training here at the church, but I see this as a more effective and broader reaching strategy to increase family discipleship practices throughout TVC. Not everyone is going to attend a class, but the vast majority of our members and regular attenders are in a Home Group.

Before we get into the elements of this time, here's a video that gives you an idea of what it looks like and how it can benefit your Home Group.

Home Group Family Discipleship Time Video

(<https://vimeo.com/287504287/2df6e76c8f>)

Next, I want to give you a framework for a successful Home Group Family Discipleship Time. Share some fun experiences my own Home Group had working this night into our group. And then I want us to workshop an actual time that you can go and implement when your group meets. *Italicized sentences are specific TVC phrases and vocabulary you can leverage and reinforce during the time together.*

- **Welcome:** Home Group leaders and/or Host welcome children, families, and adults as they enter. A simple but warm recognition goes a long way for little ones

so be sure to acknowledge their presence and welcome them into the home. Make sure there are clear instructions concerning important house rules and what areas and rooms are off-limits.

- **(Play) Connect & Play**--10 mins: Trust is the currency of child/adult relationships so spend the first 5-10 minutes of Family Worship Night connecting with the children. This can be accomplished through an organized game, fun activity, or structured play. A simple activity could look like drawing or coloring. For example, an activity for a lesson on Jesus in the wilderness from Matthew 4 could include drawing what a wilderness might look like. The main idea here is that the children have something constructive to do as soon as they arrive and the adults are engaging with them.
- **(Sing) Worship through Song**--10 mins: Corporate singing both engages and unites all ages and stages. Most children love to sing and are not hindered by fear of man or the quality of their voices. The purpose of worship through song is to engage both the heart and the mind of the worshipper and encourage them to consider the things above (Colossians 3). For Family Worship Night, select songs that are appropriate and accessible for children. Children at TVC have access and exposure to wonderful songs available on CD or iTunes. If someone in the group is a capable worship leader, feel free to empower them to lead, but singing to tracks it just a effective. For a fun twist, allow children to bring a simple rhythm instrument to play as they sing! I recommend designating one or two particular adults to guide and encourage the singing.

“Worship is the right response to the goodness of God. There are many ways to worship and singing to God and about God is one of them.”

The Doxology is always a good way to close out this time. Elementary age kids sing it every weekend in KV and should know it by heart.

- **(Read) Memory Verse**-- 5 mins: Every week in Little Village and Kids Village, children at TVC learn and memorize a monthly memory verse from the Scriptures. These verses are animated and put to melody and can be found on TVC Resource website or TVC YouTube channel. Play the memory verse song, hold up the illustration and practice memorizing it together as a group.

“The Bible is God’s true Word. It is from God and it is about God.”

- **(Read) Bible reading/Devotional**--10 mins: A Family Worship Night devotional is not a sermon. You don’t have to be a trained theologian to read God’s Word and get children to think about it. TVC provides excellent take-home resources that can be utilized for devotional time or if the adult feels confident and comfortable enough to create his/her own brief lesson and questions, feel free. The important thing to remember is God’s Word is living and active so let’s put it before our children in meaningful and helpful ways.

1. Identify a rug or carpet area all the children can sit on together. If they have trouble keeping their hands to themselves, or if they are too young to sit, parents can hold them in their laps.
 2. Whomever is reading from the Bible or reading the narrative in the curriculum should be in a prominent place. Somewhere all the children can see and hear him/her.
 3. Read dramatically with enthusiasm.
 4. Read “Review and Discussion” questions.
- **(Play) Game/Activity**--15 mins: Activities (crafts, games, etc) reinforce the lesson or teaching. Children are concrete learners so physical objects and/or activities help them grasp truths. When it comes to activities, simple is often more effective. For example, a lesson about Jesus being the light of the world can be reinforced with a fun game of flashlight tag.

Example: An outside game of “hide and seek” would be a fun way to tie in an activity to the lesson/story about Jesus in the temple when he was a boy from Luke 2.

“We pray to the Father because of the Son with the help of the Holy Spirit”

- **(Pray) Corporate Prayer**--5 mins: Prayer is just as much caught as it is taught. For example, when Jesus’ disciples wanted to know how to pray, He gave them an example in the Model or Lord’s prayer. Corporate prayer teaches children how to pray. Take advantage of their presence and pray specifically for them, by name. Parents can lay hands on their children during this time and pray for them. Also, feel free to allow children to participate in this time of prayer.
- **(Pray) Blessing/Dismissal**--5 mins: Words are powerful and can bless the hearer. Close out the Family Worship Night by speaking or reading a word of blessing over the children. Use Scripture to guide and shape the blessing. Here is an from Ephesians 3:16-20

Ephesians 3:16–19

According to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (ESV)

General Best Practices:

- **Be safe and smart:** Ministry Safe Policies
 - Keep everyone in main living spaces. No bedrooms, offices, etc.

- Parent/Guardian should be the only adult who accompanies a child to the bathroom
- Never be alone with someone else's child.
- Don't discipline someone else's kid. Of course protect and steer them away from danger, but leave discipline up to mom or dad.
- **Be involved:** It can be tempting and easy to let the adults who “have it” do all the work and use the night to just socialize with adults. Avoid this. Every adult should be in there, connecting and engaging with children. As Home Group leaders, delegate out the different elements of Family Discipleship Time. Additionally, middle school and high school age children are capable of leading various elements of HGFDT. In fact, giving them tasks and responsibilities, instead of viewing them as just participants or spectators tends to be a more fruitful approach.
- **Be flexible:** If something isn't working, don't be afraid to scrap it and move onto the next activity. The goal of the night isn't perfect programming and execution. The goal is intergenerational interaction and discipleship.
- **Be prepared:** Have a plan. While the goal is not perfect programming, good preparation can be the difference between a successful or a stressful Home Group Family Discipleship night.

Involving Middle School and High School-Age Children:

HGFDT can be a place where middle school and high school-age children flourish. Although most of the curriculum suggested appeals primarily to preschool and elementary-age children, the Home Group can easily accommodate older children.

If your Home Group has older children, the best way to include and involve them is by giving them opportunities to lead. Instead of expecting the older children in the Home Group to participate like the preschool and elementary children, they can take ownership and be responsible for various elements of the HGFDT.

You'll find that most middle and high school students naturally and easily connect with young children. They can find purpose and enjoy a sense of belonging within the Home Group through serving during HGFDT.

Here's one factor to consider as you involve the older children in your Home Group. It may be best to assign responsibilities based upon the spiritual maturity of the older children. For example, if there is a high school student who doesn't profess to be a believer, it might be best to assign and open up responsibilities that don't involve teaching or explaining biblical truths. So instead of assigning this student a “read” or “pray” element of the HGFDT, a “play” or “sing” responsibility would be more appropriate.

6. Workshop:

Using the provided sample Preschool Family Discipleship Resource (Take-Home Sheet). Build out a complete Home Group Family Discipleship Time around this FD Time and the scripture it covers.

- Connect & Play: (What opening activity can child do?)
- Sing: (What songs will the group sing?)
- Memory Verse: (What is the memory verse of the month?)
- Read: (Who will lead the devotional time?)
- Activity: (What game or activity can reinforce the lesson?)
- Prayer: (How and what will be corporate prayer time look?)
- Closing/Blessing: (How and who will close?)

Now let's share with one another what we've come up with.

Hopefully, you now feel equipped to organize and lead your Home Group through the planning and execution of a Family Discipleship Time. It's my hope and prayer that as your group begins to implement into the regular rhythm of your meetings, your group begins to experience the following benefits:

- One less night a month parents in your group have to secure childcare/babysitters
- Parents who participate in Home Group Family Discipleship prioritize family discipleship in their own home
- The children in your Home Group get to see and experience Gospel-Centered Community firsthand
- Singles and couples without children get the opportunity to witness and gain family discipleship experience

This concludes the workshop. You're dismissed.

APPENDIX 5

HOME GROUP FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following instrument is the Family Discipleship Curriculum Evaluation Rubric. An expert panel made up of education professionals and ministry practitioners will use the rubric to evaluate and assess aspects of the curriculum including, biblical faithfulness, scope, methodology, and practicality.

HOME GROUP FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Name of Evaluator: _____			Date: _____		
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
The content of the curriculum is hermeneutically sound. All passages are properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
Scope					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the topic of Family Discipleship.					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently					

covers each issue it addresses.					
Methodology					
The curriculum makes use of various learning styles and approaches such as lecture, group discussion, visuals, homework, and case studies.					
The curriculum sequences content properly.					
Practicality					
The curriculum challenges participants to practice and implement acquired skills.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to implement family discipleship (time, moments, & milestones) in their own home.					

APPENDIX 6

MINISTRY PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING A FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MODEL AT THE VILLAGE CHURCH

The following plan outlines the promotion plan, training strategy, deliverables and resources, measurements, and goals necessary to implement the family discipleship model discussed in this ministry project.

MINISTRY PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING A FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MODEL
AT THE VILLAGE CHURCH

Ministry Implementation Plan: Family Discipleship Model at TVC
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The opportunity: The Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas lacks a ministry plan for implementing a family discipleship model. This plan is designed and intended to address and correct that shortcoming.

This plan will increase perceptions and participation of Family Discipleship by leveraging the Home Group model of spiritual formation to equip and train parents in Family Discipleship Time. Parents will practice Family Discipleship Time in community through the formal Home Group gathering.

Promotion: Promotion will target both (1) existing, and (2) newly formed Home Groups.

(1) Newly formed groups: Once a month, during week 2 of Group Connect, the Family Minister will present the Home Group Family Discipleship Time concept to new Home Groups. The content of the presentation is below.

“What do we do with the kids?”
How to incorporate children into your Home Group.
Matt McCauley
mmccauley@thevillagechurch.net

“What do we do with the kids?” This is a common and familiar question church leadership hears from Home Group leaders and participants.

A recent survey of Home Group leaders revealed that of Home Groups at TVC-Flower Mound, 86% have at least one child. The vast majority of our groups contain children. And, according to the same survey, their care and consideration is a topic among groups and group leaders.

Here is a sample of some of the responses we received:

- “We haven't found a way to do care affordably. This is what limits us from meeting more often.”
- “It is very difficult for us to meet as couples.”
- “This is probably the biggest concern my wife and I have leading Home Group is the childcare side of it. Since we have so many children in our group, people either can't find babysitters or don't want to pay and that causes a fracture in our community during the two times we formally meet each month. Based on how people respond when they cannot come, this seems to be a big problem for our group.”
- “We have a multi-gen group but some have dropped out because we do not provide childcare.”

Thankfully, the TVC Groups department provides a handful of very helpful and practical solutions. I would like to propose an additional solution that intentionally includes children in the Home Group gathering. It involves combining the vision of Family Discipleship Time and the Home Group context/gathering...A Home Group Family Discipleship Time

Before we get into the details, I want to do an exercise together: *Everyone close your eyes. I want you to picture/imagine your Home Group in your mind. A typical night. Where are you, what are you doing together as a group? What is the feel and dynamic of the group and the room? Sit in that for a little bit and let that picture play out in your mind.*

Now I want you to introduce children into the picture. What just happened to your Home Group...to that time? What changed? What do you feel now?

Many, perhaps most of us, have a mental model, picture of Home Groups that is not conducive and not friendly to children. It's not that children ruin Home Groups. Could it be that our idea, our mental model of Home Groups need to change in order to better accommodate children?

Why not just invest in and formalize organized child-care?

The Why: Why is it necessary for Home Groups to consider how they might better accommodate and incorporate children?

Three big biblical takeaways regarding children that should shape our perception of them:

- Children are whole people. Not almost people, future people, or nearly people. They are not “other”. They have the same foundational spiritual needs, wants, desires as adults. Even if your Home Group only has one child, that's one whole person ready to experience and participate in gospel-centered community.

- Children are a blessing, not a burden. Working and investing to incorporate children into Home Group gatherings directly opposes the common cultural view that they are a burden. That in some way they might bring down, slow down, or hinder the group from its mission and goal. The biblical worldview would argue that the presence of children is a blessing to the group; a gift.
- In the context of ministry, children present an opportunity to engage not an obstacle to overcome. Children are difficult, no doubt. They require special attention. Their needs are significant. But their presence presents an opportunity for significant ministry and discipleship. Jesus' example in regards to children is to welcome them into ministry context when possible.

So what could/should that time, when they are included, look like?

Children obviously cannot be present for every moment of every gathering, but I argue it is a loss and a miss if children are excluded from all the rich discipleship activity of the Home Group. I contend there is a happy medium between complete inclusion and complete exclusion of children in Home Groups.

What follows is a series of suggested models for meeting that considers all people in Home Groups and provides intentional discipleship and evangelism opportunities for every age and stage.

Model A:

Week 1: Elder Led-Prayer, All-Adult Gathering, Etc.
 Week 2: Women's Accountability/Study
 Week 3: Men's Accountability/Study
 Week 4: Family Discipleship Time

The advantage of this model is that childcare is outsourced only once a month versus multiple times per month. Single-parent homes can utilize other members of the group during men's and women's accountability/study nights.

Model B:

Week 1: Elder-Led Prayer
 Week 2: Adult Gathering
 Week 3: Family Discipleship Time
 Week 4: Adult Gathering

The advantage of this model is that even with the addition of a Family Worship Night, adults are still afforded two meetings a month for study, etc.

Model C: Bi-Monthly Gathering

Week 1 or 2: Adult Only Gathering
Week 3 or 4: Family Discipleship Time

Best Practices:

- Be safe and smart: Ministry Safe Policies
 - Keep everyone in main living spaces. No bedrooms, offices, etc.
 - Parent/Guardian should be the only adult who accompanies a child to the bathroom
 - Never be alone with someone else's child.
 - Don't discipline someone else's kid. Of course protect and steer them away from danger, but leave discipline up to mom or dad.
- Be involved: It can be tempting and easy to let the adults who "have it" do all the work and use the night to just socialize with adults. Avoid this. Every adult should be in there, connecting and engaging with children. As Home Group leaders, delegate out the different elements of Family Discipleship Time.
- Be flexible: If something isn't working, don't be afraid to scrap it and move onto the next activity. The goal of the night isn't perfect programming and execution. The goal is intergenerational interaction and discipleship.
- Be prepared: Have a plan. While the goal is not perfect programming, good preparation can be the difference between a successful or a stressful Home Group Family Discipleship night.

Question for Discussion:

- What is the hope for the children in our group?
- How will children be incorporated into the life and rhythm of your group?

Home Group leaders, If you are interested in attending a HGFDT workshop, please email mmccauley@thevillagechurch.net for information and a registration link for the next class.

Thank you for your time.

(2) Existing Groups: HGFDT promotion to existing groups will occur semi-annually in the spring Family Worship Weekend and in the fall during the Leader Conference.

During the Family Worship Weekend service, the HGFDT Video will be shown to the entire congregation. <https://vimeo.com/287504287/2df6e76c8f>

- In coordination with the Family Worship Weekend showing, the video will be posted to TVC social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter).

- Following the Family Worship Weekend video, the email invitation below will be sent to all Home Group leaders not implementing HGFDT.

Friends,

Hopefully, you got a chance to see the Home Group Family Discipleship video we showed during Family Worship Weekend services this past Sunday. If not, here's a [link](#) to view it.

I'm reaching out to see if it peaked your interest and to ask if you would consider incorporating a Home Group Family Discipleship Time into your group. If so, I'm leading a workshop in January during the 12:30 service that will cover best-practices. During the 80-minute worship, you'll learn how to plan, delegate, and execute successful Family Discipleship Times in your Home Group. Here are just a few of the benefits of incorporating it into your group:

1. One less night a month parents in your group have to secure childcare/babysitters
2. Parents who participate in Home Group Family Discipleship prioritize family discipleship in their own home
3. The children in your Home Group get to see and experience Gospel-Centered Community firsthand
4. Singles and couples without children get the opportunity to witness and gain family discipleship experience

You can register for the workshop and select your training date here.

Fall promotion will occur during the Leader Conference. The Family Minister will present the "What do we do with the kids?" presentation to current Home Group leaders and follow up the presentation with an email invitation to the HGFDT workshop.

Training: Semi-annual HGFDT Workshop for Home Group leaders. At the beginning of every semester (January and September), Home Group leaders interested in incorporating HGFDT can sign up for and attend a workshop during the 12:30 p.m. Sunday morning service. The workshop will incorporate the HGFDT curriculum and prepare the leaders to implement HGFDT in their Home Group.

Deliverables/Resources: The following resources have been created and will be utilized for HGFDT promotion and training:

- "What do we do with the kids?" presentation
- HGFDT Curriculum
- HGFDT Handout
- LV/KV Glossary and Vocabulary
- LV Memory Verse Calendar
- Music:

- LV and KV Albums
- LV Memory Verse Songs/Video
- Videos:
 - Role of the Family in Discipleship
 - What is Family Discipleship Time?
 - HGFDT Video

As Family Discipleship Time becomes part of the normal routine and rhythm of Home Groups, the hope is individual families will be encouraged and better equipped to practice Family Discipleship Time on their own.

Measurement: Quantitative measurements will be made to determine the success of the ministry plan.

- Quantitative: FDPPS
 - The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practice Survey will be administered through Survey Monkey to parents in Home Groups participating in HGFDT.
 - Participants will complete a pre- and post-FDPPS one-year apart. The two surveys will be compared for a statistically significant increase in perceptions and practice.
 - Following the HGFDT training and prior to the Home Group conducting its first HGFDT, households with children will complete the pre-FDPPS. Twelve months later, the same households will complete the post-FDPPS. Households that participated in less than 3 HGFDTs will be excluded from the results.
 - Control Group: The same pre- and post-FDPPS will be administered to the to a 12 Home Groups not utilizing HGFDT. Results will be compared to the Home Group implementing HGFDT.

Goals: The Ministry Plan has two major goals: (1) Church-wide adoption of HGFDT, and (2) An increase in family discipleship perceptions and practices among families that participated in HGFDT.

1. Church-wide—75%—adoption of HGFDT within 5 years.
 - a. By 2019, 24 HG groups participating in HGFDT. (Minimum of 3 HGFDT per semester). Twelve in 2018 and twelve more in 2019.
 - b. By the end of 2021, 50 percent of HGs with children will be implementing HGFDT. Currently, the Flower Mound campus of TVC has approximately 140 Home Groups with children. Total of 70 Home Groups doing HGFDT. To reach this goal, an average of 12 HG leaders need to attend each HGFDT workshop between 2019 and 2021. Based on 2018 and spring 2019 attendance, this is an attainable goal.
 - c. By the end of 2023, 75 percent of Home Groups with children will be implementing HGFDT.

2. Conduct t-test for dependent samples of pre- and post-FDPPS for experimental and control group. This goal will be considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-FDPPS scores among parents who participated in HGFDT. A t-test for dependent samples of pre- and post-FDPPS will also be conducted for the control group to determine if there was a statistically significant difference for those who did not participate in HGFDS. The hope is to see a greater positive difference within the experimental group—greater than that of the control group.

APPENDIX 5

MINISTRY PLAN FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following document is the Ministry Plan for Family Discipleship Evaluation Rubric. An expert panel made up of content strategists and communication experts will use the rubric to evaluate and assess aspects of the plan including, content, plausibility, scope, and practicality.

EVALUATION OF MINISTRY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Ministry Implementation Plan Evaluation Tool					
Name of Evaluator: _____			Date: _____		
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Content					
The plan is easy to understand. It's not overly complex or excessive.					
The plan's resources and deliverables are well produced and appealing.					
Plausibility					
The plan takes into account the church's resources and limitations.					
The goals of the model are realistic and attainable.					

Scope					
The plan considers and takes into account traditional and non-traditional families.					
The plan involves church various departments, ministries, and leaders with TVC.					
Practicality					
The plan is feasible.					
The plan is efficient.					

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING A FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MODEL AT THE VILLAGE CHURCH, FLOWER MOUND, TEXAS

Matthew Lynn McCauley, D.Ed.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Joseph C. Harrod

A survey of the Scriptures demonstrates that parents are commanded to disciple their children. A local church that is faithful to Scripture will communicate this biblical vision for family discipleship and equip its members to practice it. This project seeks to implement a ministry plan for a family discipleship model at The Village Church, Flower Mound, Texas. Chapter 1 presents the history and ministry context of The Village Church and states the purpose and goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides an exegesis of 5 biblical passages (Deut 6:1-8; Ps 78; House Churches in Acts; Eph 6:4; Titus 2:1-6) arguing that God has instituted two disciple-making institutions—the family and the church. Chapter 3 examines historical foundations for family discipleship, presenting the family as an indispensable disciple-making institution. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, presenting the content and teaching methodology for the Home Group Family Discipleship Time training curriculum. Chapter 5 concludes with an evaluation of the project based upon completion of the specified goals. Ultimately, this project hopes to leverage the Home Group or Cell Group model of Christian formation as a vehicle to equip parents in Family Discipleship within the local church.

VITA

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