

Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders in the Home

Douglas J. Schoelles



May 2009

ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING PARENTS TO BE SPIRITUAL LEADERS

IN THE HOME

by

Douglas J. Schoelles

The goal of this project was to effect a positive cognitive, affective, and behavioral response in parents from two Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations to lead their households in spiritual disciplines. The project consisted of four consecutive Sundays of preaching on faith forming in the home coupled with encouragement of the practice of a specific faith habit. These sermons were preached in tandem with four teaching sessions that reiterated the role of parents as spiritual leaders and concentrated on training families to engage in four faith habits in the home. Teaching tools were distributed to facilitate implantation of faith habits. An interdisciplinary approach contributed to the insights and design of the project. The literature review explored biblical, theological, sociological, and educational perspectives.

This study utilized surveys as a means of identifying and assessing faith-forming understandings, attitudes, and practices, of calculating the frequency of faith-forming practices, and of measuring the amount of change, if any, within a group of participants. The study found significant change in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses of parents to the role construct of being the spiritual leaders to their children. The study demonstrated significant correlation of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to one another in positively effecting the parental response in the role construct of spiritual leadership. Through MANCOVA analysis, every factor of the preaching and

teaching project was demonstrated to contribute to making a difference in the parental response to the role construct.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
EQUIPPING PARENTS TO BE SPIRITUAL LEADERS
IN THE HOME

presented by
Douglas J. Schoelles

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at
Asbury Theological Seminary

_____ Mentor	_____ May 8, 2009 Date
_____ Internal Reader	_____ May 8, 2009 Date
_____ Representative, Doctor of Ministry Program	_____ May 8, 2009 Date
_____ Executive Director	_____ May 8, 2009 Date

EQUIPPING PARENTS TO BE SPIRITUAL LEADERS
IN THE HOME

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Douglas J. Schoelles

May 2009

© 2009

Douglas John Schoelles

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
Acknowledgements	xi
Chapter 1 Problem	1
Background	1
A Challenge for a New Mission Church	3
A New Perspective	5
Movements of the Spirit and Small Groups	6
Biblical Pattern of Faith Formation	7
The Pattern Disrupted	8
My Own Family Faith Experience	9
Leaving Behind the Faith of Their Youth	11
Less Active Christians, Less Faith Formation	12
Children Living in a Toxic Society	14
Faith Formation Requires More than Churches	18
Positive Effects of Living in Families with an Active Faith	21
Impediments to Families Being Active in Their Faith at Home	26
Equipping Parents to Guide Their Families in Faith	28
Purpose Stated	30
Research Questions	30
Research Question 1	31

Research Question 2	31
Research Question 3	31
Definition of Terms.....	31
Parents.....	31
Spiritual Leadership	32
Faith Formation.....	32
Ministry Intervention	32
Context.....	35
Methodology	35
Participants.....	35
Instrumentation	36
Variables	37
Data Collection	37
Data Analysis.....	38
Delimitations and Generalizability	38
Theological Foundation	38
Overview of the Dissertation	39
Chapter 2 Literature	41
Biblical and Ecclesial Theology of Family Faith Formation.....	41
Biblical View of Children.....	41
Biblical Pattern of Passing on the Faith.....	47
The Importance of Passing on the Faith	51
The Pattern of the Church.....	53

Why the Family Is Critical to Faith Formation.....	67
Biblical View of Family.....	67
Family as the “Domestic Church”	70
Change in Congregational Orientation	72
Developmental Role of Family	73
Spiritual Role of Mothers and Fathers	78
Countercultural Living.....	85
Training Children to Live as a Holy Nation	89
Why Living Out the Story Is Critical to Faith Formation.....	92
Teaching Children to Live into the Story	92
Four Habits of Living the Story	95
Scripture Reading.....	98
Spiritual Conversations.....	101
Prayer and Ritual Devotions	105
Sharing the Faith in Word and Deed.....	106
As an Effective Missional Approach to Faith Formation	110
As a Method to Motivate Parents.....	110
As a Method to Create Change	115
Summary	118
Chapter 3 Methodology	119
Purpose Restated.....	119
Research Questions	120
Research Question 1	120

Research Question 2	120
Research Question 3	121
Population and Participants.....	121
Design of the Study.....	122
Instrumentation	122
Pilot Test	127
Variables	128
Reliability and Validity.....	129
Data Collection	129
Data Analysis	130
Ethical Procedure	131
Chapter 4 Findings.....	132
Profile of Participants	132
Research Questions.....	137
Research Question #1: Cognitive Response	138
Research Question #2: Affective Response	140
Research Question #3: Behavioral Response	141
Correlation	144
Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA)	147
Summary of Findings.....	148
Conceptual Cognitive Response	149
Operational Cognitive Response.....	149
Affective Response	149

Behavioral Response.....	149
Correlation of the Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral.....	150
Preaching and Teaching Project	150
Chapter 5 Discussion	151
Major Findings.....	151
Significant Change in Cognitive Response.....	151
Significant Change in Affective Response	152
Significant Change in Behavioral Response.....	153
Correlation of the Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral.....	154
The Importance of the Different Factors of the Project.....	155
Implications of Findings	156
Getting into a Groove.....	157
More than Just Children.....	158
Investing in Men to Be Spiritual Leaders	159
Long-Term Process.....	160
The Role of the Church in Faith at Home.....	163
A Critical Evangelism Strategy in North America	166
Limitations of the Study.....	169
Survey Instrument	169
Data Collection	169
Length of Study.....	170
Self-Selection of Survey and Focus Group Participants.....	171
Single Parent Families	171

Generalizability.....	172
Consideration of Individual Factors.....	172
Unexpected Conclusions.....	172
Impact upon Families with Teenagers	173
Growth in Faith Maturity	173
Retaining Families with Children	174
Suggestions for Further Study	175
Postscript.....	176
Appendixes	
A. Logistical Planning	177
B. Letters and Announcements.....	182
C. Research Instruments	193
D. “Are the Kids Alright?” Sermons Outlines.....	211
E. Curriculum	219
Works Cited	244

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1.1.	Lutheran Teenagers' Experience of Religious Activity in the Home.....	14
1.2.	Where or with Whom Children Spend Their Time	20
3.1.	Key to Code for Types of Questions in the Survey Instrument.....	125
3.2.	Distribution of Types of Questions in the Survey Instrument	126
4.1.	Demographic Composition of the Population Sample.....	133
4.2.	Mean Scores, Pretest, Posttest and Difference, by Subscale	138
4.3.	Correlation of Dependent Variables	146

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

4.1.	Number of Sermons Heard	134
4.2.	Number of Teaching Sessions Attended.....	135
4.3.	Number of Teaching Tools Used.....	136
4.4.	Frequency of Teaching Tools Used	137

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give thanks to

The LORD who spoke faith and this idea into me.

My parents, JoanEllen and Richard Schoelles, who shared the faith with me.

Isabel, my beloved wife, for your excitement and encouragement, not just for this dissertation, but for every life venture, and for shepherding our children with me.

My incredible children, Richard, Joshua, and Rebekah. In many ways I took on this project to be a better father to you. Thank you for putting up with all the times I had to be gone from home. I look forward to more time with you.

The people of Church of the Resurrection. Thank you for helping me through your involvement in the project and the surveys and for upholding me with your prayers, your encouragement, and your love.

My colleagues who encouraged this endeavor, participated in it, and helped me be more effective to carry out this project: Rev. Anton Kern and Rev. Philip J Geleske.

My fellow Beeson Pastors, Rev. Dr. Devon Smith, Rev. Dr. Reid Thomas, and Rev. Dr. Chris Carter, for your practical advice and encouragement to get this done.

Angie and Brian Swanson. I am blessed to have a generous sister-in-law and brother-in-law. Thank you for the frequent times I was able to escape to your place to work.

My Reflection Group, Olivia Walker, Maria Collins, Angie Swanson, and Gennifer Gibson. Our sessions together reminded me of why I love being your pastor and friend.

Dr. Chris Keisling, for your willingness to provide valuable guidance and wisdom.

Dr. Cathy Stonehouse, my faculty mentor. I have been enriched by our discussions and this project made better by your guidance. Thank you for your patience and confidence.

Dedicated to

Rev. Dr. Shane Brue, my fellow Beeson Pastor and friend, who has completed the race,
and his wife Jill and their children.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,
he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also
through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Romans 8:11

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Background

Before my wife and I started this mission church in far north Fort Worth, Texas, we were delusional. We thought we would have Lutheran Christians eager to come out of the woodwork to help plant an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregation that would move in new directions, seeking to connect with unchurched people. After visiting a variety of megachurches such as Willowcreek and Northpoint in Alpharetta, Georgia, and Fellowship in Grapevine, Texas, we also had the delusion that we would plant a church with a high energy, entertaining children's ministry. I do not know why we had this delusion because neither of us had any experience carrying out a high energy children's ministry. Just as our visions had been fulfilled when we transitioned our last congregation, we assumed others would flock to our vision to help start this new church, and a dynamic children's ministry would just emerge.

When we were considering accepting this call to develop the Westlake-Roanoke ELCA mission, we were told we would have ten families with whom to start. When we arrived the summer of 2003 in far northeast Tarrant County, three families showed up, and after six months I grew that down to one family. I visited two local ELCA churches that were willing to let me recruit people to come join this mission adventure. After letters, some classes and preaching, out of two churches with more than 2,400 members combined, I was able to entice eight people to come on board. We began holding worship in my house with the children either worshipping with us or playing upstairs while a Christian cartoon played on the television. After my near fatal auto accident in July 2004,

we moved into a small hotel conference room. With twenty or so people in worship, we conducted the nursery and children's ministry in a hotel room. After nearly a year, we moved into an elementary school cafeteria. The rent for the school cafeteria was high, and additional classrooms were not available, so the children's ministry was in the hallway.

Thirty to sixty people worshipped with us on Sundays, of whom one-third to one-half were children. With a scant number of volunteers to take on the nursery and the children's ministry, we were limited as to what we could accomplish. With our meager resources, we conducted a nursery and a children's chapel. For the children's chapel, the children were excused from the worship service after the children's message to go with their leader for the duration of the sermon. In spite of the limited performance of the children's ministry, the children demonstrated spiritual growth. They express an eagerness to come to church and willingly invite their friends to church. When they come with their families, they participate in the worship with the exception of the sermon time. They help set up and break down like every other regular member.

The chasm between the delusion and the reality has been disheartening to many leaders. Lacking a permanent space, enough volunteers, and even commitment to do anything resembling a Sunday school, the church's children's ministry has limped along, providing a basic nursery and a time-occupying children's program during the sermon. Otherwise, the children participated in worship, bringing along behavior problems. Dealing with effectiveness of children's ministry was critical to the future expansion of Church of the Resurrection.

A Challenge for a New Mission Church

Church of the Resurrection is targeting the rapidly growing suburban developments of far north Fort Worth, Texas. Based on U. S. Census data, our target zip code area household size was projected to increase from 3.0 to 3.2 people from 2000 to 2008, indicating an increasing number of children (*Demographic ZIP Code Report*). The suburban developments of far northeast Fort Worth are filled with young families with children. In order to attract young families, churches need to make parents and children feel that they have a value-added experience when they come to a church. To be a vibrant church ministering to the community, the church must serve the needs of young families and their children if this church is to grow numerically in this area.

As many households have both parents working, the families are overextended in their schedules. The families do not have enough time together. One of the activities eliminated in the schedule to make more time for the family is worship attendance. “Busy schedules have pushed religious activities off the calendar” (E. Roehlkepartain, *Teaching Church* 173). Frequently spiritual commitments are ignored over academic and sports commitments. “The church competes with sports leagues and other extracurricular activities that vie for the family’s time-even Sunday mornings” (Holmen, *Building Faith* 41). As families often focused inward, church can viewed as a time detractor. “Asked whether people are spending more discretionary time on family activities or church commitments, 76 percent said the scale tipped toward family activities” (Reed 35). The church is not considered relevant enough to warrant the time investment or discipline hassles with young children.

Many churches are doing spectacular, entertaining children's and youth ministries in our surrounding area. Church of the Resurrection is blatantly aware that we do not have the people or the resources to carry out a full-fledge Sunday school, let alone match up with the six megachurches and the other large churches in our area. Our real competition is not with other churches; it is with the secular world.

We cannot and do not wish to compete with megachurch Disneyesque Sunday school programs. Rather than accept that an ostensible weakness is necessarily a weakness, what others may perceive as our weakness may actually be our strength. Our small size, our lack of resources, or even a lack of a building forces us to look for innovative ways of ministering to children. We live a faith where our weaknesses are opportunities for God's strength to shine through us (2 Cor. 12:9). Rather than assuming large production Sunday schools are the preferred mode; we allege the Sunday school model is a disadvantage in forming the faith of children. We are challenged to shift our focus from a dependence on congregational instruction to an emphasis upon family-centered, daily faith formation. We want to develop a ministry to children and youth that plays to our strengths and becomes an advantage for this small mission church. We seek a more indigenous, simpler, organic, and biblical model. Rather than outsourcing the spiritual formation of children to the church, we believe a better approach is empowering parents to raise up their own children in the faith as the Bible indicates. The greatest influence a church can have in effecting the faith of children is by impacting their parents.

Contrary to putting on a children's ministry that simply entertains and sequesters noisy children so the parents enjoy worship, we desire to have a ministry that treats

children as full and fellow participants in the kingdom of God. We believe that having a children's ministry that places a real dependence upon the parents to lead their children spiritually at home would be a benefit for the children, the families, and the congregation. Because of its communal network of relationship, the small church has the opportunity to provide what the megachurch cannot provide. We also believe that as we minister to children and families with an authoritative and redemptive gospel they learn to live out in their everyday families, we have the opportunity to provide for our families what the secular world cannot offer (John 14:27). When families discover the power and blessing that family faith formation has for them, they will enjoy a value-added experience in belonging to this small church.

A New Perspective

One day during my devotions, I was reading 2 Kings where parents sacrificed their children to the idol Molech. In exchange for the life of children, Molech promised prosperity (Lev. 18:21; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:10; Jer. 32:35). The Spirit spoke into my heart to recognize that many parents today are doing the same thing. They are working two jobs in order to have a three thousand square foot home and two new automobiles. In exchange they are sacrificing the time they have with their children. Because less than 35 percent of the larger community are active churchgoers, their children's spiritual upbringing can be assumed to be sacrificed as well. As living a life with God is not a priority for them, they do not see what their children lack spiritually, nor do they understand how they ought to teach them. Martin Luther spoke about parental preoccupations in his own day:

They do what King Manasseh did. This king sacrificed his son to the idol Molech and burned him. What else is it but to sacrifice one's own child to

an idol and burn it when parents train their children more in the love of the world than in the love of God, and let their children go their own way and get burned up in worldly pleasure, love, enjoyment, lust, goods, and honor, but let God's love and honor and the love of eternal blessings be extinguished in them? (*Luther's Works* 44: 83)

Luther held that fathers and mothers were pastors and bishops to their children. He labored as a pastor and a reformer to equip parents to exercise the primary responsibility in teaching the faith to their children and anyone else in their household.

Movements of the Spirit and Small Groups

While I was in the Beeson program at Asbury Theological Seminary, I was introduced to the history of Wesley and Methodism for the first time. I came to recognize that every significant growth movement of the Spirit in the Church has always been accompanied and powered by small groups. The early Church was a house church movement (Acts 2). These small groups led the Christ community to grow in three hundred years from 120 people to one-third of the population of the Roman Empire. In his book, George G. Hunter, III relays that when Bishop Patrick went to Ireland in AD 432, he went with a team of missionaries who carried out small group ministries. The small group method was instrumental in evangelizing 95 percent of the island within just a few generations, causing the re-evangelization of Western Europe through the 600's. Among the Methodists and other evangelical movements of the 1700s and 1800s that swept through England and America, small groups played a critical role in the evangelization and discipling of believers. Unlike the Methodists, small groups are not a strong pattern in the Lutheran heritage. Few Lutheran churches have vital small group ministries. The lack of small group ministries calls into question what propelled the Lutheran reformation through northern Europe that caused such an intense revival of the

faith. Recognizing that every significant reform of the Church by the Holy Spirit has included some form of small group, Luther and his adherents must have used some small group method to spread an infectious spirituality.

Looking to the emphasis and enduring success of Luther's Small Catechism helps to uncover the answer. Contrary to current practice, the Small Catechism was not written for pastors and church professionals to teach. Luther encouraged the Small Catechism to be taught in the home by parents, especially by fathers. The small group Luther used to disciple Christ followers in the faith was the God-given small group, the family.

Biblical Pattern of Faith Formation

As the family is the building block of society and the basic unit of faith communities, it was the primary place for faith instruction. For God's people in the Old Testament, parents had to train their children to live as strangers in the land, to live differently than those around them. A family acting as the faith incubator is the God-ordained format.

When Moses asks the name of God, he hears, "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob" (Exod. 3:6, NRSV). The name of God as the "God of our fathers" (and mothers) suggests that the context of faith formation is passing the faith from one generation to the next.

The *Shema*, the primary creedal confession of the Hebrew faith, is placed in the context of parents teaching the faith to their children (Deut. 6:4-9). This demand that the parents teach the faith to their children is restated only a few chapters later:

You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.

Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth. (Deut. 11:18-21)

The Lord promises blessings to the families who teach faith in the household. Any notion that the families the Lord speaks to in Deuteronomy or anywhere else in the Bible as being perfect or solid in order to necessitate faith formation is a false one. The families in the Bible, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are not perfect models of family function. Many of these biblical families are models of dysfunction. Even the family of Jesus has a tense beginning and at some point becomes a single parent household.

The good news, however, is that God redeems people. Regardless of the messengers, God's word has power. Believing God's promise, my premise is that even if the parents do not have a firm faith, if they will begin some basic patterns, God will be faithful. In fact, I believe that as parents teach the basics of faith, they too will be growing in faith. Most likely, the children will be challenging them. I also believe a comprehensive ministry to children in the home results in firming up the parents in their marriage. Parents do not have to be perfect, just good enough, or, better yet, simply faithful enough.

The Pattern Disrupted

At some point in the last century, the responsibility of parents to teach the faith was abandoned, and parents just dropped off the children for Sunday school. With the end of World War II, a steady increase of two income families and single parent families resulted in adults having less time to spend in religious socialization with their children (Kreider and Fields 14). During this period, a corresponding expansion of institutionalization and professionalism occurred in the United States. Faith formation

that had been a partnership between the family and the church became the primary responsibility of the church because it is the professional religious institution. With ministries to children that were initially intended to supplement the family, churches supplanted the family as the locus of faith formation:

In the 1960's and 1970's, the Church saw an explosion in Christian education through Sunday School and youth group ministries. Churches added educational wings and youth rooms to their facilities. At the same time, society entered into the technology age and families began to get busier. Work schedules increased and more moms started working. When the church began offering ministries for children and teenagers, parents welcomed the opportunity to bring their kids to church for a time of Christian education and fun. Quite honestly, for many parents, this provided a needed break from their children. (Holmen, *Faith Begins* 45)

The research for the *Effective Christian Education* study in 1990 showed a decreasing frequency of religious activity in the home by age group. "The pattern suggests, pending further research, that since World War II, religious socialization has not been as strong as it was for those born between 1900 and 1920" (Benson and Elkin 42). In other words, after World War II, the spiritual habits of faith formation in the home have been disrupted.

My Own Family Faith Experience

In my own family of origin, although we grew up actively involved in a Lutheran church, my parents gave limited faith instruction. My parents were active in the church as youth ministry leaders, as catechism instructors, and in other ways. At home, while we observed their model, we children received little direct spiritual guidance. We had prayers at bedtime when we were young children, but that practice had died out by the time my younger brother was born. While we had children's Bibles, we rarely read them at bedtime. Although we prayed at every meal, we rarely talked about God or other issues

of faith at the dinner table. Faith discussions were not intentionally encouraged by my parents and occurred sporadically at best. Even though I attended worship services, Sunday school and youth ministry regularly through high school, I was biblically illiterate as a young adult. My brother, sister, and I all engaged in at-risk behavior as teenagers. Not until I was twenty-eight years old did my father let me know that he had a regular early morning prayer time.

Never having experienced a pattern of home devotions and receiving precious little discussion about the domestic church even in seminary, I have struggled to enact devotional practices in my family. Based on what was modeled for me, we have always said prayers at mealtime. While I prayed with the children often at night, not until my two sons were in elementary school did I begin reading the Bible to them at night. I was motivated because the school requested parents to read with their children. We have used Luther's morning and evening prayers from the Small Catechism sporadically. We used the Faith Talk kit developed by Merton Strommen and Charles Bruning in my home as well. My children became enthusiastic about its use, but between constantly being put away and my forgetfulness, we have, for all intents and purpose, discontinued its use. If I am struggling to implement home devotions and I am the resident theologian, I know the devotional life in most of our congregational families is even more sporadic.

When we began this church, we had a vision of creating a ministry that impacted families by equipping parents in their marriages, their parenting, and their finances. Now we realize that we also need to equip them to be the spiritual leaders in their homes. Our challenge is how to accomplish that training.

Leaving Behind the Faith of Their Youth

The often-quoted statistic that most Christians come to faith by the time they are eighteen years old demonstrates that the critical years for developing faith are during childhood. George Barna's research on the topic clarifies that for the most part people have established their religious beliefs by the time they are thirteen years old (*Transforming Children* 34). What is surprising is how early the foundation is set. "By the age of nine, most of the moral and spiritual foundations of a child are in place" (*Revolutionary Parent* 58).

In February 2008, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life released the *U. S. Religious Landscape Survey*, which sought to evaluate changes in the religious make up of the United States. A main emphasis of the survey was to compare the current affiliations of adults with the religious affiliation of their childhoods. The grouping that showed the largest increase in affiliation was among those who say they have no religious affiliation. A significant number of people, 12.7 percent, who were Christians as children now say they have no religious affiliation (25). Currently 16.1 percent of the total adult population is unaffiliated or unchurched (23).

As a single religious group, Hindus show the highest retention of childhood members at 84 percent (*U. S. Religious Landscape Survey* 30). While Christians have left the faith of their childhood, they still maintain a high retention rate as well. Even though they may have changed denominational affiliation, 84 percent of Christian Protestants were raised in a Protestant household (28). Although many Catholics leave the Catholic Church, they do not leave the Christian faith. Lutherans, along with Baptists and Adventists, had the highest retention rates at roughly 60 percent (31). This data bears out

the often-quoted statistic that 85 percent of Christians come to faith in Jesus by the time they are eighteen because 85 percent of Christian adults continue in the faith of their childhood.

Christians may be satisfied with the retention of people from childhood, but the looming issue is that one in four adults, ages eighteen to twenty-nine, claims no religious affiliation. This percentage is higher than for any other age group. Although this age group typically experiences a period away from religious participation, the trend is that people are not returning to the church as evidenced by the growing number of the unaffiliated. In the 1970s the estimate of church youth who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ was 30 percent. By 1990 the estimate had substantially dropped to 11 percent (Strommen and Hardel 124). In assessing the changes of postmodernity upon society and the mission of the church, Gerard Kelly warns, “Unless faith is deeply rooted in the lives of the young, they will not carry it with them into their later adult years” (181). Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel conclude, “Fewer church families are producing the kind of youth whose hearts are committed to the mission of Jesus Christ” (14). The vitality of the faith in the home will determine the vitality of faith in the church.

Less Active Christians, Less Faith Formation

While the trends in what are proclaimed as religious affiliations may not be worrisome, the Pew study did not address the more tangible indicator of religious participation. While worship attendance has fluctuated over the past twenty years, other indicators of spiritual activity point to a downward trend.

The *Effective Christian Education* study says most adults and adolescents spend at best thirty hours a year in Christian education. This study of six mainline

denominations states that for the significant majority of adults, faith is underdeveloped, lacking key elements needed for faith maturity. Only a minority of adults evidence a mature faith that is integrated, vibrant, and life encompassing (Benson and Eklin 3). For mainline Christians, such as Lutherans, the number of people who have an immature faith is more than one in three people of all ages. When conducted in 1990, the Search Institute surveyed adults in their twenties and thirties, finding nearly one-half demonstrated an immature faith (13). These adults in their twenties and thirties are now parents. The children of these adults from 1990s demonstrating a less developed faith will not be surprising.

If basic religious behavior of worship attendance is decreasing, then personal spiritual practices of prayer, Scripture reading, talking about the faith, and doing works of service may decrease as well. Declining spiritual and biblical knowledge in adults is well documented. With declining spiritual patterns in adults, the assumption is a decline in the spiritual patterns in the lives of children. Parents who neglect faith practices model that faith is insignificant for their children.

In the 1990 study, *Effective Christian Education*, faith maturity was linked to the key biographical factors of conversation with one's parents about faith, family devotions, servant tasks done together as a family, the experience of a caring church, and service to others. The study demonstrates that the majority of parents were doing little to nothing to lead their children in the faith (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1. Lutheran Teenagers' Experience of Religious Activity in the Home

Teenagers (16-19) Who Say That the Activity Occurred <i>Rarely</i> or <i>Never</i> for Them	
Event and Age	%
Talked to mother about faith or God: during ages 5-12	38
Talked to mother about faith or God: during ages 13-15	35
Talked to father about faith or God: during ages 13-15	56
Talked to other relatives about faith or God: during ages 13-15	63
Family devotions: during ages 3-5	54
Family devotions: during ages 13-15	64
Family projects to help others: during ages 5-12	66
Family projects to help others: during ages 13-15	63
Talked to best friends about faith or God: during ages 13-15	47
Current 3 to 5 best friends are very religious	13

Source: *Effective Christian Education* 50.

“Deficits” in these key biographical factors are also evident among adults (Bensen and Eklin 42). With less spiritually mature and less religiously active adults, the likelihood that Christian children will continue in the faith is decreased. Strommen and Hardel state that the church is losing children from the Christian faith “because the tradition of passing on the faith is disappearing” from the homes of Protestants and Catholics (14). “The next generation may have faith but only if the present generation in the church is faithful in living that life of faith with them” (Westerhoff 141).

Children Living in a Toxic Society

For all the emphasis upon no child being left behind, the current American society is toxic to children. “Although we live in an apparently child-centered culture, our dominant attitude toward children is one of indifference and even contempt as our treatment of poor children indicates” (Bunge, *Child in Christian Thought* 19). Children are not only of little value in this society, but increasingly this society encourages

systemic patterns that are damaging to children physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The marketplace, seeking children's disposable income, caters to them as consumers. They are peppered with advertizing by the commercials and shows they watch. Various venues from theme parks to video game stores are designed to entertain them. This society also exposes them to violence, sexual predators, and neglect. Just as obesity is a symptom of the unhealthy patterns among adults, obesity can be assumed to be a symptom of what is going on inside children and in their lives as well. The Surgeon General estimates that more than 17 percent of children are now estimated to be obese ("Childhood Overweight and Obesity Prevention"). "In the midst of unprecedented material affluence, large and growing numbers of US. children and adolescents are failing to flourish" (Commission on Children 8). Across this country and even across socioeconomic lines, the Commission on Children at Risk writes that children are having increasing problems:

US. young people not only appear to be experiencing sharp increases in mental illness and stress and emotional problems, but also continue to suffer from high rates of related behavioral problems such as substance abuse, school dropout, interpersonal violence, premature sexual intercourse and teenage pregnancy. (9)

The commission attributes the crisis in children to a lack of connectedness: "close connections to other people and deep connections to moral and spiritual meaning" (5).

One of the key stressors for children is the breakdown of family (Commission on Children 40). Family structure changed little from 1880 to 1970, where between 83 to 85 percent of children lived with two parents. From 1970 to 1990, when divorces dramatically increased, the number of children living in single parent households doubled from 12 percent to 25 percent (Kreider and Fields 14). At the time of the 2000 census,

that statistic had changed little. While 71 percent of children live with two parents, the number living in blended families has increased. Today, one-third of children are born out of wedlock, so the numbers of children living with single mothers is increasing. Because more children are born out of wedlock and living in single-parent homes, just over 17 percent of children are living in poverty. Whereas two parent families make up less than one-third of the household situation of children living in poverty, single mothers with children make up 40 percent, more than any other grouping (5):

Children raised by both biological parents are less likely than children raised in single or step-parent families to be poor, to drop out of school, to have difficulty finding a job, to become teen parents or to experience emotional or behavioral problems. (*Marriage Promotion 1*)

The fragmentation and weakening of the two-parent family is detrimental to the well-being of children.

John H. Westerhoff, III describes the “ecology” in which Christians were once nurtured by stating that life in a typical American town nurtured people in a Christian ethos (11). Public schools functioned as Protestant parochial schools with daily reading of the Bible and textbooks complete with moral and religious lessons. Even the media reinforced religious themes with a great number of religious periodicals to entertain. Typical church was a community neighborhood congregation where all generations regularly interacted. Moreover, the church was a social center in the community. Sunday school was an integral part of the ecclesial effort to form faith in an intergenerational faith community. The two-parent family was basically secure and stable. Families were larger, connected with an extended intergenerational family network. Divorce was rare; one-parent families were few; and, interfaith marriages were almost non-existent. The family contributed significantly to the nurturing of faith formation.

The environment Westerhoff describes does not exist today. Life in much of America, especially in urban centers, with its hectic pace, consumerism, and pluralism is at odds with a Christian ethos. “Our culture, in contrast to former generations, no longer supports and encourages religious faith. Rather, it undermines it” (Strommen and Hardel 73). The contemporary culture worships multiple gods, believes all gods are equal, and encourages religious faith to be kept private. Public schools are mandated to exist as irreligious vacuums where the Christian faith is studied simply as a social phenomenon. Contemporary mass media are antagonistic to the Christian faith portraying Christians as inept or villainous characters and promoting lifestyles that are hedonistic, materialistic, and individualistic, contrary to Christian ethos. Christians live in an environment that is antagonistic to the discipleship lifestyle. In today’s society, Christians are increasingly ridiculed in the mass media, and in intellectual circles people of faith are criticized and ostracized. Contemporary Christians live in a pagan culture much like the early Christians did. Lesslie Newbigin assesses Western civilization as a culture of religious pluralism with “a worldview shaped by the assumptions of rational and spiritual humanism” (4). This secular pluralistic culture is at odds with the culture of God’s people just as the Canaanite culture was at odds with the Israelite culture. In this setting, congregations are not key centers of intergenerational community. Church does not occupy a significant social role in the life of most Americans. Church leaders express a high level of concern about the ability of Christian education efforts to pass on the faith effectively:

Prominent concerns included disinterest by adults in adult educational programs, the failure to maintain the involvement of youth after eighth grade, the increasing difficulty of finding and keeping volunteer teachers, the apparent disinterest of clergy in education, the inability to draw parents

into the educational process, and the failure of current programs and educational methods to address the changing needs and interests of adults, adolescents, and children. (Benson and Eklin 1)

Within the secular, pluralistic culture, Christian education efforts are struggling to impart the faith to children.

In this situation, families are not as robust. Extended families are often living great distances from one other. Unlike the past, high incidences of divorce, single-parent families, and interfaith marriages exist, especially in American urban centers impact the amount of time and effort parents will spend teaching their children the faith. As already stated, less than 12 percent of families engage in nearly daily spiritual activity, which means that children in 88 percent of families have little to no spiritual formation in the home.

In the context of the American secular culture, an hour in Sunday school on its own cannot have a significant impact upon the spiritual formation of children:

For all their specialized training, church professionals realize that if a child is not receiving basic Christian nurture in the home, even the best teachers and curriculum will have minimal impact. Once-a-week exposure simply cannot compete with daily experience where personal formation is concerned. (Thompson 26)

The spiritual impact is further limited when the primary mode of Sunday school is the “instructional paradigm” that encourages “busy ourselves with teaching about Christianity” whether in a schoolroom format or some Disneyesque program (Westerhoff 18).

Faith Formation Requires More than Churches

In many ways churches appropriated the role of parents. “A majority of churches are actually guilty of perpetuating an unhealthy and unbiblical process wherein the

church usurps the role of the family and creates an unfortunate, sometimes exclusive, dependency upon the church for the child's spiritual nourishment" (Barna, *Transforming Children* 81). Marilyn Sharpe, Director of Cross+generational Ministries with the Youth and Family Institute, says church leaders have led parents to believe they were not needed in the spiritual direction of their children. Even though the dismissal of parental involvement was not intentional, churches have taken this responsibility out of parents' hands and have implicitly told them it is not their job and they are not competent to teach the faith to their children. "Parents looked to church professionals and those trained by church professionals to do all of the Christian education, spiritual direction and values inculcation for their children and youth" (14; see also Martinson 400). An example of the undermining of the parental role is a letter from Northwood, a megachurch in Keller, Texas, sent to participants in their Wednesday evening program, inviting parents to come and see what is happening in the children's program. The letter included this line: "What a terrific chance to tell your child's coach thanks for the investment they have made in your child's life!" While the sentiment can be appreciated, the subtext of the comment, especially with the title of coach for the instructor, is someone who is more qualified to equip their children spiritually. The letter ends with, "You will see why Wednesday nights at Northwood is a blast!" Even though the letter opens with the reward of seeing many of the children growing in their faith journey, the closing appeal is not for the spiritual maturation of the child, but the entertainment.

Faith formation is a matter of time and investment. By the time children reach eighteen years old, they will, on average, have watched eighteen thousand hours of television. By the time children graduate from high school, they will have had more than

twelve thousand hours of instruction. Nevertheless, even if children went to church for three hours a week, fifty weeks each year, by the time they were eighteen years old they would have been in church only 2,700 hours, which is simply not enough time to counter the increasingly non-Christian messages to which they are exposed. As Rich Melheim writes, “52 minutes in a week in church will do very little if the faith is not being reinforced in the home the other 10,028 minutes” (22). Even Reggie Joiner, director of the children’s ministry at Northpointe, a megachurch outside of Atlanta, said in a presentation at Willowcreek’s Promiseland children’s ministry seminar that the emphasis had to shift from the church to the parents. While a church would be fortunate to get fifty to a hundred hours in a year’s time with children, parents spend nearly three thousand quality hours with their children each year. By the time children are eighteen years old, they will have had more than 52,000 hours with their two parents. While parental influence decreases as children age, parents remain the number one influence in their children’s lives even into their mid-twenties (Strommen and Hardel 49-50; E. Roehlkepartain, *Teaching Church* 172).

Table 1.2. Where or with Whom Children Spend Their Time

Number of Hours Children Spend with Parents, Television, Church or School by the Age of 18				
	Hours per			
	Week	Weeks	Years	Total Hours
School +	35	36	12	15,120
Television	24	52	18	22,464
Church ++	3	50	18	2,700
Mom	31	52	18	29,016
Dad	25	52	18	23,400

+180 days required each year.

++An optimistic estimate if a family attends weekly both worship and Christian education classes.

Source: *Texas Education Code*, Section 25.081; Holt, Ippolito, Desrochers, and Kelley 11; Sandberg and Hofferth 391-95.

The *Effective Christian Education* study lists that the two most powerful factors when developing faith maturity in youth: family religiousness and extensive exposure to formal Christian education. In this report that promotes formal Christian education, family religiousness emerges as slightly more important:

The particular experiences most tied to greater faith maturity are the frequency with which an adolescent talked with mother and father about faith, the frequency of family devotions, and the frequency with which parents and children together were involved in efforts, formal and informal, to help other people. (Benson and Eklin 38)

For influencing spiritual development, the top four factors for whether children will have faith are (1) what the mother says, (2) what the father says, (3) what the mother does, and (4) what the father does.

The institutional church's children's programs tend to emphasize imparting information. Conveying information is not the right approach to make life change. While information is necessary, information will not impart faith. As Westerhoff and most other children's ministry authors state, much of the most significant learning comes through informal means (e.g., Yust; Stonehouse; Thompson).

Positive Effects of Living in Families with an Active Faith

Christian Smith and Phillip Kim in their research report *Family Religious Involvement and the Quality of Parental Relationships for Families with Early Adolescents* from the National Study of Youth and Religion state, "Religiously involved families of early adolescents, ages 12 to 14, living in the United States appear to have significantly stronger relationships between mothers and fathers than families that are not

religiously active” (5). They determined the level of family religious involvement by examining how frequently the family does something religious whether attending worship services, praying, or reading Scriptures together. They also determined the level of family religious involvement by researching how frequently parents engaged in prayer and Bible reading and attended worship services. They also surveyed the quality of relationships between mothers and fathers. “Family religious activity, parental attendance and prayer are often significantly associated with positive parental relationships” (6). Even youth from families with less religious activity are still more likely to report stronger parental relationships than youth from irreligious families, 34 percent of all youth. In the actively religious families, mothers and fathers are more likely to encourage and help one another, more likely to express love to one another, more likely to be fair and willing to compromise with their spouses, and they are less likely to blame, insult, and scream at their spouses.

In Family Religious Involvement and the Quality of Family Relationships for Early Adolescents, another research report from the National Study of Youth and Religion, Smith and Kim demonstrate a significant correlation between religiously involved families and the teens within those families having stronger family relationships in comparison with teens in families not religiously involved. Those early adolescents in heavily involved religious families showed the most significant difference. They were more likely to

- Enjoy stronger relationships with their mothers and fathers, according to multiple measures,
- participate in family activities, such as eating dinner together, and

- not run away from home (6).

Religiously active families regardless of frequency of worship attendance are more likely to create environments where youth feel very supported by their parents compared with irreligious families. Youth from families at all levels of religious activity are more likely to have their mothers and fathers always help them with things that are important and are more likely to be praised by their parents. In families that do something religious at least three days per week, mothers almost never blame their early adolescents for their problems. Parents in the actively religious families are far more likely to keep their word and stick to their plans. Parents in religious families are more likely than parents in irreligious families to know their teachers and what they are doing in school, know what is going on in their children's social context, and know their friends and friends' families.

Families that are religiously active are far more likely to eat dinner together than nonreligious families. Of these families, 86.4 percent eat dinner together five to seven days a week. The religiously active families are also significantly more likely to engage in doing something fun together than nonreligious families.

More than 70 percent of youth from very religiously active families say they want to be like their fathers compared with 48 percent of youth from nonreligious families. In families that do something religious a minimum of once per week, 55 percent of youth strongly agree that they admire their fathers. This figure jumps to 64 percent for youth in highly religious families compared with 42 percent of youth who come from irreligious families. Youth from religiously active families are more likely to enjoy spending time with their mothers, think highly of their mothers, and want to be a person like their mothers at slightly higher percentages.

In their research report *Religion and the Life Attitudes and Self-Images of American Adolescents* from a study of twelfth graders, Christian Smith and Robert Faris emphasize that in comparison with irreligious teenagers, active religious expression had a positive effect on these teenagers, allowing them to possess more positive attitudes about life:

The 31 percent of all 12th graders who attend religious services weekly and the 30 percent of high school seniors for whom religion is very important are significantly more likely than non-attenders and the nonreligious to

- have positive attitudes toward themselves
- enjoy life as much as anyone
- feel like their lives are useful
- feel hopeful about their futures
- feel satisfied with their lives
- feel like they have something of which to be proud
- feel good to be alive
- feel like life is meaningful
- enjoy being in school. (7)

The authors point out that regular worship attendance, the amount of time spent in the youth ministry, and the high importance youth placed on faith were clearly associated with positive attitudes about themselves even when making allowances for a variety of demographic, social, and economic factors (9).

In the related study, *Religion and American Adolescent Delinquency, Risk Behaviors and Constructive Social Activities*, Smith and Faris demonstrate that religious activity was related positively to youth participating in constructive activities (7). Religious activity was also correlated to youth being less likely to be involved in delinquent and self-destructive behavior. Religious twelfth graders are less likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or use marijuana. They are less likely to engage in dangerous driving or criminal activity. Religious twelfth graders are better behaved in school.

Religious twelfth graders are more likely to volunteer in their community and to participate in extracurricular activity. Religious activity also correlates to a greater likelihood of engaging in sports and other physical exercise (48).

While the family has the primary influence upon the socialization of children, religion is an important secondary influence that affects beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Boyatzis, Dollahite, and Marks 298). The National Study of Youth and Religion research shows repeatedly for different aspects of family life, personal behaviors and school activity that even a modicum of spiritual activity in the home creates healthier family relationships and healthier children. This research also revealed that families who were actively living their faith five to seven times per week exhibited significantly better measurements for family relationships and healthy youth. The problem is that so few Christian families have an active faith at home. The National Study of Youth and Religion research also reported that only 11 percent of all families, including irreligious families, engage in daily spiritual activity, including worship attendance and praying or reading the Scripture together. When adjusting for the irreligious families, just over 16 percent of Christian families demonstrate a highly involved religiosity. For Lutherans, the percentage of families actively engaging in spiritual life in the home drops to less than 14 percent (Strommen and Hardel 14).

When teenagers were asked if they prayed with their parents at times other than during meals in the last year, only 32 percent of ELCA Lutherans and 46 percent of Missouri Synod Lutherans said yes (Schwadel and Smith 33). Again the measurement was not on a weekly basis but at any time during the last year. Only 39 percent of ELCA Lutherans and 48 percent of Missouri Synod Lutherans report talking with their families

about God, the Scriptures, prayer, or other religious or spiritual topics together once a week or more (38). Only 14 percent of ELCA Lutheran teens compared with 17 percent of Missouri Synod Lutheran teens report reading the Bible by themselves once a week or more (31). Just over half of Lutheran teens say they are praying alone at least a few times a week. An astounding 84 percent of regular attending ELCA Lutheran teens say they had an experience of spiritual worship that was very moving and powerful (35).

Impediments to Families Being Active in Their Faith at Home

Barna reports that 85 percent of parents with children under the age of thirteen recognize that they have the primary responsibility for teaching their children about spiritual matters (*Transforming Children* 77). Similarly, in another survey, 88 percent of parents indicated that they were responsible for teaching their children “basic values such as equality, honesty, and responsibility” (Roehlkepartain, Scales, Roehlkepartain, and Rude 32).

While many Christian parents do believe they have a responsibility to ensure that their children are instructed in the faith, very few perceive their God-given mandate to train their children in the faith. Parents do not realize their obligation to make this diligent effort nor their opportunity to be spiritual leaders for their children. They spend little to no time engaged in faith-forming practices, abdicating the responsibility to the church. Most parents who are in their thirties or forties were not trained in the faith by their parents. Because this behavior was not modeled for them, they do not develop the pattern in their families’ lives. “Even though only 5 percent of churched parents have a biblical worldview, two-thirds of all churched parents think they are doing an excellent or good job of helping their children to develop a worldview based on the Bible” (Barna,

Transforming Children 125). Recognizing their own level of biblical illiteracy, parents are insecure about their own competency to teach the faith. Barna reports, “Our studies reveal that most parents don’t feel that they have sufficient spiritual maturity to provide the kind of comprehensive education and training described in this chapter” (74). With churches unintentionally sending the message that faith formation is for experts, parents again feel incompetent to lead their children spiritually, so parents lack the patterns, basic skills, and confident faith for sharing their faith with their children.

Adding to this problem has been the lack of work by the church to encourage and equip parents to carry out this fundamental ministry in their homes. For these same parents, who say spiritual formation of their children is their responsibility, only one out of every five has been personally spoken to by a church leader about their responsibility for the spiritual formation of their children. Only 54 percent of ELCA Lutheran parents who attend church at least a few times a year say that their churches have been very or extremely supportive and helpful for them as parents trying to raise their teens (Schwadel and Smith 50). Only 20 percent of parents believe congregations are helping them form faith in the home (Roehlkepartain, Scales, Roehlkepartain, and Rude 125). “[Parents] want help in how to be a better parent, how to raise a Christian family, on how to have devotions with their kids and how to prioritize the demands of their life in light of their faith” (Hughes 103). Churches do little to equip parents to be the spiritual leaders in their homes. Few churches give measures or guidelines for what might constitute effective Christian living in the home. Few churches define what well-prepared Christians might look like before they head off to college or the workplace. With a plethora of Christian books about parenting, children’s Bibles, and other Christian children’s materials, parents

are often overwhelmed by the multitude of choices. Not having spiritual patterns and not understanding the basic skills for sharing the faith with their children, they also are unsure of what materials to use. When they have tried different resources they often have been disappointed with the results.

Parents, generally, abdicate the burden of the responsibility for promoting life skills and worldview perspectives to schools, churches, and community organizations:

Ultimately, children get neglected because parents rely upon everyone else to do their job for them, Barna stated. The popular notion that ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ has become an accepted excuse for millions of parents to assign away the commitment for their child’s development. Families may not be able to provide everything that a child needs to be successfully launched into today’s world, but they can do a lot more than they are seeking to provide today. Rather than play victim and blame social institutions for inadequate performance of duties, millions of families would be well-advised to rearrange their priorities and reclaim their commitment to preparing their children for life. (“Americans Agree”)

Waiting for social institutions to step in to train children in life is a seriously flawed strategy on multiple points but chiefly because the parents are the primary socialization influence and have a God-given mandate to be the spiritual leaders to their children. The primary means through which values, skills, and perspectives are developed is the family, not social institutions.

Equipping Parents to Guide Their Families in Faith

Churches need to be intentional in equipping parents to guide their families in faith because the spiritual environment has changed and can no longer assume children will become Christians by osmosis. Barna admits that his research on the health of congregations suffered from a faulty perception stating that “the wisdom and necessity of seeing children as *the primary focus of ministry* [original emphasis] never occurred to me” (Barna, *Transforming Children* 11). He says he did not just miss the boat on the

importance, but he missed the ocean by not ranking ministry to children at the top of the priority list:

The local church should be an intimate and valuable partner in the effort to raise the coming generation of Christ's followers and church leaders, but it is the parents whom God will hold primarily accountable for the spiritual maturation of their children. (24)

Because parents believe they have a role to play in the moral formation of their children, an opportunity exists for churches to equip and encourage parents in their role.

Church of the Resurrection is in the position to take what many perceive as a weakness and turn it into a blessing. This congregation has the opportunity to leverage the nearly three thousand hours per year that parents have with their children to impact their children to become fully devoted followers of Christ. This congregation has the potential to transform each of our families into house churches. If Church of the Resurrection can equip its parents with training and materials to teach their children the faith, it can maximize its faith formation impact.

Experience supports the assumption that if families perceive Sunday worship as a value-added event that will enhance their week together, they will be more likely to return and more likely to invest in the ministry of the congregation. The expectation is that congregations will see a greater investment from adults who perceive family faith formation making an impact in their homes than if the congregation were just conducting Sunday school. If congregations can strengthen parents, especially fathers, to be spiritual leaders to their children, the parents will be stronger disciples in the faith community. Strommen and Hardel note that "religious practices in the home virtually double the probability of a congregation's youth entering into the life and mission of Christ's church" (98).

Even with growing interest in the topic of family spiritual formation, Christian family ministry theorists and practitioners are exploring how to implement such ministry in Christian families. They are investigating the most effective forms of transmitting the faith. They are searching to determine what spiritual habits need to be taught and encouraged in the family. A critical issue is how congregations motivate parents to exercise their role as spiritual leaders to their children.

Purpose Stated

The purpose of the research was to assess the effectiveness of the preaching and teaching intervention designed to increase the practice of parental spiritual leadership in families attending two Evangelical Lutheran churches. The Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders project intended to develop the parental cognitive perspective that they have the primary responsibility in the faith formation of their children, to increase parents' affective confidence¹ in their own competency to guide the faith formation of their children and to increase the behavioral frequency of parents leading faith-forming habits with their children.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this project were aimed at discovering whether a church can effect a positive change in the cognitive perspectives of responsibility, affective confidence, and spiritual behavior of parents encouraging them to take on the role as the primary spiritual leaders in their children's lives. The goal of the preaching and teaching intervention was to cause an increased positive intellectual, emotional, and behavioral reaction to the parental role of being the spiritual leader in the home.

¹ Parents' affective confidence will increase as a result of their positive affective response toward their role as spiritual leaders in their homes.

Research Question 1

Following the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders intervention, do parents demonstrate an increase in parents' cognitive acceptance of their role as the primary faith teachers in their children's lives?

Research Question 2

Following the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders intervention of preaching and teaching on the parental role in faith formation, does the parents' affective confidence in being able to nurture their children's faith increase?

Research Question 3

Will the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders intervention of preaching and teaching on the parental role in family faith formation increase parents' behavioral practice of initiating faith habits with their children?

Definition of Terms

Although the concepts of parents, spiritual leadership, and faith formation are not complicated, for the purposes of this research clear definitions are required for these.

Parents

Frequently, studies attempt to control for parental influence when measuring the effects of religion on children by limiting the study to only two-parent homes. This study was concerned with the religious cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses of parents in relation to their spiritual leadership with their children. While recognizing and encouraging the influence that grandparents and other extended family members can have, for the sake of this study, parents are those adults who exercise parental influence over children who live with them.

Spiritual Leadership

The purpose of this project was to equip mothers and fathers to be the spiritual leaders in their homes. The central task of leadership is influencing other people to accomplish a certain purpose or task. J. Oswald Sanders writes, “Leadership is influence, the ability of one person to influence others to follow his or her lead” (26). Spiritual leadership in this study is the active behavior of parents to influence their children to join them in engaging in spiritual practices. Part of this leadership requires parents taking the initiative to begin such faith practices and instruct their children in how to engage in these faith practices.

Faith Formation

Faith formation is the ongoing process whereby individuals grow in deepening cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to faith in the Living God of the Bible. Faith Formation should be understood as participating in and practicing the Christian faith. Faith formation is meant to nurture adults and children in the faith, to convert them, to form them in the faith, and to transform them. As such, faith formation is integrating the biblical worldview to define the whole person.

Ministry Intervention

The Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders intervention took place on four consecutive Sundays. The project consisted of a preaching and teaching series. The preaching focused on the parental responsibility to pass on faith to their children. The sermon series titled, “Are the Kids Alright?” was grounded in key biblical passages: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:18-21, 26-28; Judges 2:8-13; 2 Kings 21:1-6; Psalm 127; Matthew 19:13-15; 18:1-6, 10-14; Luke 4:18-20; and, 2 Timothy 3:10-17. On each

Sunday the sermons communicated the problems facing children, the struggle youth have in this culture to retain the faith, the advantages religious families and religious children enjoy, and the spiritual responsibility of parents to be the spiritual leaders of their children. Each sermon also had an application of one of the four faith-forming habits to engender: prayer, Bible reading, faith discussions, and faith in action. The congregation was promised practical steps on implementing the faith-forming habit if they attend the teaching session later that day. The congregation gathered for the sermons was comprised of both adults and teenagers.

Each Sunday also included a teaching session that focused on each one of the four faith-forming habits. The entire family was encouraged to attend, so we employed an intergenerational learning format. The purpose of including teenagers and children was to gain their agreement and cooperation to make these faith habits a family pattern. These teaching sessions occurred later in the day on those Sundays corresponding to the sermon that was preached that day. These teaching sessions consisted of further discussion of the core principles about why family faith practices are important in a question and answer format for about fifteen to twenty minutes.

Even more important, the teaching consisted of modeling the faith-forming habits, followed by hands-on experience. Practical suggestions for dealing with obdurate family members and challenging time schedules were shared. Families who had been carrying out faith-forming habits were called upon as experts to share their experiences. For the session about faith discussions, we held a potluck meal so the families could replicate their mealtime experience and learn how to incorporate faith discussions into meals together. For the session on faith active in words or deeds, we scheduled a few different

activities in which families could participate to learn to become comfortable with stepping out to help others together as a family. Teaching tools were made available for families to continue family faith formation practices after the intervention concluded.

At Church of the Resurrection, this preaching and teaching project took place on 3 August, 10 August, 17 August, and 24 August 2008. At Rejoice Lutheran, the preaching and teaching series took place on 7 September, 14 September, 21 September, 28 September 2008. I led the project at Church of the Resurrection. At Rejoice Lutheran, Pastor Phil Geleske led the project, preaching the sermons and conducting the teaching sessions. Having two different pastors conducting the preaching and teaching project means that the project was carried out differently in both churches.

In addition, fathers and mothers separately attended two sessions aimed at their unique role in the spiritual formation of their children. Knowing that fathers need to be encouraged to take on their spiritual role, we held a separate breakfast meeting with them to impress upon them the dire need for them to get involved. For the women, we stressed the vital role mothers play. We also gave them coaching on how to encourage their husbands' efforts, knowing that wives often become impatient with their husbands in this matter.

Each congregation carried out servant outreach events as part of the project to encourage parents to lead their families to live out their faith in action. Rejoice Lutheran conducted two servant projects. One was an opportunity for families to work on a Habitat for Humanity house. The other was a pumpkin patch that the congregation conducts as an outreach to the community with proceeds going to fund various community ministries and missionaries. The pumpkin patch had the greater participation because children were

not limited from participating based on their age. Church of the Resurrection conducted one servant project. A group of twenty, with participants as young as six years old, drove to the Union Gospel mission in downtown Fort Worth to help serve lunch to homeless people. Afterwards they were given an explanation of the ministries of the Union Gospel Mission. Everyone who went on this servant project was every energized by their participation.

Context

This project was carried out in two Evangelical Lutheran Churches in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex suburbs. Both congregations belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Church of the Resurrection in Roanoke, Texas, is a mission development in far north Tarrant county outside of Fort Worth. Rejoice Lutheran Church in Coppell, Texas, is an established congregation in far northwest Dallas county.

Methodology

This quantitative study sought to examine the cognitive, affective, and behavioral patterns of parents to lead their children in faith practices in the home.

Participants

Thirty-seven adults from Church of the Resurrection and fifty from Rejoice Lutheran participated in the pretest survey. Twenty-seven adults from Church of the Resurrection and twenty-four from Rejoice Lutheran participated in the post-project survey. From the eighty-seven pretest responses and fifty-one posttest responses I was able to match thirty-five responses.

The persons involved in the survey were primarily between the ages of 25 to 50. Study participants from within Church of the Resurrection represented diverse ethnic and

racial backgrounds with the average age being in their 30s. Study participants from Rejoice Lutheran were exclusively Caucasian with the average age being in their 40s.

Six adults from Church of the Resurrection participated in the focus group on 5 October 2008. The adults involved represented a diversity of age and gender in the survey. The focus group lasted nearly two hours.

Both Church of the Resurrection in Roanoke, Texas, and Rejoice Lutheran in Coppell, Texas, participated in this project. All materials used in this project were used by both these congregations, especially the sermons, lesson plans, teaching content, teaching tools, and logistical planning.

The intervention at Church of the Resurrection was held during the summer month of August. In this congregation many families are preparing for the beginning of the school year. Unlike other sections of the country, the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex does not experience an extreme summer vacation exodus. Conceivably, some families would have a problem with attending the worship services and teaching sessions consistently, but that would be true any time of year.

Rejoice Lutheran conducted the intervention during September in order to allow for all materials to be available and to create a broad base of involvement from other ministry leaders.

Instrumentation

This study was a quasi-experimental design that measured the relevant variable twice (pretest and posttest) with no control group. The researcher-adapted questionnaire served as the primary source of data collection for each of the three dependent variables (cognitive, affective, and behavioral), as well as the independent and extraneous

variables. A semi-structured focus group interview occurred with project participants who volunteered to attend.

Variables

This study involved four sets of variables: independent, dependent, intervening, and demographic. The independent variables were the various components of the project. The dependent variables measured by this study were the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses of the participants. The intervening variables measured the faith maturity of the adults. The demographic variables gathered in this study were the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, family circumstance, and the economic situation.

Data Collection

The project involved a survey to be taken prior to the beginning of a four-week preaching and teaching series on the subject. The survey was administered through an online survey service. Church of the Resurrection took the pre-project survey from 20 July through 2 August 2008. Rejoice Lutheran took the pre-project survey from 24 August through 6 September 2008.

Two weeks after the project concluded, people took the survey again. The participants took the survey online from 7 September through 21 September 2008 for Church of the Resurrection and from 14 October through 24 October 2008 for Rejoice Lutheran.

More than a month after the project concluded, I conducted a focus group to elicit more feedback. The focus group consisted of six adults representing five families from Church of the Resurrection. The group convened on 5 October 2008. The focus group discussion asked participants what effects the project had upon adult participants. The

focus group discussion was audio-taped, and responses were transcribed and analyzed to determine recurring themes and attitudes. The focus group helped to identify the lasting impression the project had on family faith formation habits. Rejoice Lutheran did not conduct a focus group.

Data Analysis

The response data was analyzed to measure what effect the project had in creating a cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses of parents to the role construct of spiritual leadership in the home. The statistical procedures employed in the analysis of the data collected were paired sample t-tests, Pearson correlation (two-tailed), and multiple analysis of covariance (MANCOVA).

Delimitations and Generalizability

This study was intentionally used in smaller churches to enhance their ministry with families, so that the sample size was relatively small. The unique circumstances of the churches who participated in the project limited this study. Nevertheless, the principles utilized to enhance the role of parents as spiritual leaders in their homes have been used in the past effectively and can be transferred to other church contexts to increase parental spiritual leadership effectively.

Theological Foundation

Throughout the Bible the locus of teaching the faith to children is in the home through the parents and other elders. The biblical expectation of parents teaching the faith is established clearly in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 where the confession of faith in the one Lord of Israel is connected with the admonition for parents to pass the faith on to their children. This perspective continued in the New Testament (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:20-21).

Luther lifted up the parental vocation as a high calling. He said every parent was to be pastor and bishop to their children. To equip them in their responsibilities, he wrote the “Small Catechism.”

The biblical view of family is that it is the primary community of meaning that shapes and defines individuals. Although the Bible recognizes the dysfunction of families, it nevertheless is the primary covenantal relationship web where believers grow and live out the faith.

From this biblical view, John Chrysostom called the Christian family the tiny church where spiritual disciplines were to be employed and Spirit-given virtues to be lived out (*On Marriage and Family* 103). After Vatican II, Pope John Paul II and other Catholic writers emphasized the family as “the domestic church” with the calling to contribute to the transformation of society through its daily efforts to live the faith among family members and with others (*Familiaris Consortio* no. 21).

Not only are they the primary caregivers, parents are the primary teachers of their children. Without worrying about religious expertise, parents simply by engaging their children in spiritual disciplines and habits can positively foster faith in their children. As the gift of faith comes from the Spirit, parents do not have to worry about the results. They simply need to engage the spiritual process with their children. Parents are most effective in transmitting faith in Christ when they live it as a regular pattern of their own lives.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 of this project examines the biblical and ecclesial theology surrounding the role of parents in passing on the faith with a special emphasis upon Lutheran

perspectives. The chapter also examines current thinking about the role of parents in teaching the faith from a variety of children's ministry thinkers and other church leaders. Chapter 2 goes on to explore the idea of living out the Christian story and accompanying faith practices. The chapter also examines literature from the educational field on the role of parents in assisting their children in academic learning.

Chapter 3 presents the research design in greater detail. Chapter 4 describes the results of the surveys and the focus groups. Chapter 5 concludes with interpreting and summarizing the data, examining future efforts in response to the results, and offering suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Biblical and Ecclesial Theology of Family Faith Formation

Within the biblical theology and ecclesial traditions of the Church is a strong emphasis upon nurturing faith in the home that is easily discovered.

Biblical View of Children

Children are physically small: not yet developed intellectually, emotionally, or physically and vulnerable. In the Hellenistic and Roman society, “people considered children fundamentally deficient and not yet human in the full sense” (Gundry-Volf 32). Because children lacked full intellectual development, they were looked down on for not being able to participate fully in the rational world of Romans. Children were considered to occupy the same social standing as slaves, the Greek words having the same root. Having no rights, children were subject to their fathers who had absolute power over them. Fathers could decide to recognize a newborn and raise it, or cast it out, exposing it to the elements. The exposing of infants in public to the elements was widespread in the Roman world, enough that Stoic moralists, Jewish, and Christian leaders expressed moral outrage. Exposed infants would die unless picked up by strangers “in which case they might be raised for profit as slaves, prostitutes, or beggars” (33).

In the Old Testament and Jewish tradition, children have an essentially beneficial role. Psalm 127 testifies of parental love and pleasure. From the very beginning in Genesis, children are a divine gift and a sign of God’s blessing (Gen. 1:27-28). An abundance of children was a sign of abundant blessing and a source of retirement income (Ps. 127:3-5; 1 Chron. 8:40). Barrenness was seen as a sign of God’s disfavor (Job 15:34;

Prov. 30:16; Isa. 49:21). Families took extreme actions to overcome childlessness (Gen. 30:1-22; 1 Sam. 1; Deut. 25:5-10; Mark 12:19-23). Children were an essential element of the promise to Abraham to make a great nation of him with more descendants than stars in the heavens (Gen. 12:2; 13:16; 15:5). Male children were marked with circumcision to be included in God's covenant (Gen. 17:9-11; Josh. 5:3-7; Luke 2:21). Even those children still in the womb were recipients of God's blessing and called to participate in his covenant (Ps. 139:13; Jer. 1:5; Judg. 16:17; Isa. 43:1; 49:1-5). The Jewish community distinguished itself from other contemporary cultures by rejecting brutal practices towards children, including abortion, exposure of newborns, and child sacrifice. While the father was the primary authority, he had limits to his power over his children.

Still, Scripture does not hold a romanticized vision of children. They are described as disobedient, irrational, ignorant, and in need of strict discipline (2 Kings 2:23-24; Isa. 3:4; Prov. 22:15). In rabbinic literature, children are classified with others who are not in full possession of their intellectual powers. Paul speaks of children in this way: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways" (1 Cor. 13:11; see also Eph. 4:14).

Before discussing what Jesus taught about children and how he acted toward them, the more profound meaning emerges from Jesus' own childhood. The Incarnation of God is the absolute affirmation of childhood. The fact of Christ's own birth and childhood is not simply a mode for sharing humanity (Heb. 2:14-18). Christ shares in everyone's childhood:

When "the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14), God did not arrive as a mature adult. No, Jesus came as a baby and lived each

phase of childhood. He knew the love and comfort of parents and the fears, sorrows, and joys of a child. (Stonehouse 34)

Just as Jesus was not ashamed to be human, he was not ashamed to be a child (Heb. 2:22). He is able to sympathize not only with adults but also with children, having been one. “The Son of God who is with the Father from eternity nurses at His mother’s breasts, is crucified, and dies” (Luther, *Luther’s Works* 22: 352). The eternal Son of God, who laid the foundations of the earth, lay in the cradle and was suckled by his mother. By his very life as a child, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, communicated that children are a blessing from God and that children are blessed by God.

Building upon the Jewish tradition, Jesus’ teaching and practice emphasizes the significance of children in five principal ways. Children are lifted up as (1) recipients of the kingdom of God, (2) models of entering the reign of God, (3) models of greatness in the kingdom of God, (4) persons to be welcomed and served by his followers, and (5) a way of serving and knowing Jesus (Gundry-Volf 37).

After rebuking the disciples who had rebuked the parents for bringing children to him, Jesus emphatically stated, “Let the little children come to me; do not hinder them” (Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). Jesus blessed the children who were brought to him and taught that the kingdom of God belonged to them (Mark 10:13-16; Matt. 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17). When Jesus taught in the beatitudes that the lowly and powerless were the primary recipients of the kingdom of God, children who shared the same lowly and powerless social status would also be included as the intended beneficiaries of the reign of God (Luke 6:20-23). All the healings and exorcisms Jesus performed on children can be considered as concrete moments of the kingdom coming for them (Mark 5:22-23,

35-43; 7:24-30; 9:14-29). While one could argue the healings were done at the behest of the parents, the children were without a doubt the direct beneficiaries of Jesus' action.

Whereas in the Greco-Roman world comparing an adult to a child was highly insulting and nowhere in Jewish literature are children set up as examples of righteousness, Jesus lifted up children as examples of faith. Jesus put forth a child saying, "Whoever does not receive the reign of God as a child will not enter it" (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17). The child as model of faith emphasizes that the reign of God is a totally unmerited gift. The children did nothing to earn Jesus' blessing. They were brought to Jesus who took them into his arms and blessed them.

Jesus taught his disciples that if they wanted to become great they must humble themselves like a child (Matt. 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37). He told them they must change to be childlike. To be childlike is to embrace a position that is powerless and vulnerable. Humility is children's status. In the very next verse, Jesus warned his disciples that if they despise children and put stumbling blocks before them, they would receive divine retribution (Matt. 18:6, 10-14). Just as the will of the heavenly Father is that not one of his little ones be lost, to be great in the kingdom of God is to receive and help these little ones.

When the disciples once again disputed who was the greatest, Jesus brought a child into their midst (Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48). Taking the child in his arms, he stated that to receive a child in his name is to receive or welcome Jesus himself and, therefore, to welcome the heavenly Father who sent him (Gundry-Volf 44). The teaching reinforces the eschatological reversal where those who are last become first. What sets this text apart from its cultural setting is a man, Jesus, taking a child into his arms and

making a child the example for his male disciples, thereby all his disciples. Jesus made serving the children a sign of greatness for all his disciples. Welcoming children is the way Christ followers welcome and receive Christ and God who sent him. The children are to be received not as heralds of the kingdom, but as the weak and needy. By the way Mark parallels the disciples' dispute over who is greatest and their incomprehension of Jesus' foretelling of his suffering and death with the advancement of the child as a model of greatness and the receiving of the child with receiving him, "welcoming the child signifies receiving Jesus and affirming his divinely given mission as the suffering Son of Man" (45).

Jesus' teaching on children has significant implications for parents and other adults as spiritual leaders of children. "Jesus' teaching on welcoming children (1) informs social practice toward children and (2) suggests these social practices serve to strengthen faith in Jesus and are themselves a form of this faith" (Gundry-Volf 46). Parents and church leaders need to recognize that children are not proto-Christians. They are recipients of the kingdom as they are now. Parents and church leaders would do well to recognize that children have things to teach them about receiving the kingdom of God. Based on Jesus' robust endorsement of children's kingdom status interacting with their children about the faith serves the spiritual interest of adults. Children model a greater dependence and openness to receiving the kingdom. They model a key characteristic of great discipleship, humility. As children should be welcomed into the church and into the kingdom, Jesus warns adults they would be better to put a millstone around the neck and be drowned than to hinder children in their spiritual attainment or to neglect their spiritual

welfare (Matt. 18:6-10). By serving their children as spiritual mentors, parents are serving Jesus and God the Father.

Outside of Jesus the New Testament rarely mentions children, but it does circumscribe their relationship to their parents. Contemplating the salvific influence upon family members in 1 Corinthians 7:14, Judith M. Gundry-Volf concludes that Paul foresees children growing into faith and salvation:

Paul believes that the children of believers are consecrated to God, which presents the possibility of their salvation, if not portends their salvation, and that God works out the consecration and salvation of these children through the familial bond with the believing parent—that is, in the social context of the family where one parent at least is a Christian. (52)

In the passage questioning whether believing spouses should divorce nonbelievers, Paul encourages them to stay so the Lord will work through them to sanctify and save the unbelieving family members.

When Paul discusses children obeying their parents (Col. 3:20-21; Eph. 6:1-4), what he says does not seem to be out of place with the culture, but he enjoins them to obey their parents in the Lord. This admonishment to obedience is not mere religious legitimatization but places their obedience in the framework of one's relationship to Christ. This phrase, which occurs frequently in Paul's writing, defines and qualifies believers' lives in every area based on their relationship to Christ. "And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Fathers are tasked with passing on the apostolic teaching and to shape their children by this teaching.

Biblical Pattern of Passing on the Faith

As the family is the building block of society and the basic unit of faith communities, it was the primary place for faith instruction. For God's people in the Old Testament, parents had to train their children to live into the covenant and to live differently from those around them.

When Moses asked the name of God, he hears, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob" (Exod. 3:6). The name of God, as the God of one's fathers (and mothers), suggests that the context of faith formation is the passing of the faith from one generation to the next. When the most important story of the Old Testament, the Exodus, is celebrated, it is firmly situated within the context of parents and family elders, passing on the faith story to the children (Exod. 12:24-26). The family as the context of faith is reiterated when Joshua announced, "As for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). The generation of Moses was faithful in passing on the faith to the generation of Joshua (Judg. 2:6).

When the next generation did not pass on the faith, anarchy resulted (Judg. 2:10-11). This pattern is repeated throughout the Old Testament, where parents did not pass on the faith to their children, so the children became more wicked than their predecessors. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel counter a common Jewish saying, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," by asserting that each person will be held accountable for his or her own moral life (Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2). This counterpoint from Jeremiah and Ezekiel also substantiates that if the parents live contrary to the blessings of the Lord, then sweet behavior should not be expected to come from their children. Even though individuals are responsible for their spiritual lives, the

responsibility of the parents to teach their children the faith remains.

The *Shema*, the primary creedal confession of the Hebrew faith, is placed in the context of parents teaching the faith to their children:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is the one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut. 6:4-9)

The confessional statement, “Hear, O Israel,” was manifestly contrasting the faith of Israel against the Canaanite Baal worship. The Israelites were being warned against the temptations of the Canaanite cult, not to add anything or any other god to their worship of the Lord (Deut. 4:2). In the other case, it is a confession of the oneness of YHWH in face of multiplicity of divergent traditions and sanctuaries (Von Rad 63). The *Shema* restates the central claim of the treaty between the LORD and Israel. It demands allegiance to one power among others; it does not state that only one power exists. The *Shema* does not call for belief in monotheism but calls for fidelity to a particular God. The demand to love the Lord was in response to Israel’s prior experience of YHWH’s love in their provision and deliverance. “Because the LORD loved your ancestors and chose their descendents ... [and] brought you out of Egypt,” you shall respond to God’s love with love (Deut. 4:37). “To love the LORD” means choosing to be in an intimate relationship with him (Deut. 7:9; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20). Love is not so much about emotion as acting out loyalty, commitment, and responsibility. The corollary of this command to love is to obey his commands, which promise blessing. “This is why [love] is part of the

command [original emphasis]—that is, grammatically the imperative force of the opening word “hear” continues with the second clause, ‘so love’” (Mann 56). The command to love God with all the heart, soul, and strength excludes any notions of half-heartedness. No allowance is made for other loves, other loyalties. Loving the Lord was a whole-life endeavor involving heart, soul, and strength.

The people of God are responsible for meditating upon these commandments. They are to keep them on their hearts in the sense that the commands of the Lord direct their will and their lives. They are then told “you shall teach them diligently” in order to impress them on their children (Deut. 4:7):

The moral and biblical education of the children was accomplished best not in a formal teaching period each day but when the parents, out of concern for their own lives as well as their children’s, made God and His Word the natural topic of a conversation which might occur anywhere and anytime during the day. (Deere 274)

Meditating upon the word of God should be as autonomic as breathing.

Deuteronomy locates the commandments in the everyday spontaneous course of family life. “God reinforces the idea that parents are in the best position of anyone to communicate the things of faith to children” (Beckwith 107). Deuteronomy tells readers that from the time they get up until they go to bed they are to be about the task of passing on the faith. God knows faith is more a contagion that gets spread by frequency and proximity than a concept learned by explanation. The best education occurs in the familiar, everyday events where Christians ask God to be present. In the mundane habits of life along with the monumental and life-changing acts, children witness the power of God. Later in time, the command to tie the words of God onto the wrists or forehead and to write them on the doorposts were taken literally by some Jewish readers. However, just

as the command to inscribe the words of God on the heart could not be taken literally, the command to tie the word to the hands, bind them on the forehead, and paint them on the doorposts should be interpreted more figuratively. Phylacteries bound to the hands represent that the commands of God are meant to direct what believers do with their hands. Even more, the Law of God and the love of God should influence what goes on in believers' minds. Having the Word of God upon the doorframes and the gates of the faithful one's houses should encourage believers to have the Word of God frame the foundation of their family lives and determine what is allowed in and out of their households.

The importance of Deuteronomy 6:5-8 is augmented when the passage is restated only a few chapters later in Deuteronomy 11:18-21. Clearly, the very life of Israel as a people chosen and blessed by God depends upon parents passing on the faith in each and every family:

As long as Israel "hears" the words of YHWH (cf. Deut. 1:1) they will experience God's blessing in the land: but the moment Israel refuses to "hear" these words, they will "surely perish like the nations that YHWH makes to perish before you (Deut. 8:20). (Christiansen 138)

Deuteronomy repeatedly calls upon parents to teach the faith so they and their children may be blessed. In Jeremiah 32:18, the prophet proclaimed the sins of the parents have been laid into laps of their children. Research evidence demonstrates that families who neglect raising their children in the faith are significantly more likely to experience family dysfunction and at-risk behavior in their children.

Little is said about parents teaching the faith in the New Testament. The authority of parents, especially their spiritual authority, is reaffirmed by the epistle authors, primarily Paul. The few relevant New Testament passages do not depart from the

inherited Jewish tradition. The critical task of the father to which Paul speaks is bringing up children in the instruction of the Lord. Paul compares his ministry with the Thessalonians with a parent bringing children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. “As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:11). When Paul talks about the characteristics of leaders, he says they should manage, lead their households well (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12). Paul tells Titus, they “should appoint elders ... whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious” (Tit. 1:6). The clear implication is that leaders should be parents who lead their households into faith.

When the phrase “house church” occurs in the New Testament, these passages are misinterpreted if only imagined as houses where churches met for worship. In fact these house churches were clan or extended family spiritual gatherings (Acts 10:24-25; 16:14-15; 18:7-8; 21:8-9; Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:15-19; Col. 4:15; Phil. 1:2; 2 John 1:10). In Acts, Luke celebrates that whole households came to faith. Such a conversion experience would necessitate the parents guiding their children in the faith. With this perspective, the house church connotes the expectation that families conduct home devotions.

The Importance of Passing on the Faith

The principle of passing on the faith is manifested in the relationship between Moses and Joshua and what follows. Joshua was Moses’ aid (Exod. 24:13). Everywhere Moses went, Joshua went with him. When he climbed up the mountain and told the elders to wait below, he took Joshua with him for forty days (Exod. 24:13-18). Joshua was on the mountain with Moses when he received the Law (Exod. 32:17). Joshua was a proven

leader who had led the Israelites in battle against the Amalekites (Exod. 17:8-15). He was one of the spies sent by Moses to investigate Canaan (Num. 13:16). He returned with Caleb, making a favorable report based on the promises of the Lord (Num. 14:6). While the elders and others worship at a distance, Moses encountered the presence of the Lord in the tent of meeting (Exod. 33:7-11). Only Moses went close, but he took Joshua with him.

Moses was specifically instructed by the Lord to encourage and strengthen Joshua (Deut. 3:28). When Joshua complained, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp,” Moses was not reluctant to correct and teach Joshua (Num. 11:26-29). Moses renamed Joshua and, in effect, changed his story (Num. 13:16). Not his sons nor Aaron’s sons but Joshua was appointed as Moses’ successor to take the people into the promised land (Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 1:38; 3:21-28; 31:1-8). Joshua received the same promise and mission as Moses (Josh. 1:1-6; Exod. 3:12; Deut. 3:20-21). The biblical witness claims the people are more obedient with Joshua than with Moses (Josh. 1:16-18).

Moses mentored Joshua. Joshua became a leader because Moses mentored him. Most people want to be mentored. Everyone wants to be someone’s special assistant.

Then in Judges 2 Joshua and his generation prove not to have been as faithful as Moses’ generation:

Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred ten years. So they buried him within the bounds of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. Moreover, that whole generation was gathered to their ancestors, and another generation grew up after them, who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.

Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and worshiped the Baals; and they abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were

all around them, and bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They abandoned the LORD, and worshiped Baal and the Astartes. (Judg. 2:8-13)

Joshua mentored no one. No special assistant to Joshua is mentioned. While the generation of Joshua had been mentored, Joshua's children's generation was not brought up in the faith (Judg. 2:10). This next generation grew up not knowing the Lord. They did not know the mighty acts of God. As Nathan Frambach says, "No one bothered to tell them in a really compelling and authentic way" (Keynote Addresses). What Joshua received, he did not pass on. As the book of Judges portrays Israel with a leadership vacuum, the leaders were not raised up because the mantle was not shared. No leaders were raised up because no one invested in them the way the generation of Moses had passed on the call to follow God to Joshua's generation. Throughout the Old Testament many fathers, such as Eli and David, did not pass on the faith.

Barna states that one model of revolutionary parenting that raises up spiritual champions is being a coach, a mentor. "We, as parents, [must] become the ultimate coaches for our children as they develop into mature human beings" (*Revolutionary Parenting* 17). The ability to influence children is proportional to the depth of relationship parents have cultivated with them. Parents must act as the primary mentors in their children's lives.

The Pattern of the Church

Throughout the ages, church leaders often discuss the pattern of parents impressing the faith upon their children.

John Chrysostom and the tiny church. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407) was a priest and bishop in Antioch and Constantinople who "emphasized the solidarity of

human community, the need for socialization of the young into the church, and the powerful unitive and communicative love that the parent-child nexus infuses into human society” (Guroian 62). He grounded his understanding of parents and the home in his theology of the Trinity. Human parenthood and childhood mirrored the life of the Trinity. “Parents who are worshippers of the triune God are called upon to emulate God the Father’s love for his Son, while children should love and obey their parents as the Son loves and obeys the Father through the Spirit” (64). Through their mutual love families are participating in the triune life of God.

Chrysostom saw the family as the domestic church, describing it as a little church, a sacred community where adults and children practice kingdom living. In preaching a sermon on Ephesians 5:22-23, he compares the Christian household with the church in a way that also applies to interpreting 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12 and Titus 1:6:

If we regulate our households [properly] ... we will also be fit to oversee the Church, for indeed the household is a little church. Therefore, it is possible for us to surpass all others in virtue by becoming good husbands and wives. (*On Marriage and Family* 57)

The domestic church is a proving ground for ministry in the larger church and the world.

Chrysostom encouraged his people to make their homes a church where they gathered around the name of Christ, citing Matthew 18:20—“where two or three are gathered there I am in the midst of them.” The Christian family employs the spiritual disciplines to live out holiness so the virtues of grace and hospitality are embodied in the family’s relationships (*On Marriage and Family* 103). Indeed the beginning of the grace of God is in the home where parents care for their children and raise them up in the Lord and prepare them to be children of God. The hospitality of the home was critical to

Chrysostom as way of not only entertaining angels unaware but as an expression of charity and love towards neighbor.

Chrysostom argued vehemently that the vitality and mission of the Church depends upon the vitality and mission of the Christian family. He preached that parents act as artists, sculpting their children with care, helping to restore the image of God in their offspring, forming their children into “wondrous statues for God” (“Address on Vainglory” 96). The *Imago Dei*, the image of God, supersedes differences in age or gender. The daily artistic work of parents helps bring out the image of God in their children. Using this metaphor of parents as artists, Chrysostom conveys the importance of parental spiritual guidance and the significance of children in the life of the church. Just as Christ is the divine teacher for all humankind to help return people to *imago Dei*, parents are the natural teachers of their children. As God’s very own image is of unselfish love towards others, the most natural imitation of God is the love of parents for their children (Guroian 71). Chrysostom says that parents are called beyond natural love to see their children as icons, divine statues of God (“Address on Vainglory” 96). Children need to be incorporated and socialized into the church because they benefit from the nurture and discipline of spiritually mature adults who are experienced in the spiritual struggle.

Chrysostom ranks the neglect of children as one of the greatest evils and injustices, which, considering the state of many children in this county and in the world, is extremely insightful (*Comparison between a King* 132). He says that just as children were accountable for being disobedient to their parents in the eyes of God, so also those parents who put their own needs before their children’s and neglect the spiritual lives of their children would be punished based on Matthew 18:6. “Our task is to educate both our

children and ourselves in godliness; otherwise what answer will we have before Christ's judgment seat?" (*On Marriage and Family* 44). Chrysostom applies to parents, especially fathers, the role and accountability of teachers who will have to give an account for those with whom they were entrusted (Jas. 3:10). He makes the stark assertion that parents should not be satisfied with their own apparent righteousness but they are also responsible for the virtue and righteousness of their children (*Comparison between a King* 124).

Chrysostom raises the importance of parenting as a moral and ecclesial calling. Parents are fellow workers with Christ in the garden of childhood (1 Cor. 3:9). They are called upon by the Son of God to raise their sons and daughters to the full stature of maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28) as members of his body, the one holy catholic apostolic church (Guroian 77).

Chrysostom details the obligations of parents, including reading their children the Bible, praying with them, and being models of righteousness. He urges parents to tell Bible stories often to their children and to ask the children to tell them the stories. He insists parents should teach their children "to pray with great fervor and contrition" ("Address on Vainglory" 118). Insisting upon a pattern of prayer and worship, he says, "[D]o not tell me that the lad will never conform to these practices" (119).

Martin Luther and vocation. Luther emphasizes the priesthood of all believers, saying that when they emerge from the water of baptism, all Christians share the same spiritual estate. Even though they have different tasks and vocations, they all have a gospel-centered ministry to complete:

A cobbler, a smith, a peasant—each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops. Further,

everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all the members of the body serve one another [1 Cor. 12:14–26]. (*Luther's Works* 44: 130)

He insists that Christians are called to serve Christ by honorably and productively acting out their vocation.

The Christian is free from sin and slave to none through faith in God, yet servant of all bound by love to serve his or her neighbor. Luther reminds his people that they are inherently social where everyone is someone's child, married as someone's spouse, governed as someone's subject, working as someone's employee, shepherded as someone's parishioner, and the cycle continues usually as each person become someone's parent. Every arena of the temporal life is an area of Christian service, beginning with the home which is the foundation of all other societal arenas. Luther promotes the marital relationship as a domain where the gifts of grace and righteousness are lived out and bear fruit. Luther primarily commends the vocation of marriage because it creates family life:

But the greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls. Now since we are all duty bound to suffer death, if need be, that we might bring a single soul to God, you can see how rich the estate of marriage is in good works. God has entrusted to its bosom souls begotten of its own body, on whom it can lavish all manner of Christian works. Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal. Whoever teaches the gospel to another is truly his apostle and bishop. Mitre and staff and great estates indeed produce idols, but teaching the gospel produces apostles and bishops. See therefore how good and great is God's work and ordinance! (*Luther's Works* 45: 46)

The vocation of parent, for Luther, trumpeted how God's life-giving grace must be discerned under paradoxical demonstrations. The vocation of the parent was understood and elevated through the prism of Luther's theology of the cross where the grace and love and the very kingdom of God are hidden under what appears to be weakness, failure, and folly:

Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool—though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in Christian faith—my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most keenly ridiculing the other? God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling—not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith. Those who sneer at him and see only the task but not the faith are ridiculing God with all his creatures, as the biggest fool on earth. Indeed, they are only ridiculing themselves; with all their cleverness they are nothing but devil's fools. (40)

For the reformer, while the daily grind of child care appears outwardly to be undignified, insignificant, and repugnant, in Christian faith believers look upon these responsibilities to care for God's work of a child as a holy, godly, and precious estate.

Luther said repeatedly that both father and mother had the responsibility of being spiritual leaders to their children, calling them pastors and bishops to their children. "You have been appointed their bishop and pastor; take heed that you do not neglect your office over them" (*Luther's Works* 51: 136). Beginning with Adam and Eve when no church or synagogue existed, Luther claims all parents were charged with teaching their offspring the knowledge of the Lord. Applying this perspective to his biblical exegesis, Luther often refers to biblical persons, especially the patriarchs, in their role as parent and pastor of their family (6: 102; 8: 75; 12: 73). They had the primary responsibility in teaching the faith to their children and anyone else in their household. Luther tells heads

of households that if they have disobedient children and lazy servants, such disobedience serves them right for not diligently teaching the members of their households piety.

Luther says that the gift of children and servants is not for the father's or master's benefit but so that the head of the household can take on the responsibility of teaching the faith for the sake of the entire community. Parents must raise up devout sons and daughters who, in turn, raise up pious children. In a worship service announcement, he warned parents not to neglect their divinely appointed office when they did not compelling their children or servants to attend worship services. Luther echoes Chrysostom when he sternly calls upon parents to carry out their faith-forming responsibilities:

Think what deadly harm you do when you are negligent in this respect and fail to bring up your children to usefulness and piety. You bring upon yourself sin and wrath, thus earning hell by the way you have reared your own children, no matter how devout and holy you may be in other respects. ("Large Catechism" 389)

Like Chrysostom, Luther makes clear to parents that they will face divine judgment for their efforts to pass on the faith to their children.

Luther speaks about family life in a manner that resonates with many parents today. Luther recognizes children often resist godly teaching and that many youths do not want to attend worship. He assures parents that where they are truly godly and love their children, not just in human fashion, but instruct and direct their children by their words and works to serve God, then the children will come in line. Echoing Augustine who saw children as imbued with sin, Luther warns that children in the natural spirit of the flesh rebel against their parents to go after their own whims:

Likewise, when parents quite properly ... punish and chastise, the soul's salvation is not imperiled; the evil nature is just unwilling to accept it. Besides all this, some [children] are so wicked as to be ashamed of their parents because of their poverty, lowly birth, ugliness, or dishonor, and

allow these things to influence them more than the high commandment of God, who is above all things and who has, with benevolent intent, given them such parents, to exercise and try them in his commandment.
(*Luther's Works* 44: 82)

Luther sees parents waging a spiritual battle on behalf of their children when they have to confront their children's rebellious behavior.

Because Lutherans emphasize the initiative of God in giving salvation through his promises and works, infant baptism communicates the unmerited graciousness of God in Christ Jesus and "the depth of the Christian community's trust in God to bring to fruition the good work God has initiated in the sacrament" (Strohl 142). Lutherans remind themselves repeatedly that believers must daily drown the old Adam in repentance and rise as a new person in Christ. For Luther this process of growing into one's baptism can only happen in the context of a faith lived in connection with the church, "the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel" ("Augsburg Confession" 32). Although growth in faith comes through the Holy Spirit, the church and particularly parents are responsible for nurturing this faith.

During a visit to Saxony in 1528, Luther and his colleagues witnessed an appalling state of affairs among the churches and the parishioners. Unfortunately, many pastors were incompetent and ill-equipped for teaching the evangelical faith. Although Christian people were attending worship and receiving the sacraments, they did not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments. Luther says, "[T]hey live as if they were pigs and irrational beasts, and now that the Gospel has been restored they have mastered the fine art of abusing liberty" ("Small Catechism" 338). Luther felt constrained to fill the need to teach the basic elements of the Christian faith, so he wrote a brief and

simple catechism or statement of Christian teaching. Luther's "Small Catechism" has been considered one of the masterpieces of Christian writing for its brevity and depth. It continues to be used throughout the world today.

Luther was dedicated to equipping Christians to disciple themselves and others:

Luther and his followers were convinced that a systematic program of religious and ethical indoctrination would have results. Only God could create a human being, but right thinking and right-living people were in large part the products of disciplined, hard work. (Strohl 144)

To this end, Luther wrote the Large and Small Catechisms in 1529. He expected families to invest considerable time and energy, instilling the faith and preparing Christians for a future of discipleship service. While instruction was important for all ages, Luther focused on children as the most receptive. Both Catechisms, especially the Small Catechism, were written explicitly to instruct parents, especially fathers, so they could use the catechisms to instruct the members of their households. "Luther saw the family as the natural locus of education: parents catechizing their children and household dependents, joining them in prayers, teaching them proper duties and administering discipline" (Strohl 146). Luther admonishes his parents to "examine [their] children and servants at least once a week and ascertain what they have learned of it, and if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it" ("Large Catechism" 362). Luther, like Chrysostom, warns that parents will answer for their ministry (*Luther's Works* 51: 135).

Luther laments that many parents had neither the inclination nor the capability of teaching the faith. "Necessity has forced us to engage teachers because the parents have not assumed this responsibility" (*Luther's Works* 51: 140). Lacking confidence in parents to do what was best for their children and the wider community, Luther even enjoined

government magistrates and local town councils to invest in educating the community's children in academic and spiritual lessons for the benefit of the entire community.

August Hermann Franke and German Lutheran Pietists. The German Pietist movement called Christians not only to grow in their individual faith but also to demonstrate this spiritual renewal through faith active in love towards the neighbor. The Pietists helped to arouse a new spiritual dynamism within the Lutheran church that through the Lutheran Orthodoxy movement had already suppressed much of the fervor of the original Reformation. The Pietists did so by promoting the study of the Scripture, the experiential aspect of faith, a personal relationship with God and Christ, and the practical consequence of living out the faith in concrete acts of love and service to others. An important leader in the Pietist movement was August Hermann Franke (1663-1727), a Lutheran pastor at St. George's church in Glaucha, Germany, and professor of Greek and Oriental languages at the nearby University of Halle. Franke directly tied the love of neighbor with serving the needs of children. He established a large charitable and educational institution covering thirty-seven acres that included a school for the poor and an orphanage. His institution, which included more than three thousand students and staff, became a model for other such enterprises in Europe and North America. In addition to his incredible organizational skills, Franke took an innovative approach to children and education.

Franke "asserts that the central aim of education is to foster in children a lively faith that expresses itself in love and service to others, especially the poor" (Bunge, "Education and the Child" 251). At that time in Germany, following plague and war, the conditions for children were not good. The educational system in Germany was in

disrepair. Few children went to school. Education for children in the lower classes was considered useless and wasteful. Even religious education for young people was minimal. He initiated education for both boys and girls. He integrated the orphans and the poor children with the children of the ordinary citizens. Although the schools were organized according to rigid class distinctions, they allowed students to advance based on their God-given gifts and abilities. The school encouraged children to prepare for a university education rather than learning a trade, regardless of class.

Although Luther taught that Christians are justified by grace through faith alone not works, Luther did not disavow good works. In fact, Luther emphasized that because Christians are redeemed by grace, they are empowered to live out a new obedience to Christ, doing works of love for others. Faith is active in love. Franke often cites from the Formula of Concord:

Faith is a divine work in us that transforms us and begets us anew from God, kills the Old Adam, makes us entirely different people in heart, spirit, mind, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good. Likewise, faith does not ask if good works are to be done, but before one can ask, faith has already done them and is constantly active. ("Formula of Concord" 476)

For Franke, an active, living faith spontaneously erupted into good works.

Franke and other Pietists emphasize how everyday behavior of individual Christians demonstrates faith and connect this everyday faith to concern for larger social issues. Franke encourages parishioners to live simply, not to overindulge in material consumption, so they can employ their financial resources to benefit the poor. Even more, he encourages them to connect with the poor as Jesus did by interacting with them and helping them.

Pietists believe the earliest spiritual formation of children can only be accomplished in the home. They emphasize that the home is to “be a center of worship and Bible study in which children could actually experience the full range of Christian religious affections and come to living faith in Christ” (DeVries 333).

Like Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and others, Franke believes the Fall has destroyed the natural power of human beings to love God and neighbor without the help of God (Bunge, “Education and the Child” 262). The Fall sets all humans, including children, on a course that is self-centered and willful:

Since the fall of Adam all [humans] who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all [humans] are full of evil lust and inclinations from their mothers’ wombs and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God. (“Augsburg Confession” 32)

Because of this fallen state, Franke teaches that “this self-will had to be brought under obedience to God’s will,” to go from inordinate love of self to love of God and love of neighbor (Bunge, “Education and the Child” 263). Like Luther and other evangelical confessors, the only way an individual becomes a new creation is by God’s grace.

Because God works through his Word to create faith and a new creation in Christ, the primary way to instill faith in children is to immerse them in the reading of Scriptures and learning the teachings and practices of the church:

Franke encourages parents, especially fathers, to begin this approach right away with young children in the home by reading and discussing the Bible, teaching Luther’s catechism, praying at meals, beginning and ending the day, if possible with a prayer and a hymn, worshipping together, and preparing for worship on Saturday by reading the text for Sunday’s sermon. (264)

In his recommendations for teaching the faith in the home, Franke encourages families to read through the entire Bible together every two years and to read through Luther’s Small

Catechism every four weeks (Bunge, “Education and the Child” 264). Part of the instruction in the school included Scripture readings and memorizing Luther’s catechism, something Luther himself recommended and a practice continued among many Lutherans through the twentieth century. Franke recommends that children should have the promises of God’s loving care and faithfulness emphasized instead of God’s threat of punishment. Franke also says that an important way the Word is infused in children is for them to see examples of genuine piety in the adults around them because children tend to imitate what they see (265). Franke says adults’ teaching with enthusiasm and love is highly necessary to impart the faith to children. The most tangible way for children to grow in faith and love is to be treated in a loving and caring manner, guided by the grace of the gospel rather than the severity of the Law (266). Although Franke teaches that children should obey parents and other authority figures, he countered that this obedience did not mean children should be treated as slaves, nor should they obey anyone who instructs them to behave in ways that dishonors God or themselves.

Franke believes in work and thinks that both physical and spiritual idleness is a grave problem for young people (Bunge, “Education and the Child” 266). The Lutheran understanding of vocation motivates this concern, confident that through diligent work, one has the opportunity to love one’s neighbor in concrete and practical ways. He wants children to work just as diligently in their relationship with God, especially in their attention to Scripture.

In addition to his suggestions for forming faith in children, Franke emphasizes the need to pray with and for children. He encourages parents to allow children to pray in their own words, beginning when they are young (Bunge, “Education and the Child”

269). Franke also places spiritual responsibility on adults who have contact with children to pray for them and seek God's guidance on how to treat them. He believes that God, who is gracious and merciful, will answer those who pray for help because raising children is a difficult task that requires God's help. Pastor Franke urges parents not to think that spiritual development was the work of only pastors and teachers. He urges parents to recognize their responsibility for their children's spiritual development. Realizing not all parents take this responsibility seriously and that many are neglectful or bad examples, he affirms that forming faith in children is a cooperative effort among home, church, and school.

Calvin, Bushnell, and other church leaders. Calvin also makes the point that parents' primary responsibility is the spiritual formation of their children. In his catechism, Calvin writes with the underlying assumption that the child is not converted to faith but is should treated as fully Christian because of God's gracious covenant (Pitkin 188). Catechismal instruction was a systematic vigorous effort to educate children in the faith that was already theirs. The duty of their parents and elders is to provide instruction to help nourish the emerging faith. In his commentary on the Psalms, Calvin exhorts parents to regard their children as gifts of God (Pitkin 171). He encourages parents in raising their children by reminding them of God's role in developing children. With always an eye to reform society, Calvin believes society's duty is to provide the right conditions for raising godly children.

One of the most well-known writings on parents' imparting the faith to their children is *Christian Nurture* by Horace Bushnell. First published in 1847, it was the quintessential book on the religious lives of children in America. Bushnell emphasizes

that the faith development of children is a gradual process. He helps readers to be aware that the home environment and family relationships are instrumental in developing the faith of children.

Up until the last century, the family was the primary context for the moral, intellectual, social, spiritual, and physical nurture of children. The assumption of pastors and Christian educators historically has been that children learned much of their faith in the home.

Why the Family Is Critical to Faith Formation

The importance of family in socializing people, especially children, for involvement cannot be underestimated. Biblical and theological views often portray the family as a locus of spiritual activity, at times in the midst of a hostile cultural environment. Increasingly, various fields in the modern culture are discovering that the family is indispensable for developing well-adjusted, achieving children. Raising children in the faith is more than serving their own purposes. The faith-centered family trains children to devote themselves to the Lord's purposes.

Biblical View of Family

The family's role as the primary locus of human identity and learned behavior is substantiated by the biblical witness. "It is clear that in the world of biblical faith, the family is the primary unit of meaning which shapes and defines reality" (Brueggeman 18). A reductionistic view of family as just a social creation of function or even a matter of individual choices fails to appreciate the profound purpose of family. The family, then as now, is engaged in the nurture process like no other social institution. The Bible conveys a radical perception of family:

It urges that family need not be a helpless part of a hopeless, holding action in which the modern world appears to be caught. Rather it can be a new ethnos, formed by people who hear new words of hope and discipleship and move from the realm of hopeless necessity to the realm of promised possibility. (23)

Families are created by God with a divine purpose of shaping people in light of God's work and promises.

Nevertheless, living in a time where families are struggling or, even worse, damaged and where many individuals experience an unhealthy family life, the challenge is considering how families today can claim to be a new ethnos of hope, discipleship, and promise. The notion of perfect or solid families as necessary for faith formation is a false one. Most families are not on solid ground. "The Old Testament portraits of families exhibit a broad range of dysfunction and intrigue and testify to the fragile nature of the community found in families" (Dearman 119). Looking through the stories of families in the Bible such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they do not emerge as models of family function. In fact, they are models of dysfunction. Even the family of Jesus experiences complicated relationships (Matt. 1:18-25). "Yet these portraits also testify to the mysterious ways God works to preserve and bless these human relationships in spite of human fallibility" (Dearman 119). The good news is that God, not families, redeems people. Even in dysfunctional families, God is at work. Regardless of the messengers, God's word has power, so that even if the parents do not have a firm faith, if they will simply begin some basic patterns, God will be faithful:

Families are called to witness to the fact that our true personal identity and our deepest interpersonal kinship (within and beyond families) is found within the solidarity of the church doing the will and work of God in the power of the Spirit of God. (Barton 139)

Believing God's promise, families can boldly live out being the best they can, trusting God is at work in their midst.

No exclusive concept of nuclear family exists in the Old or New Testaments:

The family or household was constituted by both persons (related to one another in a wide variety of ways, such as descent, marriage, patronage, friendship, and ownership) and property. It was not limited to the intimate ties between husband and wife and between parents and immediate offspring characteristic of modernity in the West. (Barton 133)

The individual person belongs and lives out of the family. "Even when children are not present in the household, this is still the primary place for nurturing the faith" (Bozeman 15). While no concept of the nuclear family exists in Scripture, no concept of personhood exists outside of family either.

The biblical faith is essentially covenantal in its perception of all reality. In the context of biblical faith, the family is viewed in covenantal terms, open to the cost and joy of give-and-take, which impinges upon every member. Family is where persons struggle to live into the truth that they are created in God's image and to recognize this image in others and to act out of that blessedness:

Put in terms of the family, which is the fundamental social form of bodily relatedness and the fecundity of the body, the Incarnation is an affirmation of what we are given in creation, a refusal to accept that the life of the spirit is achieved either by exalting the family or by demeaning it. (Barton 135)

In the context of faith-centered families, individuals are connected with the work of God whether they are aware or even open to its blessing. "The child with a Christian parent is, via the parent's faith, brought into a vital, even if indirect, connection with God" (Andersen, Cohen, Morpew, Scott, and Strachan 23). Paul talks about how even unbelieving members are blessed through believing family (1 Cor. 7:12-16). The amazing

truth is that children who are important because they are gifts from God and loved by God are entrusted to parents and the faith community “for their nurture and growth into mature human beings” (Barton 138).

Family as the “Domestic Church”

During Vatican II, Bishop Pietro Fiordelli proposed that the Roman Catholic Church renew a deeper understanding of the family as the “domestic church” (Atkinson 594). He said in one Vatican II speech, “Is the parish the ultimate division of the Church? No. The parish is further divided into so many holy cells, which are Christian families, which we can call, following the example of the Holy Fathers, tiny churches” (qtd. in Atkinson 596). Quoting Augustine and Chrysostom, he desired to show that the family is the smallest organic cell of the church and is seen as an organ and community of Christ’s body. Lifting up the sacramental reality, family life is a way of holiness.

The family constitutes the domestic church not because of some particular configuration but simply because when they unite around Christ in their life together Christ is present (Matt. 18:20). As Florence Caffrey Bourg communicates, ordinary families provide fundamental occasions for the revelation of God at work in the “ordinary, imperfect family life” (68). For within actual family life with its ups and downs grace is experienced in pragmatic and tangible ways. Bourg makes the point that growth in holiness does not occur through correct theology but instead through lives lived in the daily belief that God is present in the midst of the mundane. A post-Vatican II document, *Lumen gentium* states, “In what might be regarded as the Domestic Church, ... the parents, by word and example are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children” (597). From here, John Paul II stated in his 1981 letter *Familiaris Consortio*

that “families ... will manifest to all people the Savior’s living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church” (no. 50). As John Paul II lays out that humans’ deepest hopes for marriage can only be fulfilled through conversion to Christ and be centered in the church, he goes on to lay out the ecclesial nature of the family divided into four parts. The family as domestic church carries out its mission in forming a community of persons, a community of serving one another, participating in the development of society and “sharing in the life and mission of the Church” (Atkinson 599). Only when the family participates in Christ’s nature and in his salvific mission does it find its true and ultimate identity and purpose. The family like the Church, which is grounded in the person of the Word of God, is part of his revelation and is a critical part of the salvific plan of God for all humanity (603). The purpose of the domestic church is to make Christian spirituality a daily practice.

Pope John Paul II taught that the family was the beginning of education for social justice (no. 64). Christian families are urged not to turn inward in a difficult world where the family is made into a safe haven for only their own familial relations and spiritual nurturing. The Christian ideal of the family as the domestic church is not only something for the internal functioning of the family and source of support for the church but is also a potential agent of transformation in society. The daily experience of domestic life provides the opportunity for learning to love one’s neighbor who stands concretely before believers as spouse, child, or aging parent. This daily experience of one’s neighbor transforms the family into a universal event, an access into the entire human race as it has been redeemed in Christ. Lisa Sowle Cahill writes, “The family should educate its members for service to society’s vulnerable and marginal members” (10). The family

serving others is nothing less than living out the nature of Christ. “For the Christian family this ideal translates into fidelity, reciprocity, and solidarity within the family, a style of relationship that overflows outward in social support for all families, especially those under duress or disadvantage (11). The Christian family by its definition as people redeemed by Christ and its calling through baptism is the socially transformative family.

Change in Congregational Orientation

Sharpe says, “The front door of the congregation may very well be the front doors of the homes of our members” (16). Despite all its imperfections and its many forms, the family constitutes the basic unit of the church. While acknowledging the ecclesial nature of the family, a bolder assertion is that the Church is made up of these ecclesial units, that it is constituted from below. Rather than having families focus themselves towards Sunday as the source of their spiritual strength, congregations would be strengthened by focusing itself towards families as the strength of the body. Thompson asks, “What if the family were not merely the object of the church’s teaching mission, but one of the most basic units of the church’s mission to the world?” (28). Again, if Lutheran theology includes the priesthood of all believers, congregations should be pushing the faith outward into daily life rather than trying to focus it towards Sunday. Sunday worship and other gatherings should be offered as celebrations and equipping opportunities rather than the ultimate expression of the community faith life. If Christ is present wherever two or three gather in his name, then the family centered around a life in Christ is a congregation. This perspective can help congregations to envision themselves as made up of numerous house churches of varying sizes and strengths.

Developmental Role of Family

The family is certainly “the first and most basic association of civil society” (Commission on Children 40). The most permanent and formative relationships are found in family circumstances. “Families are, by virtue of their social function, primary arenas for personal and spiritual formation, whether that formation is destructive or life-giving” (Thompson 143). The fact that dysfunctional and deforming family connections have such an adverse effect on the development of children demonstrates the normative function of family. “It is virtually impossible to overestimate the importance of the family to a child’s total development. The basic formation of character and development of personality that occurs within the home covers all the bases: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual” (20). Humans are biologically, emotionally, and mentally designed to grow within a family setting.

Scientific research. Scientific research increasingly discovers how human beings are biologically, genetically, socially, and psychologically predisposed to be formed and to function in families. God hardwired human beings to connect in families.

Humans are designed within their very biology and neurological structure to be in families. “The mechanisms by which we become and stay attached to others are biologically primed and increasingly discernable in the basic structure of the brain” (Commission on Children 16). Scientists are saying that from birth humans’ brains are physically designed to form attachments, because their brains “develop in tandem” with another human’s brain through the emotional communication that occurs before words are ever spoken. From holding newborn babies, one can observe infants are eager for connection through their facial expressions and grasping. “The self-organization of the

developing brain occurs in the context of a relationship with another self, another brain” (16). Social bonding also manifests itself biochemically when during the human bonding process neuropeptides, oxytocin, and vasopressin are released and received into the reward circuitry located deep in the cortex of the brain. Other neurotransmitters and hormones implicated in the human bonding process include dopamine, prolactin, endogenous opioid peptides, and steroid hormones such as estrogen, testosterone, and progesterone. Many of these same attachment hormones are released during birth and lactation, which increase mothers’ attachment and help trigger parental care.

Other evidence of the way God created humans to be in family is that “nurturing environments, or the lack of them, affect gene transcription and the development of brain circuitry” (Commission on Children 17). Parental presence has a definite impact on children’s biology. Various studies suggest “our deep need for attachment and connectedness to others can be traced back to the brain’s deepest centers of reward and gratification” (18). Positive nurturing becomes biologically patterned in human beings. Well-nurtured children will be predisposed at a cellular level, to pass on the same combination of good nurture and physiological resilience.

“The old ‘nature versus nurture’ debate—focusing on whether heredity or environment is the main determinant of human conduct—is no longer relevant to serious discussions of child well-being and youth programming” (Commission on Children 19). Social contexts can change genetic manifestation. “A social environment can change the relationship between a specific gene and the behavior associated with that gene” (19). The social environments in which children live make a difference in them for good or ill, affecting whether genetic makeup is expressed positively or negatively. Genetically

based risks can be reduced through social environment and even transformed into behavioral assets.

Family is not an accident of human evolution. Family is not something humans thought up or invented out of necessity. Family is not a human construct. Humans are created by God to be family.

Academic experience. Hundreds of reports from the secular educational field overwhelmingly show that parental involvement in their children's learning is positively related to achievement. Current research suggests that the more families support their children's learning and educational progress through activities at home, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education. (M. Sanders 163; see also Epstein 12). "The research shows that the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial are the achievement effects" (Cotton and Wiklund 2). The research indicates that the most direct forms of parental involvement in working with their children result in the most positive outcomes. The forms of direct parental involvement include reading with their children, tutoring them using teacher-supplied materials, and supporting their children's work on homework (2). The research also supports that more active forms of parental involvement produce greater results than passive parental involvement. These positive outcomes come regardless of social and economic factors.

The educational research also demonstrates that the earlier parental involvement begins in a child's educational process the more profound the effects will be over time. "Educators frequently point out the critical role of the home and family environment in determining children's school success, and it appears that the earlier this influence is

‘harnessed,’ the greater the likelihood of higher student achievement” (Cotton and Wikelund 3). Although higher incidence of parental involvement occurs in the earlier ages, parental involvement continues to promote positive emotional and behavioral outcomes with older children (4).

Another side effect of parental involvement in their children’s education is improved parent self-concepts. “Parents often begin their participation doubting that their involvement can make much difference, and they are generally very gratified to discover what an important contribution they are able to make” (Cotton and Wikelund 4). The involvement of parents also improves their attitudes towards the educational institution.

As the educational field has acknowledged and sought the influence and well-being of families in the educational process, awareness of the weakening of American families and the disruption that family instability brings to students’ academic performance has grown:

Proponents of community involvement for student well-being argue that because of the changes in the structure and function of US families and neighborhoods, many children and youth regardless of socioeconomic background, are growing up without the social capital necessary for their healthy development. (M. Sanders 163)

Educators acknowledge that the family provides a wealth of social capital for children that is difficult, if not impossible, to replace.

Importance of authoritative communities. Recognizing that human beings are designed to connect with other people and created to find moral meaning and the possibility of the transcendent, the Commission for Children at Risk draws the conclusion that human beings need to function in authoritative communities. Authoritative communities “are groups of people who are committed to one another over time and who

model and pass on at least part of what it means to be a good person and live a good life” (6). Authoritative communities are not authoritarian. They approach life together with warmth and nurture but also live out a structure of limits and expectations. Authoritative communities are multigenerational, treating children as ends in themselves and not a means to an end. These communities “are created and sustained by dedicated individuals with a shared vision of building a good life for the next generation” (35). Committed to love one’s neighbor as oneself, authoritative communities are devoted to certain principles about virtuous living. In line with these principles, authoritative communities seek to shape and launch a certain definition of person, especially children. Authoritative communities recognize that “religious and spiritual expression is a natural part of personhood” (39). The essential core and overwhelming bulk of this incredible work is done by unpaid non-specialists.

For children and adults, the family is the first and foremost authoritative community. The family is “a centrally important example of what should be an authoritative community” (Commission on Children 40). The distinguishing trait of family is its powerful combination of love, discipline, and permanence. “An authoritative parenting style ... characterized by moderately high levels of parental control and high levels of parental support, has been linked to positive outcomes for children and adolescents” (Wilcox 98). Families teach standards of conduct that cannot be enforced by law: honesty, trust, loyalty, cooperation, self-restraint, civility, compassion, personal responsibility, and respect for others (Commission on Children 40).

While many authors warn about domineering children in their spiritual journey (e.g., Westerhoff; Cahill), the practical matter remains that someone must initiate,

encourage, and hold accountable others for living out their spiritual disciplines. Again, parents have been ordained as pastors of their children through baptism. They are called to exercise a servant leadership role for their children. Parents must step up to embrace this God-given role. “Within a world, much of which is depersonalized and media-ridden, one of the most pressing needs is for a strong reinforcement of the home and the local church” (Andersen, Cohen, Morpew, Scott, and Strachan 24). Parents exercising their spiritual leadership can prevent their children from being dominated by a culture at odds with God.

Spiritual Role of Mothers and Fathers

Faith is not dogma or ritual activity. Faith is not knowing a full-blown systematic theology or reciting Bible verses. Faith is a relationship with God. As faith is a relationship with God, it is a gift from God and of God:

It presumes that God seeks relationship with us long before we begin to wonder about God. It also claims that God graciously loves and cares for all people—infants, children, teens, adults—regardless of their mental ability to understand the myriad human ideas about the nature and activity of God in the world. (Yust 4)

Augustine admits that God was seeking him even though he did not believe (187). In his explanation of the Apostles’ Creed in the Small Catechism, Luther says that people cannot come to God by their own efforts or reason, but that the Holy Spirit calls, gathers and enlightens people to faith (345).

Often parents are intimidated by the prospect of teaching their children the faith, but they will find confidence when they recognize that God is the one who teaches. From his careful study of Scripture, Luther believes that for Christians to be truly people of faith, they need to be taught by God. The Lord promises he will write his teachings in his

people's hearts (Jer. 31:33-34). The prophet Isaiah declares, "All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your children" (Isa. 54:13).

In the practice of infant baptism, Lutherans dare to believe that the initiating God graciously accepts young children (and even adults) long before cognitive understanding is possible or expected. In preparing parents to be spiritual leaders, church leaders need to help parents see that children are not proto-Christians but are people of faith, ready to encounter the transcendent. "We need to make room for children to be actual people of faith rather than just potential people of faith in need of further development before they can truly engage in a spiritual life" (Yust 7). In living and working with children, adults need to introduce and sustain spiritual habits that serve to integrate faith into the developing lives of children. The adult's function is necessary in faith formation, but not to be overvalued. As adults journey with children spiritually, they often recognize that spiritual results exceed the efforts and designs of the adults. "The adult is so often made aware of the disproportion between what one has given and what the children manifest to possess and to live" (Cavalletti 52). The role of adults is not to make faith but simply to help encourage children's active involvement in the faith story and practices (Ratcliff 12).

Jerome Berryman says for adults to conclude that children do not experience existential questions is erroneous. Not valuing the existential experience of children is detrimental to their spiritual development (Berryman 137). Any notion that parents should not spend as much effort advancing their children's spiritual development as their physical, social, or cognitive development is shallow and ignorant:

Far from building superstructures, to initiate the child into the Christian mystery is to initiate the child into the mystery of life. To

bar the child from the religious experience, to preclude the possibility of his receiving the Christian message, is to betray the child's most profound exigencies, to block his access to the full knowledge of the reality in which he finds himself immersed. (Cavalletti 177)

Whether families are intentionally passing on faith or not, children are absorbing a spiritual perspective through the family. As Marjorie J. Thompson writes, "The family, more than any other context of life, is the foundational arena of spiritual formation for children" (20). No matter what condition families of origin experience, they generate a way of life and a worldview. "Because children work out their earliest years of greatest dependency in these formative relationships, their family's ethos (way of life) and their family's mythos (perspective on life) will profoundly mold the values and faith of the child" (Martinson 401). Families can become more intentional and more constructive in this endeavor. "It is likely that parents influence their children's religious and spiritual development as they do other realms, that is, through verbal communication and induction and indoctrination of beliefs, disciplinary tactics, rewards and punishments, and behavioral modeling" (Boyatzis, Dollahite, and Marks 298). Parents will connect with their children on an existential level when they engage their children's spiritual quest.

Recognizing that family is the primary locus of faith development, the church would do well to equip parents as spiritual guides who live the faith. "It would be wiser for us to acknowledge the parents as the primary faith teachers, call them to accountability to the promises they made in baptism, and supply them with the necessary tools to do their jobs" (Melheim 23). After all, much of the spiritual development occurs through an informal curriculum. Faith is more caught than taught. "We know that children learn more from what adults do than from what adults say; they are sensitive to the 'hidden

curriculum' behind teaching—those lessons embodied in method and structure that either force or contradict the content” (Thompson 22). Parents have the power to shape children spiritually, both positively and negatively.

Faith is made irresistible when it propels believers to love people around them, when faith guides them to be people others admire and want to emulate, when faith motivates them to make a difference in the lives of others. Children need to receive the spiritual story of love and redemption through the compassionate care of their parents and their faith community. “Parents who establish warm, caring, congenial relationships with their children are communicating their own moral values without saying a word” (Strommen and Hardel 89). When children experience their needs met consistently and lovingly by their caregivers, they can imagine a faithful and loving God who cares for them. “Parents model the values they hold through their use of time, their conversations, and the commitments they make” (89). Faith must be lived before it is believed. A vibrant faith lived out in parents will commend itself to their children:

Who we are as adults, what we believe about God, and how we think and feel permeate the world in which our children live and grow. We cannot shield them from that. In relationship with us they discover themselves and construct their God, whose valuing of them looks like the sense of worth they see reflected from us. (Stonehouse 130)

If faith-forming habits can be embedded in the daily routines of family life, then the frequency of religious activity will form the informal curriculum. If families live daily in spiritual practices, this irresistible faith will happen more. In families that regularly pray, read the Bible, spend time in service, and worship together, those children will grow up carrying out these spiritual habits and will “teach those disciplines to their children”

(Holmen, *Building Faith* 99). Daily practices become honored family traditions irresistible just by their engrained pattern.

Parents modeling the faith is imperative if the children to embrace the faith. “Parents ignite faith in the lives of their children by making it an affair of the heart” (Strommen and Hardel 104). Parents through their behavior and habits model whether the faith is a compelling part of their lives. Parents who espouse a Christian faith but live lives disconnected from the implications of the gospel and without faith practices undermine their religious assertion. Barna’s research suggests that behavioral modeling “is the most powerful component in a parent’s effort to influence a child” (*Revolutionary Parenting* 84). Parents need to be intentional about their position as role models in their children’s lives. Modeling is a key method in which values and traditions get passed on:

Various studies and researches have tried to estimate the importance of learning through modeling, producing a vast array of results, but it seems likely that somewhere around 60 percent of the learning that affects people’s behavior is based upon watching someone they know and trust doing something significant. (92)

Children emulate what they see. They are looking for role models. “Young people admit to being highly influenced by their role models and to be actively seeking more such examples, but nearly half of all preteens (44 percent) admit that they don’t have any role models” (Barna, *Transforming Children* 24). Accepting the role as spiritual leader gives parents the opportunity to enhance their position as role models in their children’s lives.

Nevertheless, just as children test the limits of parental boundaries, children scrutinize the authenticity of adult spirituality. “Children have no incentive for committing themselves to a particular spiritual identity in adolescence if faith is portrayed by adults as something one sheds with childhood” (Yust 39). If taking children to church

is just an effort to instill moral training, but the Christian life is eschewed the rest of the time, children will quickly see past that shallow faith. Unless parents or some other important adult is modeling a genuine faith they can observe and imitate, children will not adhere to the faith. “If they discover that our own spiritual practices are given little attention and power to shape our lives, they are likely to imitate our indifference to the religious culture” (40). A genuine faith in the parents will beget a genuine faith in their children.

Role of mothers. Women are more predisposed towards spirituality. Often mothers take the lead in finding a church, getting everyone up and dressed on Sundays, and taking the family to church without their husbands. Teenagers reported seeing their mothers doing religious things more often than fathers (E. Roehlkepartain, *Teaching Church* 172). In general, mothers speak more often with their children than fathers. They are more likely to discuss religious questions with their children. In the *Effective Christian Education* study, youth reported they had regular religious dialogue with their mothers almost 2.5 times more frequently than with their fathers. Chris J. Boyatzis, in a diary-based study of parent-child faith conversations, found mothers were more actively involved in spiritual conversations than fathers (189). Educational research also found mothers were more likely than fathers to be involved in their children’s schooling.

Role of fathers. Church leaders recognize that men being the spiritual leaders to their boys and girls is critically important. Failure to address men and their role in family faith formation hampers the effectiveness of any efforts to effect a change. In order for families to be at their most effective, fathers must be involved in the family faith-forming process. While certain scholars have denied that fathers have a special role to fulfill (just

as mothers have a special role), the literature recognizes that “fathers are about as important as mothers in predicting children’s long-term outcomes” (Wilcox 99). William Bradford Wilcox’s research bears out that religiously active men are more engaged as husbands and fathers than nominally religious or nonreligious men and that their religious expression has a positive effect on their parenting (199).

David Murrow cites a Promise Keeper’s study showing that “when a mother comes to faith in Christ, the rest of the family follows 17 percent of the time. But when a father comes to faith in Christ, the rest of the family follows 93 percent of the time” (47). While unable to corroborate this source, statistical evidence exists that supports the contention that the father’s influence upon their children’s spirituality is substantial. Werner Haug and Phillipe Warner, in their report commissioned by the Council of Europe, show that if a father does not go to church, no matter how regular the mother is in her religious practice, only 2 percent of children will become regular worshippers, and 37 percent will attend irregularly. Over 60 percent of their children will be lost completely to the church (158).

If both father and mother attend regularly, 33 percent of their children will become regular churchgoers, and 41 percent will end up attending irregularly. Only a quarter of their children will not practice the religion at all. If the father is irregular and the mother regular, only 3 percent of the children will subsequently become regulars themselves, while a further 59 percent will become irregular attenders (Haug and Warner 158).

If a father attends regularly, then regardless of the practice of the mother, at least one child in three will become a regular church attender (Haug and Warner 159).

Attendance, in fact, increased in proportion to the mother's laxity, indifference, or hostility.

Anyone can be a biological father, but to be a spiritual father requires living as an example for one's children. To be a spiritual father does not require perfection but participation and patterning. Boys imitate their dads. A spiritual father is a living example, someone to follow (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:9). In their report *Family Religious Involvement and the Quality of Family Relationships for Early Adolescents*, Smith and Kim state, "More than 70 percent of youth from families doing something religious five to seven days per week aspire to be like their fathers" (23). In the same report, they also state that 64 percent of actively religious youth admired their fathers compared with 42 percent of teenagers from irreligious families (25). Michael Gurian writes that fathers serving as spiritual mentors are crucial:

[W]ithout a sacred role to grow into, [a boy] will, as he becomes a man, be more likely to join a gang, hit his lover, abandon his children, live in emotional isolation, become addicted, hyper-materialistic, lonely and unhappy. He needs a structure and discipline in which to learn who he is. He needs to live a journey that has clear responsibilities and goals. He needs a role in life. (249)

The data shows committed Christian men who take on the role of being the spiritual leader—spiritual example—have a positive impact on their families.

Countercultural Living

In current society, to be countercultural one only has to be a parent. Individualism and consumerism have undermined the value of family (Commission on Children 41). Christians no longer live in a society that revolves around the sacred or even around ecclesial priorities. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, "We are moving towards a completely religionless time; people as they are now simply cannot be religious any more" (139).

Christians in the United States live in a post-Christian society. Western culture is a hostile, inhospitable place for discipleship. “Paganism is the air we breathe, the water we drink. It captures us, it converts our young, it subverts the church” (Hauerwas and Willimon 151). To live truly as a Christian family in a pluralistic secular society is to live fully counter to the culture.

While parents are not taking action to form faith in the home and develop a Christian worldview in their children, another presence in the home is filling the unintentional vacuum. “On May 24, 2006, CBS News reported that one third of families in the United States have television on all the time and that 20 percent of toddlers have a television in their own bedrooms” (Stonehouse and May 367). The cultural meta-narrative is constantly piped into American homes:

The television set sits at the center of our culture’s living room as the common denominator of communication. It provides a ritual for gathering and orders time by its programming. It entertains us by its stories. It is, however, seldom parabolic. (Berryman 71)

Many families are totally immersed in this entrancing and digitally altered story, which teaches children who they are and what is important. The cultural meta-narrative transmitted through the television is not benign. “To let the television run uncontrolled is to let the media give us an anti-Christian master story and shape our worldview and that of our children” (Stonehouse 199). “Media that encourage self-gratification, individualism, anti-authoritarianism, and the like are powerful shapers of the attitudes and values not only of young people but also of families, communities, and the culture itself” (Strommen and Hardel 257). One of the greatest impediments to home devotions is the television. Even though families are busy among school, work, and other extracurricular activities, they still manage time to watch television for hours. Families

struggle to turn off the television during meal times, not to mention turning it off to sit together to talk about the faith and the Bible.

Children relate to characters from an imaginary world. They see them so frequently; they recognize them as familiar: Mickey Mouse, Elmo and Big Bird, or Sponge Bob Squarepants. Seeing one of these characters in a store or fast food outlet is like connecting with a friend. They provide comfort and assurance.

Christians need to assess which culture is defining and developing their children. Without a determined spiritual effort, children will be defined by the world's culture with its individualism and consumerism. "Unintentionally we may be forming monocultural kids—children so comfortable with the world's culture that a Christian culture is foreign to them" (Stonehouse and May 373). Parents must equip their children to live in two cultures, but this task is not easy.

In contradiction to this society, raising children in the faith is difficult and demanding. "The bottom line is that a person's moral foundation is either based upon Christian spirituality and thus drawn from God's Word, or it is based on worldly perspectives (i.e., pagan spirituality)" (Barna, *Transforming Children* 53). To counter a worldview-by-default, parents must "intentionally and strategically lead a young person through a process designed to help the youth arrive at worldview that is consistent with God's truths, principles, and desires for his creation" (67). Karen Marie Yust writes that Christians must train their children to live a bicultural life where they will be in the world but not of the world (John 15:19; 17:14-16). While they live in the midst of the world, including the neighborhood, schools, friends, life in the city, and the nation, the other culture is that of the religious community: the family spiritual practices, local

congregation, and the wider church (Yust 27). Parents need to realize that raising children in the faith is truly teaching them to live in a second culture. “In contradiction to our society, which encourages people to be either pathologically codependent or insanely independent, as parents we want to create in our children the sense of being interdependent and communal beings who are fully dependent upon God” (Westerhoff 130). Just as becoming fluent in a second language requires much intentionality, training children to live the second culture of the Christian community in the midst of this culture requires much intentionality and persistence.

In order for Christian culture to be children’s primary culture, it has to be the culture of their home. If children are to develop a similar relationship with biblical characters that they have with cartoons, they must have frequent exposure to these characters and their stories. “Otherwise, the characters of their faith stories are like distant relatives who come to visit once or twice a year. They are essentially strangers, to whom children react with disinterest, suspicion, or tentative engagement” (Yust 24). Just as parents screen playmates, they also must determine who their children make friends with spiritually and culturally. “Part of the counter cultural life of the church is to read, study and reflect upon the message of the Bible” (Anderson and Hill 136). If children are to possess the sense that God is with them always and everywhere, parents need to have religious images and practices in their households. “The message children receive from shrines and crucifixes in the home is that these images are my images and my family’s images. They belong to the family just as the rest of the furniture, pictures, and household items do” (Yust 35). Parents must decorate the doorposts and gates of their homes with the word of God and the images of faith (Deut. 6:9; 11:20)

Training Children to Live as a Holy Nation

After Deuteronomy 6:4-9, after the promise that the Lord will provide a home land for them, after the admonition not to abandon God's statutes, after the reiteration that the basis of obedience is a response to the gracious deliverance of the Lord, comes the warning not to imitate other nations (Deut. 7:1-11). The entire history of Israel is about a people who are set apart for a purpose and a destiny. In Exodus 19:6, the Lord announces to Israel, "[O]ut of all peoples you'll be my special treasure,... a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." In their wilderness experience, they were being trained how to be different from the other peoples. They maintained their spiritual distinctiveness by their everyday habits, their dress, their food, and their prayers. As Israel prepared to possess the land, they were warned not to make a peace with the people of the land. They were warned not to intermarry with them. Specifically they were warned that if they get comfortable with these people, if they bonded together with these people who did not know the LORD, these people would "turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods" (Deut. 7:4). The Israelites are told once again that they are a people set apart for the purposes of the Lord. "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession" (Deut. 7:6).

The people of Israel were called to exist as a nation dedicated to the service of the Lord and morally pure. Repeatedly, they were warned not to bow down to the culture's gods nor serve them (Exod. 23:24). Repeatedly, they were warned not to imitate the practices or customs that would lead them away from the Lord (Lev. 18:3; Deut. 18:9; 20:18; cf. 2 Kings 17:15-18). One of the recurring rants of the prophets was that the

Israelites did not keep themselves away from the practices of the other nations (Jer. 3:22-25). Written in the context of exile in a foreign nation, the book of Daniel emphasizes living differently among other people of other faiths (Dan. 1-3, 6).

In the New Testament, Christians take up the title of being a chosen people (Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2, 2:5; Rev. 17:11). While early Christians did not comprise a nation, they were exhorted to live as aliens in this world. They are encouraged to put off the old life, leaving behind pagan ways of living and thinking, to embrace a Christian way of living (Col. 3:1-12; Eph. 4:17-24; Gal. 5:13-26; 1 Pet. 4:1-5). Christians were challenged to live faithfully in the midst of a world that does not recognize the work of God in Christ and that passes away (1 Cor. 3:19; 5:10; 7:31; John 12:25; 17:11-18; 18:36-37).

The apostle Peter especially takes up this language. Speaking to Christians dispersed throughout the Roman empire who are in one sense resident aliens as immigrants, Peter accentuates that they are strangers and aliens as spiritual followers of Jesus (1 Pet. 1:1, 17; 2:11). During Peter's time in the Roman empire, Christians were seen as very strange for believing in a humiliated and crucified savior and living as though the world was different. "Peter really believed that the gospel, and this community it produced, had the power to convert even ordinary, selfish, materialistic people like us into something resembling saints" (Hauerwas and Willimon 133).

As Jesus himself exhorted the disciples to live uniquely in the world, as the apostles encouraged and admonished believers to grow in their faith to live faithfully in the midst of a sinful world, obviously the same exhortations to adult believers apply also to children. Just as the adults need to be trained in the faith, so do children to keep them

from imitating the ways of unbelievers and from being led astray. Writing that children should be so immersed in a Christian environment, Bushnell says, “[M]y argument is to establish that the child is to grow up a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise” (4).

The people of God by their very definition are people who have another alliance, who have another home. They are also supposed to be spiritually distinctive. “Christianity is an invitation to be part of an alien people who make a difference because they see something that cannot be seen without Christ” (Hauerwas and Willimon 25). Living out the invisible as if it were visible makes Christians peculiar people:

Without any more effort than simply getting out of bed and driving to a place of worship, Christians simply are distinctive. And that is to say nothing about the stubborn, profoundly formative power of worship itself. However feebly and distractedly we participate, we are acknowledging a reality outside ourselves and the world as it is otherwise known. We are confessing at least the possibility of being accountable to something (to someone) other than our individual desires and “need.” (Clapp 195)

Parents have the joyful task of training their children to be peculiar, to be defined as different than many of the other children with whom they go to school.

The problem for most American Christians is that they want Christianity to mesh with society. When watching commercial television, trying to ignore most advertising, or listening to popular music, however, they rarely perceive their values portrayed positively. Christians have long assumed that American society shared their values because this country was founded upon Christian principles, yet Luther, Calvin, Franke, and Wesley all viewed their societies as being at odds with God’s kingdom—and they lived in Christendom. “Parenting occurs on the front lines of the spiritual battle that defines our daily existence and purpose” (Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting* xxi). Raising

children to live as a holy nation is a spiritual conflict whether in the age of Luther, Wesley, or today.

As Israel and the New Testament Christians, contemporary Christians are called to stand out as an example of living in the kingdom of God. They have been made into a holy community, the Church. The primary purpose of the Church is to be witness to the in-breaking of the kingdom of God in Christ Jesus who is now judge over all of life (Luke 4:18-19; Acts 1:8). They give witness to the kingdom by raising up disciples, including their own children, who manifest the new way of life in Christ (Matt. 28:19-20; Eph. 4:12-16; Mark 8:34-38). The work of the Church is to communicate the meaning of living in Christ. The intended result of this work is to produce Christ-shaped disciples of all ages.

The whole goal and aim of Christian spiritual formation is to be shaped by Christ and reflect Christ (Rom. 8:29; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:15). The challenge to contemporary Christians is whether they are being increasingly conformed to the world or increasingly conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 12:2).

Why Living Out the Story Is Critical to Faith Formation

Critical to the process of being transformed more and more into a reflection of Jesus Christ is knowing Jesus' story, God's story.

Teaching Children to Live into the Story

Story defines people: "Narrative is a fundamental epistemology for humans, and family narratives are a major embodiment of meaning" (Boyatzis, Dollahite, and Marks 301). Story is at the center of familial and personal understanding and is so essential to living a spiritual life. Because story plays a primary role in human thinking, "religious

narratives map onto human thinking,” especially with children (301). Children need more than stories about themselves or what is around them. The best stories are spiritual, helping to connect children “with deeper truths and ultimate meanings in life” (Ratcliff 12).

Children are born without knowing God’s story, and without recognition they have their own stories to write. Nevertheless, people need a larger story if they are to make sense of the world and themselves. Untethered experiences in this world only come to have meaning when viewed through the prism of a worldview story that people believe explains the truth of this world. One of the children’s greatest urgent needs is opening up to the transcendent (Cavaletti 178). “We have the privilege of becoming partners with God by assisting children in finding what they long for—experience with God” (Stonehouse 181). Adults cannot hold back the scriptural message thinking children are not ready for the story of God. Walter Wangerin discusses how children have experiences of the divine and have a consciousness of the experience but need a language so that it may be acknowledged and preserved:

Who can say when, in any child, the dance with God begins? No one. Not even the child can later look back and remember the beginning of it, because it is as natural an experience (as early and as universally received) as the child’s relationship with the sun or with his bedroom. And the beginning, specifically, cannot be remembered because in the beginning there are no words for it. Language to name, contain, and to explain the experience comes afterward. The dance, then, the relationship with God, faithing, begins in a mist. (20)

As children learn the story of faith, they are given a language to begin to understand their spiritual experience.

Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen assert that (1) God intends for the biblical story to shape children, (2) God intends that children meet God in his story, and (3) God intends that his story become their story. Believers are encouraged to find their

place in the story and to live into it as “the true story of the world” (12). In a clear sense, the story interprets the reader more than the reader interprets it:

It is the divine author’s intention to shape our lives through [the Bible’s] story. To be shaped by the story of Scripture we need to understand two things well: the biblical story is a compelling unity on which we may depend, and each of us has a place within that story. (12)

When “we enter deeply into the story of the Bible, God will be revealed to us. We will also find ourselves called to share in the mission of God and his purposes with creation” (22). As Hebrews 4:8 explains God’s story is living and active and penetrates the soul.

Proclamation of the gospel message is necessary for children to know new things. One way they experience God is to enter the stories of Scripture and see God in action, discover God’s character event by event, and hear God speak to them in the story (Stonehouse and May 5). Stories told to them by older generations of the community must be communicated in meaningful ways (Beckwith 93). The story is communicated in rituals of the story, story practices, storytelling and story sharing. “The more a child’s moral imagination is shaped by the stories of Christianity, the greater will be their capacity for spiritual and moral formation” (Ford and Wong 320). Adults who had grown up committed Christians reported that “extensive time spent studying the Bible as a family ... made the greatest difference” in their commitment level (Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting* 32)

A significant factor in the enculturation of children in the biblical story is whether parents live in the story:

Whether or not the biblical story becomes primary in the lives of our children will be powerfully influenced by what we as leaders in the faith community and parents believe about the biblical story and what we believe about how we tell that story. (Stonehouse and May 368)

For God's story to shape children and their perception of the world, the story must be a living narrative that is woven into daily living.

Four Habits of Living the Story

The challenge, then, is living into the drama of God's story each day as families. Ivy Beckwith affirms that spiritual formation happens when the faith community communicates both its shared story and God's story through symbols, art, music, ritual, actions, and narratives (97). Living into the divine story is more than reading the story but is acting it out in daily practices. Children must be taught how to understand and visualize their own stories as a means of positive spiritual growth. Reflecting one's own story of life with God helps one to see the work of God in one's life (93). Richard J. Foster states that the spiritual disciplines open the door to God working inside to change believers within and bring them the gift of God's righteousness (6).

Families will be unable to integrate God's story with all of daily life if they do not engage faith habits that define their lives and make room for God in the rush of life. To initiate spiritual practices in the 86 percent of families who have no spiritual practices in their lives together, church leaders should focus upon initiating fundamental faith-forming habits. Once these fundamental faith-forming habits have gained a foothold in the lives of families, the church can teach and instill a wider breadth of spiritual practices from that basic foundation. These basic habits are best instilled in children when they are young. The repeated advice of those who contemplate family ministry is to start young, because establishing these patterns later in life is difficult (Frambach Keynote Addresses; see also Strom 11). A pattern of living and celebrating the faith can bring together the often discordant and disconnected fragments of families' hectic lives (Batchelder 10). As

the National Youth and Religion Study indicates, youth who live with parents who exercise faith habits are most likely to imitate their parents and practice regular faith-forming habits as well. “If parents and children together respond to Christ, then the whole life of the family is enriched” (Andersen, Cohen, Morpew, Scott, and Strachan 27). The critical issue is not children’s learning styles, etc. but fundamentally parents carrying out faith-forming habits in the home. “Once established in a home, [family patterns of religious rituals] are long retained even if church participation declines, and they tend to be passed from one generation to the next” (Moberg 561).

From reading the biblical and ecclesial sources, church leaders should focus their energies on training parents and families in four basic faith-forming habits of prayer, Scripture reading, faith discussions, and faith sharing in words and deeds. “There is mutual support in prayer, learning, worship and service” (Andersen, Cohen, Morpew, Scott, and Strachan 27). In discussing how to foster “close relationships with God” through the family, they describe faith as an affair of the heart, a commitment of the mind, a producer of loving actions, and faith growing through dynamic interaction (Strommen and Hardel 75). They say parents can contribute to faith by “becoming Gospel-oriented parents, communicating moral values, being involved in service activities, and sharing faith at home” (81).

Addressing specifically family-centered spirituality, the Youth and Family Institute, an ELCA organization, has developed four keys for nurturing faith in the home. David W. Anderson and Paul Hill write, “The Four Keys serve what the church calls ‘means of grace’—avenues for the work of the Holy Spirit to create faith and build the

church, the body of Christ” (98). They define the four keys as (1) caring conversations, (2) devotions, (3) rituals and traditions, and (4) service.

They describe *caring conversations* as families being available to talk with and especially to listen to one another. Caring conversation is the foundation under relationships that allows family members to talk about all the important things in life. Caring conversation means families taking time to be really present with one another, listen deeply, share their deepest dreams and joys and concerns. Luther says the gospel is proclaimed through “the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren” by which God gives his “council and help” (“Smalcald Articles” 310).

Anderson and Hill describe *devotions* as prayer and biblical reading, study and reflection. They encourage parents to help children find themselves in God’s story and God in their story. Scripture should be God’s fresh and living word for believers each day. They encourage leading caring conversations into deeper conversations about the Scripture.

Anderson and Hill say, “Rituals and Traditions are those patterns of behavior that occur with regularity” (161). Rituals communicate relationships, values, and meanings. All humans have patterns of behaviors that ritualize how they live. The Christian faith has many rituals that help to define and encourage Christ followers in living the faith. “What families choose to celebrate and how they celebrate experientially articulates what a family believes and values” (101).

The *service* key is faith work for others. As believers are filled to the brim with God’s love and loving relationships, they are free to pour themselves out in service. They get to share the love of Christ that fills them to overflowing. “When parent and child

together perform service activities, the child sees the parent's capability, faith, and values in action" (151).

Although admiring Anderson and Hill's four keys for developing family faith-forming practices, too much emphasis is placed on rituals and traditions. Granted a systematic, in-depth Christian nurture needs to be developed in families. Some practices they recommend expect a deeper level of faith than many parents possess. When 86 percent of families are doing nothing, the church is challenged to start something from nothing. Thompson says, "[S]imple but specific structures and patterns support the spiritual potential within families of faith" (21). The basics that can get families started in carrying out faith-forming habits are (1) Scripture reading, (2) prayer and ritual devotions, (3) spiritual conversations, and (4) faith active in love through words and deeds.

Scripture Reading

Reflecting human experience, stories have the power to transform lives enabling people to learn by example. "Narratives of the Christian faith, told in a compelling manner and lived by the people of God, past and present, can lead children to authentic Christian living" (Ford and Wong 320). That compelling faith narrative is found in the Bible. "The Bible will always have the primary role in the content that we teach children in the church" (Krych, "Theology of Christian Education" 7).

As adults, parents need to understand children's desire to engage shared stories as a way of making room for complex understanding. Reading Scripture is more than simply imparting information:

The power of the gospel is not, primarily, that it gives us the tools for an intellectual understanding of our relationship with God. Its power is

imaginative, and speaks to our inmost feelings in ways that even as adults we can hardly describe. Indeed, we shrink from such description.
(Pritchard 13)

Parents need to be encouraged not to think they have to explain everything. As discussed earlier, God teaches and enlightens. Parents simply need to share the story of God; they have no power over it. “Stories are at the heart of faith development for children, stories capture and communicate theology for them” (Stonehouse 161). Reading the story and doing faith practices of the story frequently so that it lives in the children gives them experiences with God, enabling them to ask their own questions when they are ready.

Darlene L. Witte-Townsend and Emily DiGiulio say the rereading of favorite stories “enables the understanding of complex human issues and contributes significantly to social, emotional and spiritual growth” (127). They examine how the emerging self-consciousness is nurtured through the engagement of stories over and over again. Telling faith stories provides children with a linguistic immersion experience and gives them a language to speak about what they experience and perceive. As part of their process of understanding human experience, children relate their own lives to the experiences of biblical characters (Stonehouse 140). “In books, themes of intimacy and independence, for example, are presented in scenes that are more real than real life, but which prompt thinking about awareness of these within the family context” (132). As children are trying to make sense of human relationships, stories aid children in finding patterns that explain the social world:

Many needs of the mind, heart and body intertwine and grow within the child as these stories are experienced over and over again and social, practical, moral, ethical and philosophical dimensions are explored, including those which are explicitly stated as well as those which are implied. Children engage this multidimensional information with great intensity. (133)

Children often display an intense engagement in stories they want to hear repeatedly. They will want to hear Bible stories over and over again if they are introduced to these stories. More than simply hearing the familiar narrative told again, children are exploring “social, practical, moral, ethical and philosophical dimensions,... including those which are explicitly stated as well as those which are implied” (133).

Children are capable of working through very complex concepts. As Sofia Cavalletti and Berryman note, adults hold a conviction that children are not capable of receiving the great realities of the biblical story. Adults are often unsure of their own faith, and they have not transmitted these realities with the necessary essentiality. Cavalletti says, “It is easier for us to cover our ignorance and doubt to talk about Noah’s ark and guardian angels, than of Christ, died and is risen” (51). Even the unpleasant stories in the Bible need to be shared with children. “We need to accept that our children are called to travel with us through the hard and bitter mystery of the creation as it actually is” (Pritchard 33). Parents cannot shelter their children from the pain in their life together. Children are not fools. Cavalletti also says, “We should not be afraid to approach the greatest themes with the youngest children” (51). If parents will communicate the essential elements of the story, without explaining away or going abstract, “the children will listen to us, enchanted, happy, and never tiring” (51). Parents do not have to sugar coat the word of God. They do not have to invent fairy-tale versions of the gospel. They can be blunt and honest and trust the gospel. Parents have to remember God’s word resonates in a different manner in young children than adults:

We are there together before our God, adults and children, telling the truth, and not trying to bravely protect each other or vaunt a pious assurance we do not really hold. God has his own ways of easing the hard

places for us and our children. Telling lies is no help to anybody.
(Pritchard 37)

Perhaps parents could be surprised by the exegetical insights of difficult passages by their children.

In the process of reading the biblical story with children, Witte-Townsend and DiGuilo advise that parents should never give the impression only one correct response exists to complex questions. They are not training their children to live in the story when they train them only to repeat back *right* answers. Instead parents should ask open-ended questions that promote exploring the complex patterns of how people relate to God and how God relates to them. Recognizing these patterns within human relationships from the meta-narrative allows children to engage these meta-patterns (136).

Perhaps rather than telling children what the story means, parents and caregivers should lead them to engage the story reflectively, wondering about its meaning. One way the story can be reflected upon is to enter into the biblical story, to walk around in it: seeing the people, hearing the sounds, feeling the emotions (Stonehouse and May 6). Sometimes parents might ask the children to tell the biblical story they just heard (Yust 85). Parents can invite their children to talk about the ways they see Bible stories coming alive around them. When a child engages the Bible story in an illustrated book while sitting in the lap of a loved one, the feelings surrounding the experience of that story make possible that the content of the story is more likely to sink in (Hughes 118).

Spiritual Conversations

As Boyatzis points out, “Parents have a scriptural call to search for the sacred all day and night” (183) in order to generate the conversations that create the rich context for religious contextualization. Strommen and Hardel, in advocating strengthening family

relationships, stress the importance of effective communication (47). The *Effective Christian Education* study shows that many families do not talk about the faith. Many parents are reluctant to talk about their faith with their children:

Some parents, because they think they are forcing their own point of view on their children, hesitate to tell their children what they believe. It need not be that way; if parents explain why they feel deeply about a certain issue, their children will be nothing but appreciative. (Strommen and Hardel 90)

Hesitancy about discussing the faith is ludicrous when considering all the other subjects parents spend time addressing. “Yet hearing their parent’s faith stories is one of the most important influences on the faith of children and teenagers” (E. Roehlkepartain, *Teaching Church* 174). Through stories shared in families, we learn what our parent values, the principles they live by, how they make sense of the world that sometimes confuses and frightens children (Hughes 117).

Parents need not fear having religious conversations with children where they have to be experts. Children are already spiritual pilgrims asking the essential existential questions: “Who do I come from?” “Who am I?” “What am I doing here?” (Stonehouse 195). Religious dialogue with children should not be unidirectional dogma monologue but a reciprocity where both parents and children are mutually participating. “Parent and child work together to create meaning about God, heaven and the afterlife, good and evil, and so on” (Boyatzis 184). Parents are usually the first people children turn to with questions about spirituality. “The good news is parents do not have to be experts in order to foster their children’s spiritual perception” (Yust 135). When adults are open to listening to children, it “demonstrates the power of talking with children, rather than just to” or at them (Hood 246). Sadly, too many parents are too busy to hear what is on the hearts and

minds of their children. By not listening, they miss opportunities to make a difference in deep level, life-changing moments in their children:

Listening is not only the most vital aspect of effective communication, but it serves as a window into the mind and heart of the child—an indispensable chance to get right to the core of the child's needs and growth potential with a minimum of trial and error. (Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting* 91)

In this conversational style where parent and child challenge each other, express doubts, demonstrate frustration when they struggle to comprehend, expose logical inconsistencies, and uncover religious hypocrisies, parents and children develop an openness in mutual discussions where they each can express their own understandings and incorporate the others. Spiritual discussions should not require that children must agree with their parents for family congruence. Parents also realize through these discussions that they often arrive at deeper understandings of spiritual truths. Boyatzis found children initiated half of all spiritual conversations in a study group. He found parents who were intentional about asking open-ended questions tended to create “co-constructive” spiritual conversations (189).

In another result from his study, Boyatzis found that spiritual conversations were not prompted by religious activities such as travelling to or from worship services, but with “the natural ebb and flow of family life” (194). These conversations occurred most often around mealtime, bedtime, and prayer. Considering that a significant majority of American families still frequently eat dinner together, using mealtime as an opportunity

for faith talks seems a natural strategy for increasing the parent-child conversations about matters of faith.²

Eugene C. Roehlkepartain suggests churches conduct family-oriented classes to train families to talk about faith together. “By bringing families together and giving them structured opportunities to talk about faith, they may become more comfortable talking about faith in their everyday home lives” (*Teaching Church* 174). Yust suggests parents could prepare for spiritual conversations by exercising their own curiosity by reading books that explore their faith tradition and by engaging in conversations with other adults about the faith questions children raise (135). Parents could even seek out explanations with their children to their questions.

Dick Hardel and Deb Stehlin with the Youth and Family Institute have developed “FaithTalk with Children” to stimulate spiritual conversations at the dinner table, in the car, or wherever families make time to talk with one another. The kit contains ninety-six questions divided into four color groups and a spinner. A version was also designed for older children with 126 cards. Some questions focus on memories, asking children and adults for examples to remember a time they felt close to God. Another subset focuses on actions, challenging children and adults to imagine how to or to take action to express God’s love. Another subset deals with values. The fourth subset focuses on their spiritual disposition and relationship to God.

² Teenagers of actively religious families are more likely to eat dinner together five or more days a week, 86.4 percent, than teenagers in irreligious families, 65.3 percent (Smith and Kim, *Family Religious Involvement and the Quality of Family Relationships* 34). The younger children are, the more likely they are to eat their meals with their parents. For children under six, 79 percent of them ate with their parents every day compared with 73 percent of children six to eleven, and 58 percent of children twelve to seventeen years old (Dye and Johnson 6).

Prayer and Ritual Devotions

Just as with faith development in adults, prayer and devotional practices are critical to the faith development of children. “Of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father” (Foster 33). In looking at spiritual leaders, Foster comments how in their walk with God, prayer was not something added on— it was their lives (34). Many authors combine prayer with other spiritual practices under the heading of rituals or devotions (Anderson and Hill 161-70; May, Posterski, Stonehouse, and Cannell 162-64). The essential spiritual practice of religious rituals or devotions is prayer.

Children benefit from involvement in the discipline of prayer and spending time with God (May, Posterski, Stonehouse, and Cannell 140). Prayer, as worship of God, is certainly a key discipline for children:

It is a fact that children have an extraordinary capacity for prayer, as regards to duration as well as spontaneity and dignity of expression. Theirs is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving, which expresses the nearness and transcendence of God at the same time. (Cavalletti 44)

Parents need to encourage children to express themselves in communication with God.

“In Scriptural accounts, children are often involved in the verbs of worship” (May, Posterski, Stonehouse, and Cannell 219; see also Josh. 8:34-35; 2 Chron. 20:13; Neh. 12:43; Matt. 21:15-16). In the domestic church, parents have the responsibility of training their children in devotional patterns. “Prayer needs to be modeled and taught in very simple ways in the home” (Thompson 76). Parents can teach the children prayer simply by praying with them. “Children learn to pray best when they pray with their primary caregivers and experience firsthand that prayer is a valued spiritual discipline” (Strommen and Hardel 134). Hearing the prayers of one another, a bonding power occurs

that goes beyond the even good interpersonal communication. The prayer of each family member is essential to the spiritual wholeness of the family because the foundation of the relationships becomes the relationship with God.

Often adults think children are not capable of silent prayer, but children can be good at it. From her experience, Cavaletti says children are very capable of silence. Perhaps parents would find if they led their children into a time of stopping and being silent, that their children would eagerly join them. Children need to be taught how to express themselves to God.

Studies show that people who have regular devotional practices of prayer and Bible reading demonstrate a higher faith maturity (Benson and Eklin 79). One of the essentials of faith-focused Christian education was teaching parents how to pray with their children. “Few congregations teach parents how to pray with one another and with their children” (Strommen and Hardel 134). Churches can help promote family devotional life by providing resources and teaching parents skills for leading structured family devotional activities (E. Roehlkepartain, *Teaching Church* 175).

Sharing the Faith in Word and Deed

One of the problems with much of the family spiritual formation literature and curriculum is a myopic emphasis upon the family only. Just as for individuals, the interior life of the Christian family grows and deepens through social outreach and mission. This outreach is just as essential to the identity of the Christian family as any other faith practice. Children need constant opportunities to live out their values. Many of these opportunities will take place in the home, but the children also need opportunities to serve in God’s world. Children need ways of becoming history makers—people whose

words and actions contribute to a more just and compassionate society. “The ongoing challenge of loving our neighbors as ourselves, however, can generate actions that stand out from the social norm” (Yust 158).

Christian leaders want to be intentional about preparing the family to share their faith with others. They want to help families see they have missional opportunities for their faith all around them, up and down their block. The goal is to help move the ministry of the church from inside the walls of a Sunday church building into the daily living of the family. Steve Sjogren and Dave Ping write, “Small things done with great love will change the world” (85). Sjogren and Ping discuss how to motivate congregations to reach out in everyday ways to impact the world. Just as with the mustard seed, little things can make a bigger difference than can be imagined. In teaching children to do little deeds of love and service in the world, parents are teaching their children to lay their lives before the Lord in a tangible way. “Serving is what walking with Jesus is all about” (97). If Christian parents are going to teach their children about living a life with Jesus, then sharing Jesus by talking with others and serving others will have to be a real part of that dynamic faith. The start of a young Christian’s life of serving Christ is serving one’s own family in practical ways first. “Humbly serving those closest to us is probably the most persuasive theological ‘argument’ of all” (139). As parents and children together learn how to serve one another, they then can begin to do small deeds of service for others. As the children and parents begin to do deeds of joy-filled service for others, they will be making an impact on the families around them. Then the redemptive understanding of the “domestic church” gets lived out. “If each of us pour out our little

eyedropper-full of Christ into one or two lives every day, God can use us to bring about tremendous change in our communities” (155).

Dealing with so many problems of their own, many families have no energy or inspiration to go help other families. “Many people, isolated from families in need and not connected with a supportive community, are not moved to act” (E. Roehlkepartain, *Teaching Church* 175). Families can be encouraged to serve together by raising awareness of social problems in an intergenerational context, finding ways families can serve and promote justice in their everyday lives, and creating opportunities for families to serve together (176).

Children get more out of mission and service projects when they are geared to their age and comprehension. When parents work with their children to discover and exercise their gifts, they encourage them to live into their calling as sons and daughters of God (Frambach, “Ministry of Children” 259). Jolene L. Roehlkepartain writes that creating hands-on, tangible projects for children “cements the value of service and mission” in their consciousness (11). Servant projects teach children the concepts of sharing, empathy, and altruism. “The most significant and fundamental form of learning is experience” (Westerhoff 61). These servant acts also give hope to the children that their small acts of service really do make a difference. Servant projects where whole families participate not only give them an opportunity to serve, but increases their sense of connection with the church and with other families (Anderson and Hill 157; Strommen and Hardel 145). “When we and our children serve others we experience the pleasure of human connections, the satisfaction of contributing to something larger than ourselves, and the opportunity to meet new people” (Yust 145). When congregations include the

service dimension in their ministry, they help young people to begin to see themselves as practitioners of the faith and not as consumers. Children and youth indicate that faith-inspired service to people in the church and wider community allowed them to develop positive qualities:

Narratives from children and youth indicated that religiously inspired service to people in the faith community and wider community allowed children and youth to develop positive qualities: greater concern and empathy for others; abstention from proscribed activities and substances and making sacrifices for religious/spiritual reasons, which encouraged youth to develop ego strength and a sense of uniqueness through being different from their peers; and a religiously motivated emphasis on honoring their parents which fostered more respect and less contention between youth and parents. (Boyatzis, Dollahite, and Marks 299)

Giving in acts of compassion, kindness, and service to others has a remarkable effect upon believers, particularly children,

Little is written about children engaging in evangelism even though a common assessment is that children are natural evangelists (Barna, *Transforming Children* 72; Krych, "Theology of Christian Education" 19). They are eager to talk about the faith with their friends, with family members, and even with strangers. They are quick to ask piercing questions of adult family members about their spiritual journeys. They are also eager to invite friends to come to church with them.

The key point to be drawn is that sharing the gospel in word is connected with sharing it in action. Regardless of age, personal evangelism occurs because a believer, transformed by the gospel, does something to share it with others. The 1972 *Generations* study of Lutheran adults and youth reports, "A large proportion of Lutherans seldom share their faith in the specific ways that our items measure" (Strommen, Brekke, Underwager, Johnson 183). The study found that during the previous twelve months, 44

percent reported no personal witness. Considering Lutherans, this statistic could be questioned if it was under reported. The authors go on to note that persons with the lowest scores on personal evangelism also had low scores on the dimensions of personal piety and neighborliness (183). Personal piety is the spiritual practice of faith in daily life. Neighborliness is described as activities of a helping hand nature, not dealing with crises events:

The good neighbor is one who “frequently” does all or more of the following: helps a friend or neighbor on a work project; takes care of a neighbor’s children or home during his absence; helps others by giving money or labor to help someone complete a task; gives help to persons in difficulty; or invites a new neighbor or friend into his home. (183)

Lutherans would describe these neighborly actions in the classic terms of “faith active in love” or in contemporary Christian terms of service. “Lutherans who are involved in personal evangelism are the first to show neighborliness or give help to the other in time of crisis.” (175). Based on this clear correlation, sharing faith through deeds needs to be connected with sharing faith in words. The challenge is not so much for the children who have an instinctive ability, even as teenagers, for evangelism but for adults who are intimidated about modeling this behavior for their children.

As an Effective Missional Approach to Faith Formation

Emphasizing faith formation in the home can be an effective and efficient method for discipling children and adults. One challenge is motivating parents to assume their biblical and ecclesial role as the primary spiritual instructors for their children.

As a Method to Motivate Parents

With only 14 percent of families experiencing significant faith practices in the home, Christian leaders are challenged to understand why parents do make faith

formation a priority. To implement faith-at-home practices, Christian leaders need to perceive what motivates parents to make this investment at the expense of other activities and priorities. Christian leaders must present compelling motivations for parents to change their investment of their time from work, television, sports activities, or computer games. The challenge is getting parents to take action to change the use of time in the family, so time can be expanded or created for the family to engage one another in spiritual disciplines.

Obviously, just as in Chrysostom's and Luther's days, parents are focused on tangible and practical results. They focus on their children excelling academically, socially, athletically, and, above all, economically. Still, parents do want their children to have values and to have a spiritual faith. Few Christian parents want their children to abandon the faith when they move out. In fact, Christian families want their young adults to keep their faith to guide and strengthen them as they head out into the world unsupervised and unprotected. Prior to faith formation in their children, parents want life within the family to be less stressful and more enjoyable for all members of the family. "With as busy as parents are they want not only to increase faith in the home, but to build better relationships with one another" (Anderson and Hill 103).

Support for motivating parents to increase their role in their children's spiritual formation is found in an examination of literature from the educational field in discussing how to motivate parents to become involved in their child's education or school. A preeminent scholar of parental involvement in schools, Joyce L. Epstein reports that in the field of education parents have to be given information by the schools "on how to

help in productive ways at all grade levels” (13). Parents are also influenced by teachers who actively lead them to increase their involvement (14).

One of the key aspects of parental motivation is their role construct of how they define their function in their children’s lives and education. “Parents’ actions related to their children’s lives will be influenced by parents’ role constructs and by the dynamic processes that involve them in confronting complementary (or competing) parental role expectations held by various groups in which they hold membership” (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 17). How parents define their role in their children’s lives will be influenced by their family, schools, church, and the broader cultural context. The greater the concurrence in a grouping of people on individual members’ roles and role behaviors, the more productive is that group (10). Parents were most involved when teachers actively encouraged involvement (30). Thus, establishing expectations for parents and adults within a congregation for the spiritual leadership of children, the role construct will be better defined and parents will be more motivated to fill that role. The pastor as leader and spiritual teacher can influence parents to become more involved.

Parents will also develop goals for their involvement based on their own appraisals and estimates of their capabilities in a situation. “The stronger their perceived self-efficacy in the situation, the higher the goals they will set and the firmer will be their commitments to realizing their goals” (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 18). “To the extent that they believe strongly that parents have a role in the teaching-learning process, they may be more likely to take on involvement activities” (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris 539). If they have a low self-efficacy and believe they cannot cope with difficulties in that domain, they are more likely to decrease their efforts or stop trying

altogether. “Persons with low efficacy in a given domain who experience failure will experience drastically reduced motivation to become involved” (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 18). Conversely, if a parent holds positive efficacy beliefs they will be “more likely to ... assume that the time and effort they allocate to involvement are well spent because of the positive child outcomes they are likely to create” (21; see also Strom 11). In other words, if parents feel confident in their abilities to act out the role in a proper and effective way, they are more motivated to act out the role expectations.

One of the key problems in motivating parents to carry out faith-forming habits in the home is their low self-confidence. Many parents do not think “they are qualified religious instructors” (E. Roehlkepartain, *Teaching Church* 173). Not only do parents feel unqualified, but they may also feel conflicted about faith themselves:

Many parents today are struggling to know what to teach their children about the ultimate realities of life. These adults carry with them, however, a lot [of] pain and conflict or boredom and frustration from their own religious upbringing. This makes them pause about what to do. (Berryman 71)

If Christian leaders can change parents’ perception about their efficacy in teaching the faith to their children, they will become more motivated to invest time and effort into leading their children spiritually. Churches will affect their self-efficacy when they are equipped to grow in their own faith and lead their children in faith practices:

Until adults in the church are knowledgeable in their faith, have experienced the transforming power of the Gospel, live radical lives characteristic of the disciples of Jesus Christ, no new curriculum, no new insights on learning, no new teacher training programs, and no new educational technology will save us. (Westerhoff 84)

Parents will discover that their lived out faith will catch fire with their children.

High parental aspirations for their children's education have a positive influence on students' levels of achievement (Catsambis 3). Likewise, if parents have high aspirations for their children's spiritual development, those aspirations will have a positive influence as well. "Most parents want to know how to help their children at home and how to stay involved with their children's education" (Epstein 13).

Parents could be enticed to increase their investment in family faith formation if they could see that families functioning with a high level of religiosity excel above nominally religious families and especially beyond irreligious families. Hoping to experience fewer problems with discipline and delinquency, parents could be motivated to make a spiritual investment if shown that the teenagers of highly religious families are more likely to have good relationships with their parents and to stay out of trouble. With the hopes of improving family relationships, parents would be stimulated to increase their spiritual behavior in the home if they were assured that highly religious families are more likely to have better relationships among themselves. Demonstrating that the teenagers of highly religious families are more likely to achieve well in school, have better life attitudes, and engage in constructive behaviors would encourage parents to make changes to foster better functioning youth.

When parents realize leading their family and children to greater spiritual health is their role and within their capabilities, they will be motivated to act out faith formation habits. "Efforts to involve parents should be grounded in the knowledge that parents' beliefs about their roles in children's schooling and their effectiveness in helping their children succeed are the primary points of entry into increased, and increasingly effective, involvement" (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 35). Christian leaders need to

effect a change in parental cognitive and affective attitudes towards their roles as spiritual leaders in their families to motivate effectively parents to act out those behaviors.

As a Method to Create Change

From their study of education research, Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey and Howard M. Sandler state that when parents increase the cognitive and affective acceptance of their role in teaching their children they are more likely to get involved in their children's academic learning:

A parent's fundamental decision to become involved in their children's education is a function of the parent's cognitive understanding of their role in their child's life, their affective sense of their ability to help their children succeed in school, and the invitations, demands, and opportunities to participate. (8)

In other words, parent's behavior is influenced by their cognitive perceptions and affective attitudes.

Research confirms that parental orientation and training enhances the effectiveness of parental involvement (Cotton and Wikelund 3). They also discovered a little is better than a lot to avoid overtaxing the time and effort of parents involved. The two greatest impediments to parental involvement are lack of planning and lack of mutual understanding. Parents must be "enabled to create a strong sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school" (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 35).

Kathleen Cotton and Karen Reed Wikelund in recommending how to involve parents, make these suggestions:

- Communicate to parents that their involvement and support makes a great deal of difference in their children's school performance, and that they need not be highly educated or have large amounts of free time for their involvement to be beneficial. Make this point repeatedly.

- Encourage parent involvement from the time children first enter school (or preschool, if they attend).
- Teach parents that activities such as modeling reading behavior and reading to their children increase children's interest in learning.
- Develop parent involvement programs that include a focus on parent involvement in instruction—conducting learning activities with children in the home, assisting with homework, and monitoring and encouraging the learning activities of older students.
- Provide orientation and training for parents, but remember that intensive, long-lasting training is neither necessary nor feasible.
- Continue to emphasize that parents are partners of the school and that their involvement is needed and valued. (6)

Involving parents to be involved in the educational or spiritual growth of their children is a continuous effort requiring various strategies to equip, encourage and remind parents of their role.

Family Involvement in Children's Education shares a few examples of schools carrying out direct training of parents to help their children with schoolwork. One elementary school carried out a series of five two-hour workshops on how to help their children with reading and math. Another school district led a hands-on teaching techniques workshop for parents. A school in Cleveland carried out a math and science workshop with children and parents (11).

Schools that made parent involvement a priority by carrying out programs to address it reported that parents became more involved (*Family Involvement* 13). Most effective parent involvement programs include a parent education component, which consists of activities, workshops, lectures, and discussions, which are intended to provide information and answers to improve skills (*Parent Involvement in Education* 42).

When teaching adults, a cooperative and relational approach is more effective than an authoritative, lecture style. Most adults think of themselves as responsible, independent, and self-directed people who resent being *taught* and treated like children (*Parent Involvement in Education* 51). Adults learn best when a wide variety of teaching methods are used, so parent education activities should be a balance of small and large group activities, formal and nonformal formats, and working and playing situations. Forums can include meetings, small group discussions, guided observation workshops, lectures, and demonstrations. Beyond just announcing an open invitation, practical steps need to be taken to actively invite parents to participate.

Studying a Catholic parish teaching first communion which emphasized parental involvement, Eugene Vincent Tozzi found relational forms of educating were the most effective. “Sessions were more effective if they were characterized by a high degree of interaction rather than lecture, smaller groups, non-authoritarian styles of leadership, and a positive relationship between the leader and participants” (Abstract).

Another key way to train parents is to allow them to be trained by other parents who have already gone through the process and can share their insights. “Many young parents did not experience as children the kind of nurturing we are discussing. Experiencing faith-nurturing practices with other young families will release them to weave those formative practices into their home life” (Stonehouse and May 10). Parents should be encouraged to be patient by not trying to attempt too much too soon (Batchelder 10). Rather than over explaining a faith practice to children, David Batchelder recommends parents should recognize their children will learn a faith practice simply by experience and persistence.

Summary

To effect a behavioral change in parents to act as spiritual leaders for their children, churches must address their cognitive and affective perspectives. Only when parents understand their role and feel confident and compelled to carry out their role as spiritual leaders will they then behave as spiritual leaders. One effective method to influence a change is a series of preaching and teaching moments that incorporate a variety of learning approaches.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose Restated

The purpose of the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders research was to assess the effectiveness of the preaching and teaching intervention designed to increase the practice of parental spiritual leadership in families attending two Evangelical Lutheran churches.

Motivating parents to adopt a new way of looking at their role as parents, to increase their confidence, and to change their habits is a daunting task that few churches have undertaken. As evidenced by the responses of parents, few churches are doing much to equip parents to teach the faith in the home. Statistical information and anecdotal evidence suggest that most churches, such as Church of the Resurrection and Rejoice Lutheran, have not inspired and equipped their families to be intentional faith-forming centers.

To empower parents to lead their families to becoming faith-forming centers, a series of four biblical sermons on the role of parents as spiritual mentors and four primary faith habits in the home were prepared and preached. This sermon series was carried out in tandem with four applied teaching sessions and two separate gender-specific gatherings to encourage the roles of fathers and mothers.

Postcards, bookmarks, and newsletter announcements promoted the series. newsletter notices and worship announcements encouraged the congregations to participate in the online surveys before and after the intervention. Letters and all other communication sent pretest and posttest to encourage participation in the online survey

are in Appendix B. *FaithTalk* kits (Strommen and Bruning; Hardel and Stehlin) valued at \$20 or \$30, depending on children's age group, were offered as incentives to participate. Incentives are reported to increase response rates without appearing to distort the quality of responses (Wiersma 176).

This project examined the effects these sermons and teaching sessions had on those who attended. This research project was built upon the hypothesis that a preaching and teaching program about biblically centered family faith formation (independent variable) can positively impact cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes (dependent variable) in the adults of a congregation.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study.

Research Question 1

Following the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders intervention, do parents demonstrate an increase in parents' cognitive acceptance of their role as the primary faith teachers in their children's lives?

The hypothesis was that parents must experience a positive change in their cognitive perception of their role as the primary teachers of the faith in their children's lives before they will make changes in their home life.

Research Question 2

Following the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders intervention of preaching and teaching on the parental role in faith formation, does the parents' affective confidence in being able to nurture their children's faith increase?

The hypothesis was that parents would fulfill their role as the primary teachers of the faith in their children's lives if they experienced diminished feelings of incompetency and insecurity about sharing the faith with their children. Parents' emotional confidence is critical to their willingness to carry out faith habits. The goal is that increased positive affective responses will result in parents relying on their abilities to carry out the role of spiritual leadership.

Research Question 3

Will the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders intervention of preaching and teaching on the parental role in family faith formation increase parents' behavioral practice of initiating faith habits with their children?

The hypothesis was that in addition to their cognitive and affective position, another key reason parents do not carry out faith-forming habits in their homes with their children is that they do not know how to engage these behavioral habits in their homes. The goal of the quantitative research was to measure whether an intervention of preaching and teaching would increase their behavioral practice.

Population and Participants

The population for the study embraced all those adults who attend worship in an ELCA Lutheran church at least 25 percent of the time. The sample for this study was drawn from those who attend Sunday worship services of Church of the Resurrection in Keller, Texas, and Rejoice Lutheran Church in Coppell, Texas, at least once during the four weeks of the project. A letter was mailed to participants before and after the project to encourage them to complete a questionnaire online. Bulletin announcements and e-mail announcements encouraged and reminded participants to complete the

questionnaires. The findings of this study are based on the responses of those who completed the pretest and posttest surveys.

Design of the Study

This quantitative research project is a quasi-experimental, pretest posttest, single group design with no control group. Even though two churches participated in the research, because of the sample size the data was pooled together. The design and procedure of the study included definitions of variables and the procedure for collecting data, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity and analyzing the data.

Instrumentation

This study was a quasi-experimental design that measured the relevant variable twice (pre and post) with no comparison group. The primary instruments were surveys along with one semi-structured focus group interview with volunteers who participated in the project.

The primary tool for data collection was a researcher-adapted survey. The participants took the survey online to minimize the intimidation to answer in ways that would be considered favorable. To measure the cognitive and affective attitudes towards the spiritual role of parents, the survey used the Likert scale to determine their strength of agreement. The survey used a four-point scale to remove a neutral response, forcing the respondents to make either a positive or negative indication. For behavior of faith-forming habits, the survey employed the verbal frequency scale to measure how often these actions have been taken. The survey grouped items by both topic and by scaling technique.

The survey used questions drawn from proven surveys that measured individual and family spiritual practice. The survey adapted some questions from the Search Institute's "Building Assets, Strengthening Faith" questionnaire and the "Building Strong Families" study supported by the Search Institute and the YMCA (E. Roehlkepartain, *Building Assets* 35-42; Roehlkepartain, Scales, Roehlkepartain, and Rude 86-66). The survey included five key questions from the Search Institute that are used to measure faith maturity (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 7-8, 19, 23). The project survey utilized questions pertaining to the practice of faith-forming habits from the National Study of Youth and Religion Survey Instrument because the wording was more precise. Survey also included modified questions from Robert D. Strom's *Parent as a Teacher Inventory (PAAT)*.

A few questions were written by the author because no similar questions were found that would measure the cognitive or affective subscale of parents' attitude towards their role as the primary faith teachers in their children's lives. The modifications made to questions from other surveys in order to reflect the differences in subject matter, to strengthen the reliability of the cognitive and affective subscales, and to measure participation in the project.

Both the pretest and posttest utilized identical surveys. The pretest survey included demographic questions. The posttest survey did not duplicate the demographic questions because the survey controlled for having the same participants complete both the pretest and posttest surveys. The posttest survey measured additionally for participation in the project. The survey instruments can be found in Appendix C. The entire survey was intentionally limited to no more than a total of sixty questions.

In the first question, participants entered the last four digits of their social security number. This coding allowed the surveys to be matched by participant without violating anonymity. The survey participants also identified the congregation to which they belonged.

The survey asked for responses in eight categories (see Table 3.1). The survey distributed throughout questions dealing with cognitive, affective, and behavioral subscales (see Table 3.2).

The first category gathered basic demographic information about the respondent. In response to queries, participants identified their gender, ethnicity, age, family status, and economic status. They also answered about their involvement in their congregation.

The second category measured the conceptual cognitive response to role construct of being the spiritual leaders to children (C-1). Participants responded who they thought had the primary role or most influence in faith development. Questions measured what priority adults gave to their spiritual leadership in the home. Eight questions made up this category. An example of these questions, is “As a parent, I have the greatest influence on my child’s spiritual life” (see Appendix C, p. 205). Another question was based on the baptismal promises made by parents in baptism: “As a parent I am responsible for teaching my child the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments.”

The third category measured the operational cognitive responses of competency and faith habits (C-2). Participants responded whether they knew how to be spiritual leaders to their children. Eleven questions made up this category. An example of these questions is, “I know how to engage my child in thinking about a Bible story or passage” (see Appendix C, p. 205).

Table 3.1. Key to Code for Types of Questions in the Survey Instrument

Code	Type of Question	Measuring Response	Pretest	Posttest
Dem	Demographic		9	2
C-1	Cognitive response	Conception of overall role	8	8
C-2	Cognitive response	Competency in faith habits	11	11
A	Affective response	Feelings of confidence	10	10
B-1	Behavioral response	Prayer and bible reading	7	7
B-2	Behavioral response	Faith talk and faith action	7	7
FM	Faith maturity	Maturity of faith	7	7
PT	Posttest	Involvement in project		6
		Number of Questions	59	58

The fourth category measured the affective response (A) towards the role of parents as spiritual leaders. Participants answered how confident or comfortable they felt in leading their children in the four faith practices. Ten questions made up this category. An example of these questions is, “I feel confident about praying with my child to God” (see Appendix C, p. 206).

The fifth and sixth categories measured the behavioral responses of parents as spiritual leaders (B-1 and B-2). The questions sought to measure what they did to put the role of spiritual leader into action. Participants responded how they engaged the four faith habits with their family. A number of the questions also dealt with the parents’ own practices. The premise is that if parents actively engage in personal faith habits they will be more likely to carry out faith habits with their children.

The fifth category dealt with the behavioral responses of engaging prayer and Bible reading (B-1). An example of the questions dealing with Bible reading and prayer is, “I know how to engage my child in thinking about a Bible story or passage” (see

Appendix C, p. 206). The sixth category dealt with the behavioral responses of talking about faith and putting faith in action. An example of the questions dealing with faith talks and faith actions is, “I know how to engage my child in thinking about a Bible story or passage” (see Appendix C, p. 207). Each category had seven questions.

The seventh category focused on discovering their personal faith (FM). Participants answered questions relating to their faith maturity, their worship participation, and their personal spiritual practice. Seven questions made up this category. An example of these questions is, “My life is committed to God” (see Appendix C, p. 207).

The eighth category appeared on the posttest survey only. The questions measured their attendance in worship during the four-week sermon series, their participation in the teaching sessions and their use of the teaching tools. Five questions made up this category.

Table 3.2. Distribution of Types of Questions in the Survey Instrument

Type of Question	FM	C-1	B-1	A	B-2	C-2
# of Questions	7	8	7	10	7	11
# Question in Survey						1
		2		3		4
	5	6	7	8	9	10
	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22
	23	24	25	26	27	28
	29	30	31	32	33	34
	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42	43	44	45	46
				47		48
				49		50

In addition to the survey, a focus group was conducted one month after the end of the project to elicit more feedback. Six adults representing five families from Church of the Resurrection comprised the focus group. A discussion was facilitated to ascertain what effects the project had upon adult participants and to discuss the observed impact upon their children. The focus group discussion was audio taped, and responses were transcribed and analyzed to determine recurring themes and attitudes. The responses of the focus group gave a deeper understanding of the quantitative responses from the survey participants. The focus group also helped to identify the long-term impression the project had on family faith-formation habits.

Leadership at Rejoice Lutheran considered the focus group an additional layer of complexity that would not prove helpful. Rejoice Lutheran did not conduct a focus group.

Pilot Test

Twelve volunteers from Calvary Lutheran Church in Richland Hills, Texas piloted the adapted questionnaire on 22 July 2008. All of them completed the questionnaire in less than fifteen minutes. In testing the survey, the volunteers noted that the order of answers about frequency was in reverse order of the answers about agreement. The consensus was that this reverse order helped keep respondents alert to the questions. After testing, questions #21 and #33 were altered to be answered on the basis of frequency. After testing, the volunteers perceived question #49 duplicating another question on the last page of the survey so it was relocated to the beginning. The volunteers discovered no other problems.

Variables

This study involved four sets of variables: independent, dependent, intervening, and demographic.

Independent variables. The independent variables for this project were the sermons and teaching sessions during the Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders project. The project subscales measured participants' attendance to hear the sermons and participation in the teaching events.

Dependent variables. The dependent variables measured by this study were the participants' cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses before and after hearing the Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders sermon series and participating in teaching programs. The analysis of the pretest and posttest survey responses measured any changes in cognitive and affective attitudes and behavior.

Intervening variables. Parents' personal spiritual habits influencing the children's involvement in spiritual and religious activities is well established. The most obvious example of this spiritual influence is church attendance. The survey measured for the parents' faith maturity. The intent was to discover a correlation between this dynamic variable and cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses.

Demographic variables. The demographic variables measured in this study were the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, family circumstance, and the economic situation. These variables were not the main focus of this study, but these responses may yield interesting perspective on the Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders project.

Reliability and Validity

The survey instrument is valid for measuring the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses of parents towards their role as spiritual leaders for their children. The survey instrument was validated by expert review.

The bias of the study is that those who participated in the survey and the focus group were self-selected by their participation and motivation to fill out the survey.

The study is externally valid for parents in other ELCA Lutheran congregations. Generalizability could be inferred for other Christian parents.

Data Collection

Every family in the two congregations received a letter inviting them to participate in the project and to complete a pretest survey no later than the Friday before the sermon series began. For the two Sundays prior, Sunday bulletin and newsletter announcements reminded church members to encourage a strong response. On the last Thursday, an e-mail reminder went out to encourage people who had not yet completed a survey online to do so. They filled out the survey by going to the project Web site, AreTheKidsAlright.com. The front page of the Web site contained the introduction to the survey, explaining the purpose of the project, the purpose of the survey, the need for their participation, and the condition of anonymity. The letter explained that the last four digits of their social security numbers would be asked of them for collating of data but ensured that their anonymity would be maintained throughout the project (see Appendix C). They were then redirected to the survey hosted on surveymonkey.com.

The post-study questionnaire followed a similar process. Two weeks after the last sermon, a letter went out inviting people to complete the posttest survey. The survey

began within two weeks after the completion of the intervention because within that period of time people are either going to make a change in their behaviors or they are not. For three weeks, Sunday bulletin and e-mail announcements reminded adults to complete the post-project survey. The posttest survey was closed twenty-six days after the last sermon.

The answers to the survey prior to the introduction of the independent variable, the Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders project, created the pretest baseline of the adults' cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses towards family faith formation.

After the introduction of independent variable, the participants completed the questionnaire again. The posttest answers were measured against the pretest answers to assess what changes in their cognitive, affective, and behavioral response to the subject of their role as the primary faith teachers in their children's lives.

Data Analysis

The responses to the questions were tabulated by category. The total score on a given survey (pretest or posttest) was divided by the number of questions to determine an average score by category. The statistical procedures used for analysis of the collected data were level of significance paired sample t-tests, MANCOVA, and Pearson correlation (two-tailed) coefficient analysis. Level of significance demonstrates if a significant level exists between two measures before and after the project. Correlation analysis measures the relationship between different variables. Analysis of Variance measures whether certain variables had an effect on any of the outcomes and the level of significance.

Ethical Procedure

Doing research with human subjects requires that the research is ethically conducted. In survey administration, protecting the privacy of personal information is an important ethical responsibility. Procedures for collecting data are set up so that the “confidentiality of identifiable information is presumed and must be maintained” (Wiersma 419). Providing a high level of anonymity and confidentiality was important for the integrity of the data collected and for the participants.

The letters that went out to ask participants to complete the online survey assured them of anonymity and confidentiality. They simply had to input the last four digits of their social security numbers. These numbers allowed the collating of responses of individual respondents and the ability to measure the composite congregational change in response to the Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders project accurately. Giving specific directions for the criterion of the personal coding gave the advantage of consistency in recording the same code every time. Being a number they know by memory, it was easily recalled and duplicated without any risk of losing or forgetting the code six weeks later. Because the survey was conducted on line, no risk of personally coming into contact with respondents existed.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Over the past five decades or more, parents decreased their role as the primary spiritual leaders in their homes as evidenced by how few families engage spiritual habits beyond Sunday morning. In addition to failing to equip parents for this role, congregations have actually undermined the parental role through congregational programming. Not only does the Bible mandate that parents fulfill this role, but literature on faith formation in children demonstrates that parents have the greatest impact on their children's spiritual formation. With children living in a contemporary society that does not reinforce Christian values and beliefs, the need for parents to exercise their spiritual leadership is critical so that their children continue in the faith.

The purpose of the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders research was to assess the effectiveness of the preaching and teaching intervention designed to increase the practice of parental spiritual leadership in families attending two Evangelical Lutheran churches.

Profile of Participants

Data gathering for the Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders study began by inviting people from Church of the Resurrection and Rejoice Lutheran to complete an online survey. From the online survey, 103 church members responded prior to the intervention. After the intervention, fifty-three completed the survey. Out of the fifty-three who completed the posttest survey, only thirty-five matching pairs emerged with pretest and posttest data.

Out of the thirty-five respondents seventeen were from Church of the

Resurrection (48.6 percent) and eighteen from Rejoice Lutheran (51.4 percent). Out of the thirty-five respondents, nine were males (25.7 percent) and twenty-six were females (74.3percent). From these adults, two were divorced while the rest were married (see Table 4.1)

Table 4.1. Demographic Composition of the Population Sample (N = 35)

	Church of the Resurrection	Rejoice Lutheran
n	17	18
Men	4	5
Women	13	13
Married	14	17
Divorced	2	
Divorced and remarried	1	1

The entire sample from both congregations was comprised of regular attending members. All who responded to the survey attended a minimum of one of the worship services to hear one of the four sermons on the subject. More than 70 percent of the participants from both congregations attended three or four of the four-week sermon series (see Figure 4.1).

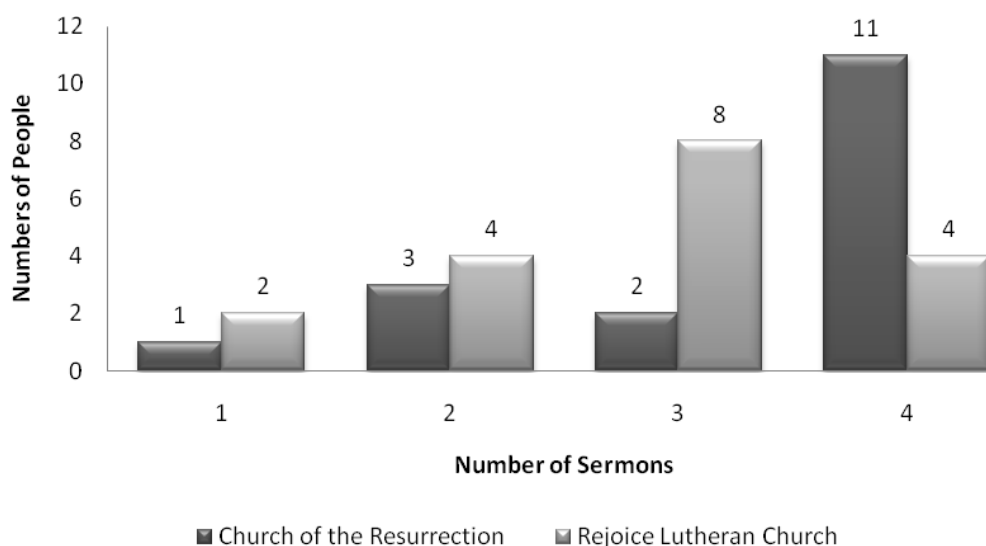


Figure 4.1. Number of sermons heard.

An obvious difference occurred between the two congregations in terms of participation in the teaching events (see Figure 4.2). Whereas 76.5 percent of the Church of the Resurrection participants attended in four or five teaching sessions ($n=13$), 83 percent of Rejoice Lutheran participants attended only one or two of the teaching sessions ($n=15$). The difference was due to the time and conduct of the teaching sessions. Church of the Resurrection has only one service. The teaching sessions occurred immediately following that service, with a meal provided. Rejoice has two services. The teaching sessions were occurred later in the afternoon with no food provided.

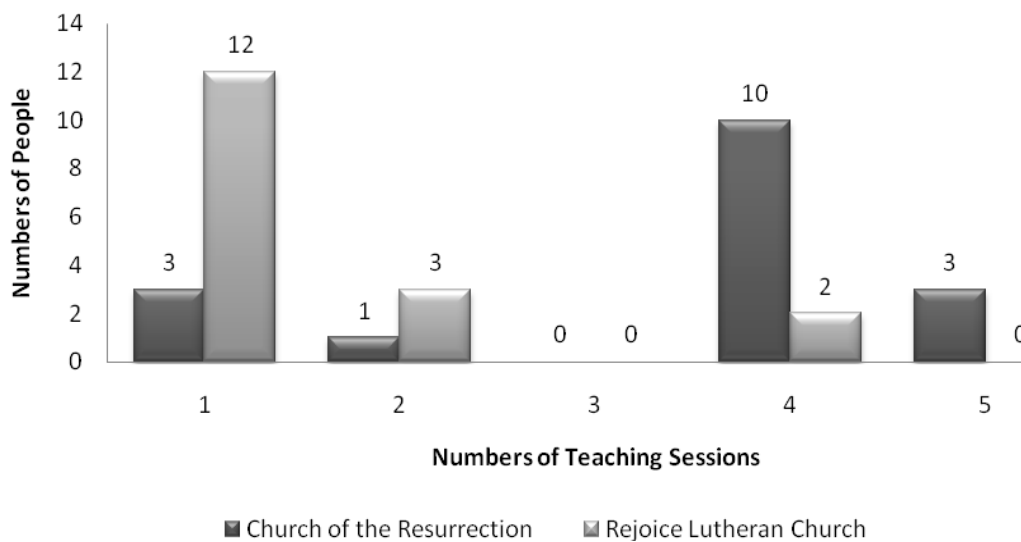


Figure 4.2. Number of teaching sessions attended.

In the posttest responses, an obvious difference emerged between the two congregations in terms of employing the teaching tools (see Figure 4.3). Whereas 70.5 percent of the Church of the Resurrection participants utilized at least one of the tools ($n=12$), 72 percent of Rejoice Lutheran participants used none of the tools ($n=13$). Pastor Gelske, with Rejoice Lutheran, stated after the project that he used the tools more as props than promoted as tools to help the parents initiate spiritual practices with their children.

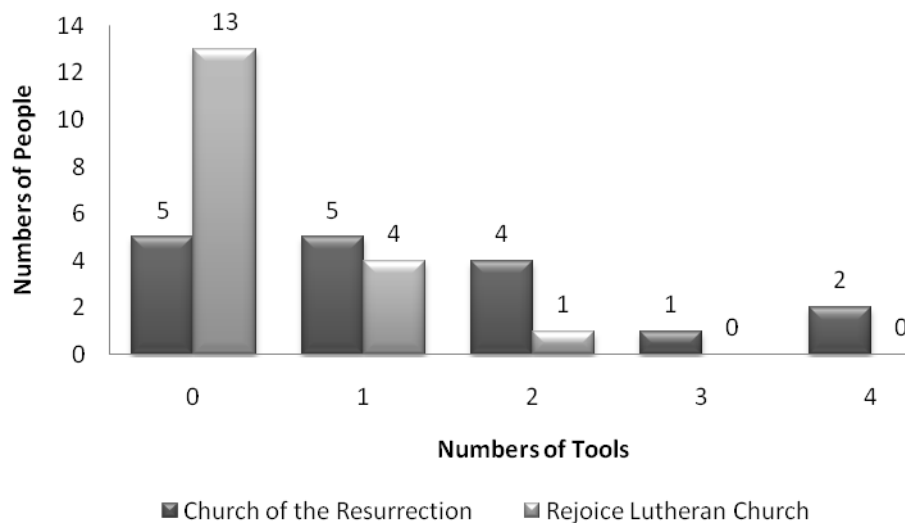


Figure 4.3. Number of teaching tools used.

The survey also measured which tools were used the most (see Figure 4.4). The prayer card and the *FaithTalk* kit were shown to be the most frequently used tools. While the Bible bookmark was introduced as a tool to help in discussions about the biblical stories, the unmeasured primary tool is the Bible itself. The response to the Bible bookmark is not indicative of use of the Bible. The Faith in Action magnets were utilized the least.

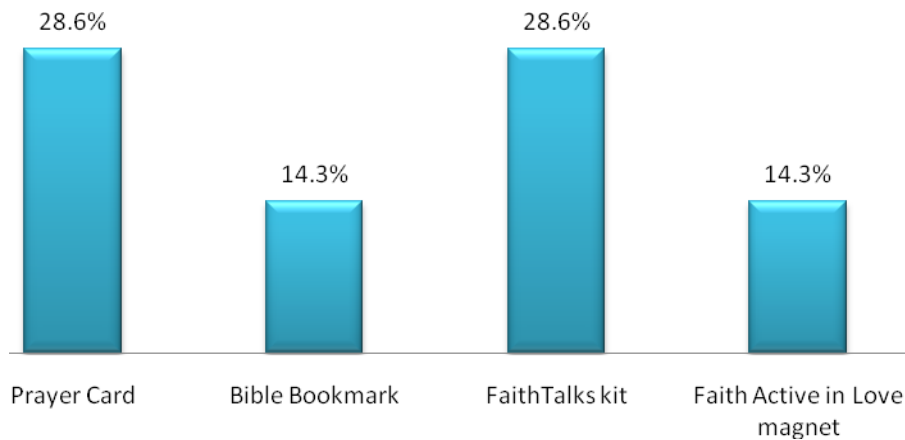


Figure 4.4. Frequency of teaching tools used.

Participants were asked whether they participated in the servant project. This event was emblematic of the hands-on approach to teaching this material. The majority of participants attended the servant project ($n=28$, 80 percent). For Church of the Resurrection, twelve respondents attended (70.6 percent) and five did not (29.4 percent). Rejoice Lutheran experienced a higher level of participation with sixteen attending (88.9 percent) and only two abstaining (11.1 percent).

Research Questions

The survey instrument scored on a decreasing Likert scale (4, 3, 2, 1). Lower scores indicate resistance to the role construct of being spiritual leaders. The hypothesis was that a preaching and teaching project would decrease parental resistance to carrying out the spiritual leader role construct in the home. For every subscale, the mean scores decreased from the pretest to posttest (see Table 4.2). To determine if a result is significant, I used a significance level of $p > .05$.

Table 4.2. Mean Scores, Pretest, Posttest and Difference, by Subscale

	Pretest	Posttest	Difference
C1: Conceptual cognitive understanding	1.671	1.521	0.150
C2: Operational cognitive understanding	1.956	1.709	0.247
A: Affective confidence	1.894	1.694	0.200
B1: Prayer and Bible reading behavior	2.380	2.159	0.221
B2: Faith talk and faith in action behavior	2.657	2.376	0.281
Fm: Faith maturity	1.755	1.588	0.167

Research Question #1: Cognitive Response

Answering Research Question 1, “Following the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders intervention, do parents demonstrate an increase in parents’ cognitive acceptance of their role as the primary faith teachers in their children’s lives?” involved measuring both their conceptual understanding and the operational understanding of the role construct.

In measuring the conceptual understanding of the role of parents to act as the primary spiritual leaders of their children (C1), the hypothesis predicted that the cognitive understanding would improve after participating in the project. Participants demonstrated an improved acceptance of the concept of parents as the primary spiritual leaders of their children (pretest $M=1.671$; posttest $M=1.521$). The results of a two-tailed paired samples t -test supported this hypothesis ($t [34]=3.256$; $p<.003$).

In the qualitative data, the focus group participants all said the project had increased their cognition of the spiritual leader role construct. They all said they knew it was their role before, but parents took their role more seriously. When one father said, “I am more cognizant of putting it into action,” this sentiment was affirmed by the others.

As a mother of young children said jokingly, “Apparently getting them up and getting them to church wasn’t enough.” They all agreed they became more aware of their lack of spiritual behavior. One mother who demonstrated spiritual leadership prior to the project said, “It made me more conscious of what is my responsibility, and to take authority in my house.” She went on to say, “If I don’t have the authority that Jesus gives me, I don’t have authority with my kids.” They agreed on the importance of being the spiritual leaders for their children to build “lifelong habits” and “teaching what they will fall back on.” They recognized their role in passing on the faith. They also stated they understood better how to carry out that role.

In measuring the operational cognition of how to carry out the role construct of parental spiritual leadership (C2), the hypothesis predicted that parents would improve in understanding how to carry out the role of being the spiritual leader after participating in the project. Participants demonstrated an improved acceptance of the concept of parents as the primary spiritual leaders of their children (pretest $M=1.956$; posttest $M=1.709$). The results of a two-tailed paired samples *t-test* supported this hypothesis ($t [34]=4.078$; $p<.000$). The qualitative responses of the parents affirmed that the intervention had increased their confidence to carry out their role as spiritual leaders to their children.

The mean scores for this subscale demonstrate that participants had a greater affiliation with the cognitive concept of the role construct than operational understanding, affective attitude toward the role, or behavioral action. In other words as stated in the literature review, parents stated they understood what their role was as spiritual leaders.

Research Question #2: Affective Response

Answering Research Question 2, “Following the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders intervention of preaching and teaching on the parental role in faith formation, does the parents’ affective confidence in being able to nurture their children’s faith increase?” involved measuring their affective response towards the role construct.

In measuring the affective response towards the role of parents to act as the primary spiritual leader of their children (A), the hypothesis predicted that the affective response would improve after participating in the project. Participants demonstrated an improved affective acceptance of the parental role as the primary spiritual leaders of their children (pretest $M=1.894$; posttest $M=1.694$). The results of a two-tailed paired samples *t-test* supported this hypothesis ($t [34]=3.031$; $p<.005$). The increased affective response scores mean the parents felt less anxious and more confident about carrying out spiritual leadership in the home. Increased scores on the affective response demonstrate an increased affective confidence to carry out the role construct.

In the qualitative data, the focus group participants all mentioned how their feelings of insecurity had, to one degree or another, affected their role of being spiritual leaders to their children. One father spoke clearly about his affective response to the role construct: “Before this series, I did not feel very competent at all. Right now, I feel more competent because some things are working and coming together. I still feel very inadequate. I still feel inept at it.” The focus group participants expressed an acceptance of their inadequacy, but a confidence to purposefully model their faith to the best of their abilities. “My kids see me differently than before because [the intervention] has definitely opened me up to more possibilities. This [project] has opened me up to share with them

more spiritually.” A couple of parents admitted that their spouse predominated as the spiritual leader in their home, but now they were taking on this role more. They said they felt more confident in this role after the project.

In response to the question about their affective response, they also discussed their own laziness. As one mother said, “When you realize how important it is, you just have to stop everything.” Parents felt more enthusiastic about carrying out their spiritual leader roles because they had witnessed the positive effect it was having on their children and their family relationships. One mother who has struggled to connect with a teenage daughter found the series helped her to “find a way to reach her.”

Research Question #3: Behavioral Response

Answering Research Question 3, “Will the Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Leaders intervention of preaching and teaching on the parental role in family faith formation increase parents’ behavioral practice of initiating faith habits with their children?” involved measuring their behavioral response to the role construct by engaging in prayer and Bible reading in their family (B1) and having faith discussions and acting out their faith with their family (B2).

In measuring the behavioral understanding of the role of parents to act as the primary spiritual leaders of their children (B1), the hypothesis predicted that the behavioral practice of prayer and Bible reading would improve after participating in the project. Participants demonstrated increased activity of carrying out Bible reading and prayer with their children (pretest $M=2.380$; posttest $M=2.159$). The results of a two-tailed paired samples *t-test* supported this hypothesis ($t [34]=3.143$; $p<.003$).

In measuring the behavioral response of conducting faith discussions and acting out the faith either in evangelistic efforts or in service to others (B2), the hypothesis predicted that parents would increase these behaviors as an active expression of their role construct acceptance of being spiritual leaders after participating in the project. Participants demonstrated increased activity of discussing their faith or acting out their faith with their children (pretest $M=2.671$; posttest $M=2.376$). The results of a two-tailed paired samples *t*-test supported this hypothesis ($t [34]=4.101$; $p<.000$).

The high behavioral response mean scores demonstrated the greater pretest resistance as compared with the cognitive or affective pretest mean scores (B1 $M=2.380$; B2 $M=2.657$). These mean scores for the behavioral subscale support the observation that behavioral practice of the spiritual leader role construct lags behind the cognitive and affective acceptance of the role construct. Even though the posttest scores demonstrate a significant change in the behavioral response (B1 $M=.221$; B2 $M=.281$), the greatest resistance to the role construct is putting the behavior into practice.

In the qualitative data, none of the focus group participants had implemented all the faith practices as regular habits, but they all had one or two faith habits on which they focused. For every family, certain faith practices resonated with them more than others. All the parents said they were not carrying out the faith habits every day.

For each family, prayer together was a beginning practice. For a family with younger children having prayer around the table was chaotic. A father of teenage boys said dinner table prayer had been a significant practice that often led them into more conversation:

For us ... it is getting together around the dinner table instead of going off into the living room, eating, watching the television, and taking turns

praying around the dinner table. I was never big about praying over meals or food until we did it together as a family. Now I find myself praying even when I am by myself.

Each family did say they were attempting to pray more often together as family, with some making family prayer a regular practice.

One mother with children from a wide age range asked her children to pick their favorite Bible story, explaining why they liked that passage. She was surprised by their insights and depth of understanding. In the practice of reading the Bible together, families with older children struggled to initiate Bible reading as a new pattern. Other parents confessed that not having Bible reading as their own personal habit hindered them from helping to make reading it a habit in their family.

The practice that resonated most with all the focus group parents was faith discussions. Every family reported increasing their dialogue about faith matters. For a family with young children, the most convenient time was during the morning and afternoon commute. The parents of teenagers were the most excited about the faith discussions. One parent said surprising conversations emerged from the *FaithTalk* kit. He said his teenagers are very adamant that everyone has an opportunity to discuss the topic. All the parents said their families were talking more.

All the families in the focus group talked about serious ways in which they and their children were actively expressing their faith in witnessing to others or serving others. The mother of three young children told the story of rescuing a dog during their morning commute. Her son said that God would be proud of them for rescuing the dog. In discussing their efforts to invite others to church, the family with teenage boys told of how their youngest son was holding an impromptu Bible study with seven boys at a sleep

over. Another mother told of how a couple of her daughters vigorously urged her to call a mother whose family was in crisis. “They need to come to our church because they will be changed.” They then spoke of how their own lives had changed. A mother with two teenagers led “operation shoebox” to send care packages and gospel booklets to children in the developing world. She explicitly said her efforts sprang from the project.

Faith maturity was an independent variable that changed little during the project. The mean difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores nevertheless positively changed more than the conceptual cognitive response mean difference ($M=0.167$; $C1$: $M=0.150$). As the paired t-test samples indicated this was a significant positive change, the faith maturity proved to be a dependent variable. All the parents in the focus group said the project affected them in living out their own faith within their families.

Correlation

Correlations were analyzed to determine any relationship between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral variables (see Table 4.3). The analysis addresses the hypothesis that positive changes in the cognitive and affective responses to the role construct will result in a positive behavioral response by parents to put into practice the spiritual leadership. The mean difference between the pretest and posttest response score means were analyzed as Pearson two-tailed correlations.

Cognitive response of the conceptual understanding about the role of parents to act as the primary spiritual leaders of their children ($C1$) significantly correlated with the operational cognitive response ($C2$; $r_2=.576$; $p<.000$). An increase in either the cognitive understanding of the role or the cognitive operational understanding had a positive effect on the other. As hypothesized, a significant correlation existed between the conceptual

cognitive response and the affective response ($A; r_2=.346; p<.04$). The analysis did not find a significant correlation with either behavioral response or faith maturity. In other words, just because parents possessed a greater understanding that spiritual leadership was their role in the family this knowledge did not correlate with increased behavior to exercise that role or increased faith maturity.

The operational cognitive response exhibited a significant correlation with each dependant variable. The operational cognitive response was positively correlated with the affective response ($r_2=.651; p<.000$). The analysis found a significant relationship between the operational response and the behavioral response for the habits of prayer and Bible reading ($r_2=.456; p<.004$). A significant correlation also exists with the behavioral response for the habits of faith talks and faith in action ($r_2=.543; p<.001$).

Analysis revealed the affective response is significantly correlated with all the cognitive and behavioral responses. The correlations with the cognitive subscales have been noted above. A significant relationship exists between the affective response and the behavioral response for the habits of prayer and Bible reading ($r_2=.568; p<.000$). A significant correlation also exists with the behavioral response for the habits of faith talks and faith in action ($r_2=.519; p<.001$).

The behavioral responses demonstrated a positive significant correlation to one another ($r_2=.572; p<.000$). Again, the behavioral responses were positively correlated with the operational cognitive and affective responses.

The original design was for faith maturity to be an independent variable that had an impact on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses. Indeed, a positive correlation existed for faith maturity with four of the subscales. The analysis

demonstrated a significant correlation with the operational cognitive response (C2; $r_2=.482$; $p>.003$). A significant correlation was found with the Affective response (A; $r_2=.504$; $p>.002$). The analysis found a significant relationship between faith maturity and the behavioral response for the habits of prayer and Bible reading (B1; $r_2=.532$; $p<.001$). Faith maturity was also significantly correlated with the behavioral response for the habits of faith talks and faith in action (B2; $r_2=.475$; $p<.004$).

These high correlation values imply covariance between all the subscales of the role construct. These correlation values support the hypothesis of the interdependence of one subscale upon another implied by the research questions.

Table 4.3. Correlation of Dependent Variables (N = 35)

Pearson Correlation (two-tailed)						
	C1diff	C2diff	Adiff	B1diff	B2diff	FMdiff
C1diff	1	0.576	0.346	0.298	0.214	0.260
Sig.		0.000 **	0.042 *	0.082	0.216	0.131
C2diff		1	0.651	0.456	0.543	0.482
Sig.			0.000 **	0.006 **	0.001 **	0.003 **
Adiff			1	0.568	0.519	0.504
Sig.				0.000 **	0.001 **	0.002 **
B1diff				1	0.572	0.523
Sig.					0.000 **	0.001 **
B2diff					1	0.475
Sig.						0.004 **
FMdiff						1
Sig.						

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA)

To determine what impact the various factors of the intervention had upon the dependent variables of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses, an analysis of variances was performed. As the dependent variables show a significant level of correlation, further analysis required a MANCOVA. Even though significant changes may be concealed by the nonsignificant differences when analyzed collectively, the preaching and teaching project demonstrated significant differences at a number of points. The respondents' attendance to hear sermons, their participation in teaching sessions, their attendance at the servant project, and their use of the teaching tools were analyzed with the outcomes of the dependent variables.

Preaching by itself was found to have a significant impact upon the behavioral response of prayer and Bible reading ($F [3, 20]=3.266; p=.053; \eta_2=.412$). According to the effect size score (η_2), the overall method accounted for 41.2 percent of the variance of increased behavior. The greater number of sermons they heard, the greater was the response in prayer and Bible reading.

The MANCOVA demonstrated that the teaching tools had a significant impact upon behavioral response of faith talks and faith in action ($F [3, 20]=6.680; p=.022; \eta_2=.323$). Respondents were more likely to report an increase in faith talk or faith actions if they employed the teaching tools. Another significant difference emerged for teaching tools with the operational cognitive response ($F [3, 20]=6.680; p=.02; \eta_2=.323$). Given that very intent of the tools was to give parents tools to enable them to know how to carry out the spiritual leader role construct, the method accounted for 32.3 percent of the variance.

Even though not at a significant level, a strong result was that the combination of preaching and teaching tools together had a strong influence on the affective response ($F [1, 20]=3.222; p=.094; \eta_2=.187$).

Curiously, the servant project event by itself demonstrated a significant effect upon operational cognitive response ($F [1, 20]=6.680; p=.022; \eta_2=.323$). Even though not significant, results indicated that the servant project had a strong correlation with the conceptual cognitive response ($F [1, 20]=3.441; p=.085; \eta_2=.197$).

The MANCOVA indicated a significant level of impact from the combination of teaching sessions and teaching tools on the behavioral response of faith talks and faith in action ($F [1, 20]=4.610; p=.05; \eta_2=.248$). This method accounted for 24.8 percent of the variance.

While not every factor demonstrated a significant impact on the mean score differences within the covariant subscales (teaching sessions), every aspect of the preaching and teaching project was shown to have at least one significant impact upon at least one of the subscales. Moreover, the fixed factors of the intervention impacted every one of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dependent variables.

Summary of Findings

The statistical analysis validates the hypothesis that the Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders project would create a positive change in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral response of parents to their role as the primary faith teachers in their children's lives.

Conceptual Cognitive Response

Parents understand they have the primary role to be the spiritual and moral guides to their children. This subscale was the strongest pretest mean score indicating that parents had identified most closely with this aspect of the role construct. While the change was not as large as the other subscales, the difference of the mean score was still significant. After the intervention parents admitted they gained a heightened appreciation for the importance of the role. The pretest scores show that parents accept their role to be spiritual leaders, but they are not doing anything about it.

Operational Cognitive Response

Knowing how to carry out the function of the spiritual leader role construct is significantly correlated to the other subscales. The operational cognitive response saw one of the most significant increases in the mean score. Parents need to know how to carry out the spiritual practices if they are going to act on them.

Affective Response

As noted in Chapter 2, feelings of incompetency and inadequacy are known to increase parents' resistance to the role construct of being the spiritual leader in the home. The positive affective response was significantly correlated with every other subscale. When parents increased their confidence, or even simply moved past their insecurity, they felt more comfortable about acting out their spiritual leadership role.

Behavioral Response

The behavioral response demonstrated the greatest pretest resistance. Even though parents do not implement each of the four main faith practices with the same level of activity, along with the operational cognition of the role construct, the behavioral

response evidenced significant change. Getting parents to act out their role as spiritual leaders is the concrete objective of the project.

Correlation of the Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral

The findings demonstrated that the positive changes in mean score differences of each subscale is significantly correlated to most of the other subscales. A positive change in one of the subscales has a positive impact on most of the other subscales. The findings make clear that in order to equip parents to act as spiritual leaders in the home such efforts must address their cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses.

Preaching and Teaching Project

Analysis of the covariance demonstrated some significant levels of influence from all the project factors. The number of sermons attended made a significant difference for the behavioral response of prayer and Bible reading. The number of teaching sessions and tools used made a significant impact upon the behavioral response of faith talks and faith in action. Considering that the most crucial effect is demonstrating a positive change in the behavioral response, the project's impact upon the parental role construct of spiritual leadership in the home is significant.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Recognizing my own need to be a spiritual leader to my children and seeing the same need in the families I served, I was motivated to conduct this research. Considering that at best 16 percent of Christians engage in some level of regular spiritual practices in the home, making faith the center of home life is a concern beyond Lutheran churches. As I began to preach and teach on the role construct of parents being the spiritual leaders in the home, many families resonated with the idea. While adults had an initial understanding of the role construct of being the spiritual leaders in their homes, enacting the practices on a routine basis still proved elusive.

Major Findings

As discussed previously the statistical analysis of pretest and posttest responses demonstrated significant levels of change, correlation, and variant impact. The qualitative data collected during the focus group confirmed the project had a significant impact upon parents growing into their role of spiritual leadership.

Significant Change in Cognitive Response

The quantitative data demonstrated a significant change in the participants' cognitive responses to the role construct occurred from pretest to posttest. The qualitative data also provided evidence of this change.

The analysis confirmed that the cognitive response of the conceptual understanding (C1) increased significantly. Even though the conceptual response demonstrated the least amount of improvement in mean score difference, parents still grew in their appreciation of their role as the spiritual leader. They recognized that they

were responsible for more than simply involving their children in the ministry programs of their churches. They affirmed the promise they made at their children's baptism—that they are responsible for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. They became aware that much of their children's spiritual learning takes place in the home. They grew in understanding the concept that they are their children's primary spiritual instructors and that they have the greatest influence on their children's spiritual lives. Their pretest scores indicated they understood their role as the spiritual leaders already. Knowing they ought to be enacting this role and actually doing it were two different matters. Until they were equipped with making spiritual habits operational and increased their confidence, they struggled to move from concept to behavior.

The cognitive response of the operational understanding (C2) increased significantly. Parents grew in their understanding of how to carry out spiritual practices with their children. They came to recognize how they needed to be acting out the spiritual leadership role by engaging specific faith practices with their children. Through the preaching and teaching project, they were given specific strategies to put spiritual practices into action. They were given faith practices tools and had opportunities for practical experience so they did increase their knowledge about how to carry out basic faith practices and, in turn, their role as the spiritual leader in their home.

Significant Change in Affective Response

One of the most important factors undermining parental spiritual leadership is the affective response of feeling inadequate and insecure. The quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated a significant change in the participants' affective response from pretest

to posttest to the role construct. When parents grew in their confidence, they were more likely to initiate spiritual practices with their children. They overcame feelings of restlessness and discomfort when going through spiritual exercises with their children. As they learned how to carry out spiritual practices with their children, they grew in confidence. As they discovered new levels of connection with their children, their comfort with their role as spiritual leaders grew.

Significant Change in Behavioral Response

Quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated a significant change in the behavioral responses of parents to the role construct of being the spiritual leaders to their children. Along with the operational cognitive response, the behavioral responses demonstrated the greatest amount of improvement in mean score difference. Again, equipping and motivating parents to act out their spiritual leadership in their homes was the primary objective of the project.

These behavioral response score differences are very significant considering the resistance to the role construct that must be overcome. Barna and others report that over 85 percent of parents think they are doing an adequate job of spiritual training of their children (*Transforming Children* 77). Simply to lead parents to recognize that their actual practice is not adequate is making progress. Participants reported becoming more aware of not doing what they now saw they should be doing. To register a positive change in the behavioral responses means that parents actively initiated faith practices in their homes.

Parents intentionally found ways to be praying with their children. They learned to encourage them to pray for others and their concerns. Parents affirmed the importance of praying for their children and blessing their children.

More parents were reading the Bible with their children. When reading a Bible story or passage with their children, they asked them questions about the reading. If their children were older, they would engage in a dialogue about the passage.

Parents encouraged their family members to find ways to serve one another. Together as a household they looked for ways to help other people or to be involved in servant projects. Some parents even encouraged their children to invite others to worship.

Parents learned the importance of telling their children about their own faith journeys. Parents increased the amount of conversation about faith, especially around the dinner table.

The combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses worked to equip and motivate parents to act out their role as spiritual leaders in their homes.

Correlation of the Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral

The significant correlation of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to one another demonstrated these are covariant factors in the role construct of spiritual leadership. To motivate parents to take on the spiritual leadership in their homes, Christian leaders need to address how parents understand their role, how they feel about it, and how to enact it specifically. Efforts to equip parents and other heads of households to live out their spiritual leadership will require a whole person approach that addresses the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. Teaching people how to conceive the spiritual leadership role is not enough if adults have no idea how to engage in spiritual practices. Teaching parents practical applications of spiritual practices will not be effective by itself if these same parents are not encouraged to higher levels of affective confidence. Training and tools in spiritual practices will go unused if parents do not make

the conceptual connection of the vital necessity in the lives of their children for them to carry out their spiritual leadership role. A holistic approach is required to reach parents cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally. While this study focused on behavioral changes being caused by an increase in the cognitive and affective acceptance of the role construct, the correlation implies that increases in the behavioral response will cause changes to their cognitive and affective responses.

The Importance of the Different Factors of the Project

Every factor of the Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders project was demonstrated through MANCOVA analysis to contribute to making a difference in the parental response to the role construct. Although different factors, often in combination with other factors, influenced specific responses, the analysis showed that only through the combination of all the factors were all the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses addressed. This finding confirms that a concentrated effort should include preaching, teaching sessions, teaching tools, and hands-on experience.

While preaching certainly had a significant impact, the findings do not confirm that preaching is more important than the teaching sessions and the teaching tools. The teaching sessions had poor attendance and the teaching tools little usage because a majority of 54.3 percent did not participate in more than two of the teaching sessions and 51.4 percent did not use the tools. Measuring what impact these factors could have is not possible. The issue is not the efficacy of the teaching sessions but the involvement in the teaching sessions. While the sample size prevented breaking the data from the two congregations, the differences in the teaching session attendance and usage of the tools are clear. Whereas 76.5 percent of the Church of the Resurrection participants attended in

four or five teaching sessions (n=13), 83 percent of Rejoice Lutheran participants attended only one or two of the teaching sessions (n=15). When the two congregations are examined separately, the lack of participation of people at Rejoice Lutheran clearly skews the overall statistics.

Getting church people to participate in classes outside worship is always a challenge. Church of the Resurrection found having classes right after worship was effective. For congregations with multiple services, such scheduling may not be possible and will require creative methods to motivate parents to attend classes.

The impact the teaching tools had upon helping parents implement faith practices in their homes was also diluted by the overall numbers. While only 23.5 percent of the respondents from Church of the Resurrection did not use any of the tools (n=4), 72 percent of Rejoice Lutheran respondents used none of the tools (n=13). Again, the analysis cannot determine the usefulness of the tools from information that does not exist. Considering the lack of the use of the tools in the entire sample, the fact that the analysis did show teaching tools had an impact suggests their importance in any efforts to train parents to be the spiritual leaders.

Nevertheless, efforts to equip parents to be spiritual leaders that lack a component of classes and tools will not be effective.

Implications of Findings

The significant results from the project point towards implications for families, congregations, and the larger Church.

Getting into a Groove

Motivating parents to accept the role construct of being the spiritual leaders in their homes is a long-term process essentially aimed at changing daily household behavior. Becoming spiritual leaders is not an infrequent occurrence but requires parents to create new patterns for the daily routine. To add times of prayer and Bible reading, to add faith discussion to the evening meal or daily commute, and to become aware of opportunities to serve or invite others requires making changes in daily habits which entails support over time from congregational leaders.

Without spiritual practices becoming regular habits, they will become infrequent and awkward observances. In essence what is required is developing a nearly daily pattern that over time just seems natural once it is established. Children thrive on structured practices and routine. Once the effort is made to make spiritual practices routine, the children themselves will help keep parents in the pattern.

Feeling haggard already with all that must be done, often parents are frustrated when they hear the admonition to initiate spiritual practices into their daily routine. Having not been raised in these routines themselves by their parents, they require training and support to initiate these ancient practices into their daily routines. Parents often have the perception that if they do not do all the spiritual practices and conduct them every day they will be failing at the role of spiritual leadership. In his study of parents who embraced their spiritual leadership responsibility, Barna writes, “While it might be ideal to engage in Bible study every day, I found that few parents in our research did so; they were more likely to deal with Bible content once or twice a week (excluding times when they were at church together)” (*Revolutionary Parenting* 96). He found many parents

who raised spiritual champions did not have highly organized spiritual patterns. He did find that the parents who embraced their spiritual leadership had a consistent, long-term pattern of employing spiritual practices in the lives of their children.

This study project was intended only to be the starting point of guiding parents and other adult leaders into a pattern of spiritual habits. Indeed the change resulting from the project was significant, but it was only a beginning. These gains will be lost if the parents and the congregations do not treat the parental role of spiritual leadership as a long-term process.

At Church of the Resurrection, I will be preaching another sermon series focused on this topic this summer. This series will be accompanied with take-home material for families to work on together. Faith-at-home is also an issue I bring up from time to time in other sermons when appropriate. Church of the Resurrection will be initiating a faith-at-home class as part of a basic Christianity course series. Another way this parental pattern is encouraged in Church of the Resurrection is that when adults speak about how God is working in their families I ask them to talk about their faith-at-home practices and what they mean to them. As we plan servant projects for the youth group, we also schedule some projects that involve the rest of the youths' families and the wider church. Only with repeated sermonic address, ongoing learning, continuous support, and encouragement of parents in their spiritual leadership role and skills will faith at home be a priority for the families and the congregation.

More than Just Children

With a heavy emphasis upon passing on the faith to children, many adults without children can get the impression that these faith practices and patterns do not apply to

them. Pastor Mark A. Holmen was intentional in calling his effort “Faith at Home” to move beyond the perception that this practice was only for families with children.

Considering the numbers of Americans who do not have children or who are unmarried, Christian leaders would want to move beyond an unintentional exclusionary perception (Telephone interview).

Affirming the biblical understanding of family as a covenant relationship also helps connect churches with the postmodern ethos that family is where one finds it. Congregations should be mindful not to make family faith formation practices only about nuclear families with children. To do so is to be exclusionary and myopic. Congregations need every family unit carrying out faith-at-home spiritual routines so the faith is more than a Sunday only religion. Westerhoff explains that healthy congregations are intergenerational communities, so congregations need every adult to be versed in the basic faith practices in order to contribute to the building up of the children in these practices as well (51). The challenge for pastors and other leaders is to guide their congregations to be intergenerational while engaging faith practices together.

Investing in Men to Be Spiritual Leaders

The project placed a special emphasis on encouraging men to embrace the role construct of being a spiritual leader in their households. This study recognized from the beginning the critical role fathers have to play as spiritual leaders. The response ratio of males to females (n=9; n=26), which was nearly identical for both congregations, reiterates that females often function as the spiritual leaders in their households. Even though a specific effort was made to encourage and equip men as spiritual leaders, the structure of data collection meant that although men may have increased their cognitive,

affective, and behavioral responses to the role construct, they still may have been excluded from the final data because the instrumentation eliminated those who did not complete the survey prior to the intervention. Because the posttest survey did not include the demographic questions, no data was collected in the posttest survey that would have determined if this failure to take the pretest was, in fact, the case. The study also discovered anecdotally that part of the reason more women completed the pretest and posttest surveys was the perception among some that only one survey per family was necessary, so the wife filled out the survey.

As men have a critical role to play, churches need to find ways of engaging them and equipping them to be spiritual leaders. Further study on what methods are effective in equipping fathers and measuring the impact their spiritual leadership has in their families would benefit this effort.

Long-Term Process

While I have been excited and energized about equipping parents in order to improve their parenting experience and bless their children, resistance to adopting a new and challenging way of discipling our children has been obvious from responses in the two study congregations. While this project was a gift of love from me to my people and other Christian families, for many parents and grandparents this emphasis on family faith formation has been uncomfortable.

The resistance to this faith-at-home process should have been obvious if 86 percent of parents are not actively leading their children spiritually. The resistance from Christian parents surfaces not because parents are against carrying out this spiritual leadership but because this emphasis upon parental spiritual leadership is contrary to

what the church has implicitly taught for the past five decades. A certain amount of resistance comes from changing an expectation of parents because few parents will admit they do not want to be spiritual leaders.

The more deeply rooted cause of the resistance is simply that this domestic spiritual life requires a new pattern of behavior. Christian leaders should expect passive resistance to changing daily patterns at home. Resistance will occur because implementing family faith formation practices means altering use of time habits, coordination of meal and bedtimes, and looking for opportunities for teaching and service. At-home faith means moving many parents from an apathetic to activist role as spiritual leaders. To establish faith practices in the daily family routine also means reevaluating other time investments of both children and parents. In many congregations pastors and other leaders must find ways to help families evaluate their lifestyles and help them find new ways to prioritize their lives. Because very few of the parents today received any kind of family faith formation routines from their parents, congregations need to take on the task of training families how to live as religious families in small and regular patterns. Some people will require more time, assistance, and modeling in order to make faith habits regular patterns.

While many church leaders talk about getting families to be conducting faith at home, an understanding about how difficult initiating new practices are for families who are not accustomed to such activities is often lacking. Christian leaders cannot assume that implementing family faith formation routines is a simple matter of telling parents what they need to do.

When congregational leaders consider reviving the practice of parental spiritual leadership they need to recognize the inertia that must be overcome. The greater the inertia, the more energy required to start an object moving. Considering that inertia of nearly absent faith-at-home practices has been building over the past five decades as the Christian church has failed to equip parents, congregational leaders should expect significant energy will be required to motivate and train parents to assume their spiritual leadership role.

Family faith formation is a paradigm shift that requires a significant shift in the thinking of Christian leaders, parents and other heads of households. “In fact, it’s a total culture shift, because it flies in the face of behaviors, beliefs, and characteristics that have been ingrained in them through training, experience, perception, and practice” (Holmen, *Faith Begins* 99). Holmen, after six years as the senior pastor at Ventura Missionary Church promoting faith at home, has achieved 37 percent of his household units identifying themselves as carrying out regular spiritual practices (Telephone interview). While he expresses frustration with this percentage, remember the average in most churches is 15 percent. His experience shows that advances in this area happen when faith at home is made a constant priority,

Making faith to be the center of the home is a long-term process for the families. Making the home the primary place for spiritual growth is a long-term process for congregations. I recognize as a spiritual leader who invests in the future of others that Christian leaders need to have the long-term strategy of continually equipping parents to increase the spiritual profit for their family members incrementally.

The Role of the Church in Faith at Home

The study showed that significant positive changes in adults towards accepting their role as the spiritual leaders in their homes occurred when the congregation invested time and effort to equip themselves for that role. Their growth as spiritual leaders for their children was facilitated by their churches.

Based on the statement that around 85 percent of families are doing almost no spiritual practices in the home is an indication that congregations are failing to equip parents for the spiritual leadership of their children or even the spiritual leadership of themselves. Strommen and Hardel state, “Few congregations teach parents how to pray with one another and with their children” (134). Barna reports that only 15 percent of senior pastors considered ministry with children to be a top priority (*Revolutionary Parenting* 57). Clearly, equipping parents and other heads of households to engage faith formation practices in the home has not been a priority for the vast majority of Christian congregations.

The role of the church is to partner with parents in the spiritual growth of their children. Parents and congregations each have their own sphere of activity. Certainly communal activities of worship, discipling, fellowship, evangelism, and outreach ministry conducted by congregations cannot be replicated by individual families. Likewise intimate activities of living out the faith cannot be replicated by congregations. These spheres of spiritual activity reinforce one another. For example, only on rare occasions do churches overcome the influence of parents who have apathy or antipathy towards the faith. The family, particularly what the mother and father say and do, is only slightly more important than involvement in Christian discipling towards developing faith

maturity in youth (Benson and Eklin 38). The family and congregation work in tandem to help disciple Christians of all ages.

Surprisingly very little activity is required from parents to create positive support for the faith. “Parents ignite faith in the lives of their children by making it an affair of the heart. And they look to the congregation for help in making this faith a commitment of the mind” (Strommen and Hardel 104). A significant role the church can play in advancing the faith in the lives of children is to nurture the faith of parents and equip them to be spiritual leaders.

Churches need to recognize the critical role they have to perform in guiding parents to become spiritual leaders. Holmen says that churches who want faith-at-home to happen in the lives of their members need to recognize “that the majority of families today probably have no idea of how to make their home a place for nurturing the faith of their children” (*Faith Begins* 121). Congregations will have to invest time and effort to equip parents for spiritual leadership and train them in practical ways of carrying out faith practices. Christian leaders should not assume the personal devotional practices of adults translate into family faith practices. Just like my own father, many parents do not make that connection or know how to apply for their whole family what they do for themselves. Congregations have to help draw those connections. As this study has shown, a combination of preaching and teaching supported with implementation tools is an effective method of helping adults see the importance of their role and equipping them to carry it out. Preaching on the parental spiritual leadership helps parents recognize faith in the home is a priority (103). Preaching alone will not equip parents with the confidence and skills to engage spiritual practices with their families. Thompson recommends

churches develop hands-on workshops that enable parents to integrate practices with their children's spiritual development. She also recommends the events should be "provided for the whole family instead of age-segregated groups" (141). One of the keys to helping families create an ethic of faith active in love is for congregations to perform the function of finding opportunities for families to serve together. Just as congregations regularly conduct courses on the fundamentals of the Christian faith, teaching parents how to be the spiritual leaders, needs be a recurring course offering if congregations hope to transition their families to live as faith-at-home families.

Just as families have lost the family faith formation practices over the past five decades, congregations have lost the programs and structures to train families to live out the faith in the home. If congregational leaders recognize the inertia of adults to become spiritual leaders, then they should recognize the inertia in the congregations to change their discipling agendas to make equipping parents a priority again. As seen from this study, initiating momentum towards this new direction will not take forever, even though a long term effort will be required.

Christian leaders need to be challenging parents and other head of households to exercise their spiritual leadership. Christian leaders need to be making adults aware of their spiritual responsibility to mentor others under their care in the faith. Parents and other heads of households need to be affirmed in their role and encouraged to trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to teach the faith in spite of their own perceived and real inadequacies.

Churches need to be actively training parents in practical and tangible ways to carry out the core spiritual practices of prayer, Bible reading, faith discussions, and faith

in action. Church of the Resurrection plans to make a faith-at-home course a basic expectation of membership. Beyond introductory courses, congregations need to be experimenting with various methods of equipping and supporting parents in their role as the spiritual leaders. Parents will need strategies for helping them to live out the spiritual practices after classes. Perhaps some will try mentoring programs where elder and experienced parents can model and coach younger parents. Congregations should be considering ways to continue updating parents in their spiritual leadership as their children move through age development. Support groups that have been effective in helping adults learn from one another about parenting skills could also prove effective way of sharing insights about spiritual leadership.

Having taught and trained parents and other heads of households, Christian leaders should be asking parents if they are implementing devotions, prayer, or service into their routines at home with their children. Christian leaders need to train and hold accountable parents for the spiritual leadership in their homes; the rewards will come from the Lord and from their families. One easy way to hold parents accountable for spiritual leadership is to ask their children to hold them accountable. Through the process of faith steps in the lives of children, such as baptism, first communion, first Bible, entering into confirmation, confirmation or affirmation of faith, congregations have opportunities to involve parents, to train them in spiritual leadership, and to remind them once again of their spiritual responsibilities and privileges.

A Critical Evangelism Strategy in North America

Even though 85 percent of Christians continue in the faith of their childhood, the percentage of the United States population that is Christian is declining. Given that those

who claim to have no religion is growing, and growing most rapidly among those under thirty, the clear trend is that decreasing number of children will continue in their faith through adulthood. To counteract this trend and to have any hope of influencing the larger society, the Christian church in North America needs to recognize that making the Christian family a center for spiritual growth is a critical evangelistic strategy.

While I recognize the commission to proclaim the gospel to all people and am not suggesting that focus on faith-at-home be at the expense of other evangelistic efforts, I do believe that a major effort to equip every household to be a domestic church is necessary to evangelize our own children and prevent them from drifting away from the faith. Rather than investing so much money and effort in advertizing and programs to reach adults, Christian leaders would discover a far greater return by investing in the spiritual leadership of parents and other heads of households.

The family is the frontline of the spiritual battle for children. “Given the power of family religiousness on the faith development of youth, priority should be given to the faith formation of parents and the teaching of faith development skills” (Benson and Eklin 65). If the family is not an active center of spiritual growth, Christian leaders cannot expect children to receive adequate training in the faith anywhere else in the cultural experience, not even the church.

If the usurpation of the spiritual role of parents and deterioration of the faith practices in the home has taken the last fifty to sixty years, restoring the spiritual role of parents and revitalizing spiritual practices in the home will require a considerable investment of time, energy, and resources, especially in a society that is experiencing

continued changes in the nature of the family and that is increasingly hostile to the Christian faith.

Faith in the home is a critical evangelism strategy because if the faith will become a vibrant daily experience in the intimate life of family it will become a vibrant daily experience in the life of the individual family members. As families become the faith growth centers for individuals, rather than training individuals to live in a Church culture, families are training individuals to live biculturally as Christians in the larger secular, materialistic culture. Rather than trying to invite nonbelievers to traverse the entryway of an ecclesial building, Christians will be more effective inviting nonbelieving friends and family to experience the vibrant faith life they share in their homes. The church in North America could grow if it would begin to see every family unit as a tiny church and recognize the mission potential of getting people to join Christian households and not necessarily institutional structures.

Focusing on equipping parents to be the spiritual leaders can also be a missiological method to reach those families not currently involved in the church. Church of the Resurrection has always had a vision to carry out ministries to help parents with family finances, marriage, and parenting. An intentional outreach to parents in the community to help them become the parents they desire to be for their children could be an avenue for drawing them into the faith community and introducing them to Christ. Helping unchurched parents to see that faith is not something for which they dress up on Sunday but something they live out together every day may help to lower the barriers to bringing them to Christ.

Limitations of the Study

While the study demonstrated a number of significant results, a number of weaknesses need to be addressed.

Survey Instrument

The ordinal Likert scale on the survey ranged only from one to four. If the scale was increased to six, allowing for greater degrees of positive or negative response to the questions, the survey could have measured subtle changes better. Specifically, the response scale did not offer enough nuance to measure slight improvements in the behavioral response.

Data Collection

Before the project, four other churches had expressed an interest in participation. For this reason, the decision was made to conduct the survey online because that method offered a uniform process for multiple locations spread out across the country. The online process for administering the survey was also chosen for the degree of anonymity and the ease of data retrieval.

In retrospect the online survey was a mistake. The online process depressed the participation, especially from the least active. Only regular attending members completed the pretest and posttest surveys. The online survey created an extra step between the call to participate and actual participation. The result was a lower response as forecasted by other sources. The response rate for online surveys averages 30 percent compared to average response rates between 50 to 70 percent for mail and 80 to 85 percent for face-to-face administration of surveys (“Response Rates”). This study did slightly better by

having nearly a 50 percent response rate for the posttest survey. Ultimately, out of these two congregations only thirty-five individuals responded both before and after.

Concern about protecting anonymity was more important for me than for participants. The ease of not having to enter fifty or more questionnaire answers manually for every respondent pretest and posttest also motivated the decision. The data collection would have been far more effective with a greater response rate if the surveys were simply handed out directly during worship on certain Sundays before and after the project. A greater response rate would have resulted in a larger sample, which would have enhanced the findings of this research. A larger sample would mean the responses could be separated by the congregation for processing the data, especially because each congregation implemented the project differently. Due to sample size this option was not feasible.

Length of Study

Conducting this project over the period of eight weeks is a very short period of time to try and measure a lifestyle change. While the intent of the study was to determine if a preaching and teaching project could initiate a stronger parental response to the spiritual leader role construct, as previously noted, creating a family environment where faith practices are part of the daily routine is a long-term process.

Even though I am pleased with the results measured, I acknowledge that the progression of making spiritual practices into daily habits that come to define who Christians are can be crowded out by the hectic pace of life and derailed by crisis. Establishing a firm foundation of spiritual practices and spiritual leadership in households is a repetitive process over months and years. These participating congregations are

maximizing what has happened by continuing to affirm the spiritual role of parents and conducting new classes to train parents in their role. A longer study would be beneficial, especially to discover strategies for overcoming obstacles to making spiritual habits central in the lives of families. A study examining the results of weaving faith-at-home practices into the life of the congregation would help underscore how faith-at-home needs to be a ministry priority of the entire congregation, really in every aspect of its ministry.

Self-Selection of Survey and Focus Group Participants

Unintentionally, the use of the online survey process selected the most active adults. Those who interested in the project were the ones most likely to fill out the questionnaire. The design of the project further screened out less active adults by excluding those who did not fill out the pretest survey. Rather than being included in the survey simply by showing up at church, participants selected themselves by filling out the pretest and posttest surveys.

This self-selection then continued with the focus group. Only those who had completed both surveys and who responded to an invitation to attend participated in the focus group.

Single Parent Families

One of the oversights of this project was not developing strategies and congregational support for single parent families. The study sample included two divorced parents who represent so many more in the congregations and communities. Whereas a two-parent family can invest more than 52,000 hours in eighteen years of childhood, the average single parent will only have 29,000 hours. Single parents need people within the congregation to help them carry out their family faith formation. Other

families can assist single-parent families, couples, and single by inviting them over for dinner on a regular basis and conducting faith conversations together, taking other adults and children along when they do a service project, or occasionally doing children's sleepovers where bedtime rituals could be rehearsed. These tangible expressions of support would go far in encouraging single parents and other adults. One possible avenue of future study could be discovering the unique needs of single parents as they pertain to the role of spiritual leadership and testing strategies to equip them for their role.

Generalizability

This study was limited to the participants from Rejoice Lutheran Church in Coppell, Texas, and Church of the Resurrection in Keller, Texas. Similar results may be limited to congregations of similar size, demographic composition, or denominational affiliation. A congregation's own sense of discipling the children in its midst would also be an influencing factor.

Consideration of Individual Factors

Every individual has his or her own unique characteristics and circumstances that a survey cannot measure. Certainly, unique factors came into play in how individuals responded to the project. For many, their stage of life and their current situation with their children influenced their response.

Unexpected Conclusions

This study could not measure every aspect or implication from the intervention. Three specific issues emerge that warrant further study.

Impact upon Families with Teenagers

While the mantra of many children's ministry experts is to start when the children are young, the response of the parents with teenagers was surprisingly strong. Most of the families with teenagers reported actively engaging faith practices in their homes.

Given that teenagers are at the stage where they have arrived at their faith decision, the positive response among these families should not be surprising. Prayer and faith discussions were the spiritual practices most often engaged by these families. The youth themselves often led the faith practice, but the role of parents to create the spiritual space for the faith practices was clear. Simply conducting a faith practice a few times was needed before the teenagers took over. Faith in action was another spiritual practice that resonated with these families with teenagers.

These families reported that the faith practices opened up or strengthened lines of communication between parents and teenage children. In fact a number of parents reported momentous breakthroughs with teenage children with whom they had been struggling.

This unexpected conclusion gives encouraging motivation to work with families of children of any age to initiate faith practices in their households.

Growth in Faith Maturity

As noted previously, Faith maturity, which was intended to be an independent variable, emerged as a dependent variable. The intervention promoting the spiritual leadership of parents was shown to have impacted the parents themselves. Considering that the purpose of faith in the home practices is to grow individuals in the faith, growth in faith maturity would be logical outcome. Again, motivating parents to live out spiritual

practices for the sake of their children can have the collateral result of increasing their own faith. The ongoing spiritual nurture of adults is an important gift to children. Not only are they growing deeper in their faith, but they can be applying Christian principles and values in their parenting.

The growth of faith maturity in this study raises an additional insight. In the church in North American, believers struggle with the individualization of the faith. Christian education typically defaults into a focus on the individual. This notion of an individual faith is contrary to the biblical understanding of personhood. Biblically, one has an individual identity only as one belongs to a family, a community, and to God. Clearly from the qualitative data, parents reported growing in their faith as a result of interacting with the other family members. Returning to Deuteronomy 6:4-9, I speculate that when adults make faith a family experience that they can grow in their faith profoundly. Growing the faith maturity of adults through faith in the home practices is worthy of further exploration.

Retaining Families with Children

A factor in motivating this project within Church of the Resurrection was finding a method of educating children in the faith that would help retain families in a mission congregation. In the months following the project, Church of the Resurrection has moved through significant changes, including the departure of a paid, part-time youth and children ministry couple, the time investment of completing this project, and the renovation of an existing lease property to become a full-time ministry center. During this same period, at least four families with children have left Church of the Resurrection. A

few of those families stated explicitly or implicitly that the lack of ministry to children and youth was a significant factor in their decision to attend another congregation.

Considering the amount of chaos the congregation has experienced, the effect of faith at home in helping to retain families is difficult to ascertain. The departure of these families also highlights the continuing church culture expectation that the church has a responsibility in providing dynamic youth activities. Sadly, congregations will continue to be under pressure to provide dynamic children and youth ministry in a competitive church consumer environment. Further study is warranted to discover if equipping parents to be the spiritual leaders in the home would affect the children's ministry expectations of those parents and the retention of families with children. The issue is not just if parents will decrease their perspective that the congregation is responsible for the spiritual nurture of their children, but if they will also change the type of children's ministry they seek from one that is entertainment focused towards a communal faith journey.

Suggestions for Further Study

This study was limited to two congregations, one small and one medium sized. I recommend a study involving larger congregations or more congregations to increase the sample size and to determine if the same significant results would occur.

This study had no control group with which to contrast results. I recommend a study be conducted involving a control group to measure what difference a faith-at-home equipping intervention makes in the spiritual development of both children and adults.

This study placed a heavy emphasis upon parents being spiritual leaders to their children. As previously stated, given the diversity of family make-up and the increasing

number of adults who do not live in households with children, perhaps a study could be conducted to examine the role construct of adults being spiritual leaders to one another in various family configurations.

Postscript

The equipping parents to be spiritual leaders research was basically a self-help project. The content evolved from the context and need of the mission congregation I serve. As a parent, this project also emerged out of my own personal desire to grow as the spiritual leader to my children. The skills and practices I have learned to teach others have made a difference in my own home. As I struggle to practice the core faith habits routinely with my own family, I am well aware of how much other families struggle to carry out these routines. If the pastor struggles to make faith-at-home practices daily habits, then I know my families are having difficulties. As I have to coax and control my young children to participate in prayer, Bible reading, faith discussions, and faith in action, I recognize the need for making faith-at-home practices and parental spiritual leadership basic and simple to do.

APPENDIX A

Logistical Planning

Dissertation Project Logistics

1. Survey
 - a. A key part of this project is your people participating in the survey before and after to determine if the preaching and teaching has made an impact.
 - b. They will receive letters, e-mail and or bulletin announcements.
2. Survey Monkey.com
 - a. The survey will be carried out online. I will send you a link to the Web site. You will publish this in your letters. You may even decide to have your church Web site link to it.
 - b. Link to online survey on whereNewLifeBegins.org Web site
3. Letters and E-mails to encourage involvement
 - a. Pretest and Posttest
 - i. Letters sent out two weeks in advance of survey
 - ii. Bulletin and e-mail announcements from week before the survey begins, until it closes.
 - b. Letters to families
 - i. Purpose
 - ii. Promise of blessing
 - iii. Recognize the difficulties
 - iv. Survey process
 - v. Anonymity: they will use the last 4 digits of SS#
 1. I will use only to coordinate responses.
 - vi. They will use your church zip code in the survey, so you need to give them that in the letter.
 - c. Notecard to fathers (esp. uninvolved)
 - i. Importance of Dad teaching time
 1. one of the parts really critical is teaching Dads and Granddads why they got to get in the game. I am asking you to hand write notes to the men in your congregation to come.
 2. You may share the task with other men leaders.
 - d. Letter to teenagers
 - i. Teenagers need a special letter to get their buy-in.
 - ii. *I am giving your parents homework. I need you to help them learn something. This will bless you.*
4. Promotional Tools
 - a. Develop imagery.
 - b. Develop and print the bookmarks, postcards, and posters.
 - c. Items will have to be printed on a time schedule for the events.
 - d. Worship Series Bookmark

- i. Important tool: tells when everything is happening.
 - ii. Lists teaching sessions
 - iii. List out where and when these will be held.
 - e. Survey time
 - i. The survey time will begin two weeks prior. See schedule below.
 - f. Series Postcard
 - g. Poster
 - i. Minimum 2 ft x 3 ft—or larger
 - h. Community Events:
 - i. We will be participating in some chamber of commerce events.
 - ii. Find venues where we can advertize that we are going to help families grow stronger.
 - iii. Use Poster, 7' sign, brochures, postcards
- 5. Learning sessions: FAMILY BIBLE SCHOOL
 - a. The hardest task is simply planning where and when we will hold the various teaching events.
 - b. The learning events, outside of the Dad and Mom events, are for the whole family. This is Family Bible School.
 - c. The learning events that happen after the preaching are probably done best right after church.
 - d. All this planning needs to be done so we can put this information in the bulletins, letters, and on the series bookmark.
 - e. Plan for where to meet and how
 - i. Dad's event
 - 1. Saturday before the first Sunday of the series
 - 2. A breakfast
 - 3. Church or restaurant with separate room
 - 4. Get men to set this up.
 - 5. This can be led by one of the men as well.
 - 6. Dads as Spiritual Leaders: Story of Joshua not mentoring any one and its consequences
 - ii. Mother's event
 - 1. Monday evening after the first Sunday.
 - 2. "Women's Night"
 - 3. Where?: may consider doing at a coffee house
 - 4. Moms as Spiritual Leaders
 - 5. Have women set this up.
 - iii. Week 1: Prayer
 - 1. Where?
 - 2. What food item:
 - a. recommend some food: maybe snacks or desserts
 - 3. Items Needed: Prayer Cards and Blessing Cards
 - iv. Week 2: Bible Reading
 - 1. Where?
 - 2. What food item:
 - 3. Items Needed:

- a. Bibles
 - b. Bible Bookmarks
 - c. Bible Recommendation Sheet
 - v. Week 3: Faith Conversations
 - 1. Right after church
 - 2. Full meal:
 - a. important to have a sit down meal. We are about teaching how families use meal time as faith time. We may have to set up tables differently. It is okay to mix together family units, especially the elderly and the singles.
 - 3. Items Needed: *FaithTalk* kits
 - vi. Week 4: Faith in Action
 - 1. Right after church
 - 2. About 30 minutes.
 - 3. Items Needed: Faith in Action Suggestion Card
- 6. Faith in Action—Servant Projects
 - a. This is a critical ingredient to the project. Do not skip it.
 - b. Get someone to help organize this event.
 - c. Highly recommend reading Steve Sogren's *Conspiracy of Kindness: Servant Evangelism* book.
 - d. Encourage participation: tell them it is expected.
 - e. Arrange for two servant evangelism projects.
 - i. Project on Last Sunday of series
 - ii. 2nd project on Saturday six days afterwards
 - f. Suggestions
 - i. Door to door servant evangelism?
 - ii. Soup kitchen experience?
 - iii. Serve elderly or poor families in congregation
 - iv. Habitat House
 - v. Other sources for ideas.
 - (1) <http://www.servantevangelism.com/main.cfm>
 - (2) <http://www.loveyourcity.com/>
 - (3) <http://www.tchcoalition.org/>
 - (4) <http://www.uss.salvationarmy.org/fortworth>
- 7. Learning Tools
 - a. These are meant to be tools that help families to continue to work on this.
 - b. Prayer Cards: Print on neon yellow card stock
 - c. Blessing Cards: Print on card stock
 - a. Bible Bookmarks: Print on neon blue card stock
 - b. Faith talk Kits
 - i. FaithTalk® Cards: set with case (BLUE CASE) \$29.95

- ii. FaithTalk® Cards with Children: set with case (RED CASE)
\$19.95
- iii. Call Youth and Family Institute, make sure they will arrive in time
- iv. <http://youthandfamilyinstitute.org/>
877.239.2492

This will be your biggest expense and you will have to decide how you want to handle this as a church.

The Faith talks kits are very effective. I have used them in my home. Another family had an even better response than we did.

You may decide as a church to subsidize the whole cost as an investment in your families. You can use it as a carrot for their participation in the project.

You may decide to subsidize part of the cost—have the families pay for half. Whatever you do, you will have to order them four weeks ahead of your big meal event, so you can hand them out.

In my congregation, people who have filled out the online survey will get one free.

- c. Faith in Action Suggestions
 - i. Developed four 5 x 8 cards with age appropriate suggestions.
 - ii. Put local church info on card
 - iii. Print on Neon orange card stock or refrigerator magnet

8. Sermons

- a. *Are The Kids Alright?* How To Strengthen Your Family
- b. Week 1 Blessing Your Family
- c. Week 2 Grounding Your family
- d. Week 3 Talking the Faith
- e. Week 4 Sharing the Faith
- a. Review Outline
- b. Write sermons
- c. Music Suggestions

9. Teaching

- a. Review teaching outlines
- b. Decide what may need to be cut

Dissertation Project Schedule

What needs to happen when:

Pretest Survey:	July 20—Aug 2	online
<i>Survey Bulletin announcement</i>	<i>July 20</i>	
<i>Mail letters about the survey</i>	<i>July 21</i>	
<i>Survey Bulletin announcement</i>	<i>July 27</i>	
<i>Mail series postcards</i>	<i>July 28</i>	
<i>Mail letters to teenagers</i>	<i>July 29</i>	
<i>Mail cards to moms and dads</i>	<i>July 29</i>	
<i>E-mail reminder</i>	<i>July 30</i>	
Men's Breakfast	Aug 2	Saturday, 8 am
Sermon #1 <i>Blessing Your Family</i>	Aug 3	Sunday, 10 am
Lesson #1 Prayer	Aug 3	Sunday, 12 nn
Women's Event	Aug 4	Monday, 7 pm
Sermon #2 <i>Grounding Your Family</i>	Aug 10	Sunday, 10 am
Lesson #2 Bible Reading	Aug 10	Sunday, 12 nn
Sermon 3 <i>Talking the Faith</i>	Aug 17	Sunday, 10 am
Lesson #3 Faith Talks	Aug 17	Sunday, 12 nn
Sermon #4 <i>Sharing the Faith</i>	Aug 24	Sunday, 10 am
Lesson #4 Faith in Action	Aug 24	Sunday, 12 nn
Servant Project: Opportunity #1	Aug 24	Sunday, 12 nn
Servant Project: Opportunity #2	Aug 30	Saturday, 12 nn
Posttest Survey:	Sept 7-21	online
<i>Survey Bulletin announcement</i>	<i>Sept 7</i>	
<i>Mail letters about survey</i>	<i>Sept 8</i>	
<i>Survey Bulletin announcement</i>	<i>Sept 14</i>	
<i>E-mail reminder</i>	<i>Sept 19</i>	
Focus Groups		
<i>E-mail invites and RSVP</i>	<i>Sept 20</i>	
<i>Bulletin announcement</i>	<i>Sept 21</i>	<i>Sign up List</i>

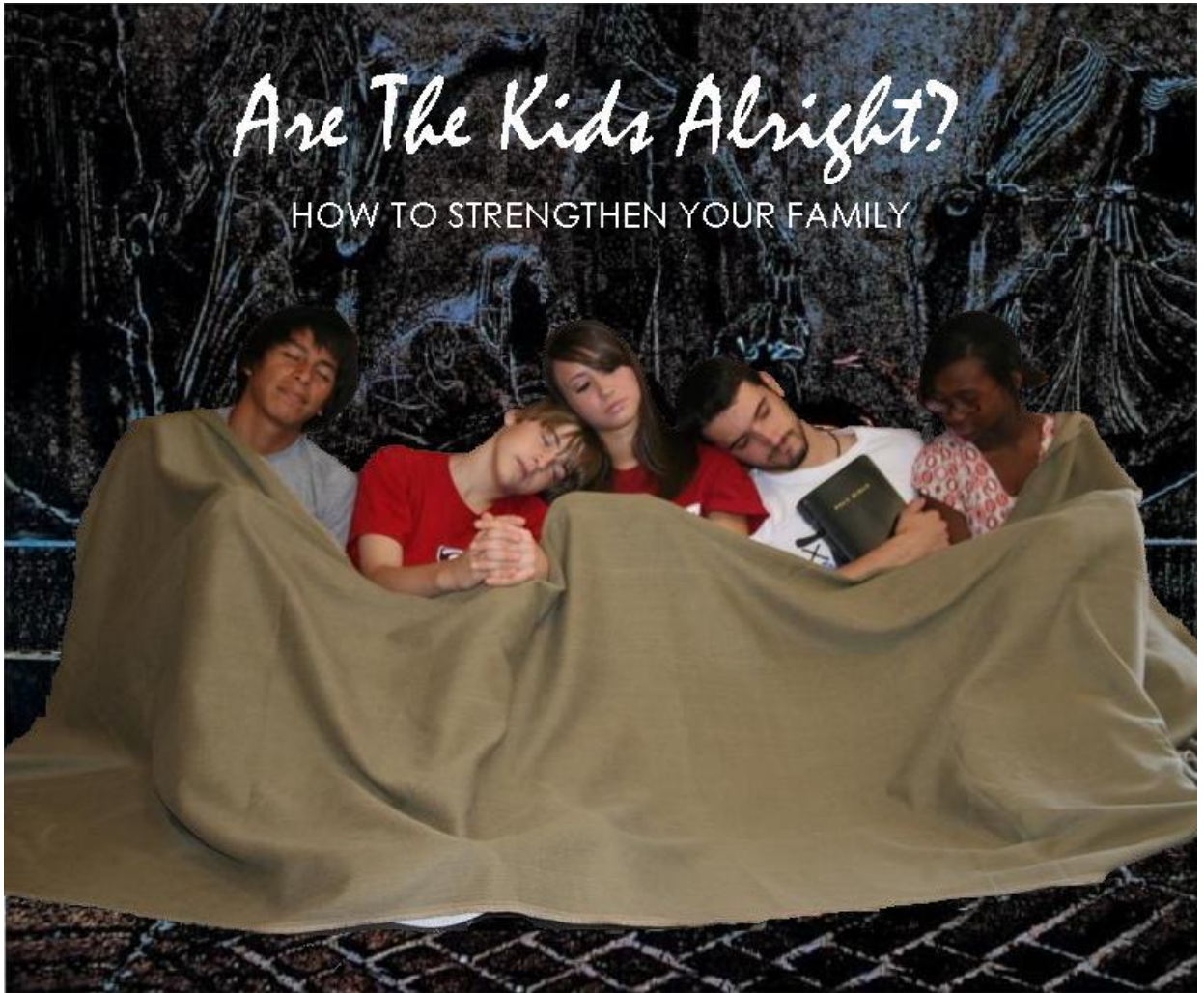
Focus Group: Opportunity #1
Focus Group: Opportunity #2

Sept 24 Wednesday, 6 pm
Sept 28 Sunday, 1 pm

APPENDIX B

Letters and Announcements

Promotional Postcard



Are The Kids Alright? ~ How to strengthen your family

How will you strengthen your kids for the world?

What will you give your kids that will stick with them?

It is a challenge to lead your family.

You are not always sure how to make that happen.

We want to help you have a positive impact on your kids.

We can share with you ways to strengthen your family.

Ways that will build up your kids in their attitudes and self image. Come hear how you can lead your kids to be more than alright.

Aug 3rd Blessing Your Family Aug 10th Grounding Your Family Aug 17th Talking About Real Matters Aug 24th Sharing Outward

Promotional Bookmark



Sermon Series Beginning Aug 3rd

Sat- 8/2-8am	Men's Breakfast
	Judge Bean's in Keller
Sun-8/3-10am	Sermon: Blessing Your Family
Noon-1pm	Family Lesson: Prayer
Mon- 8/4-10am	Women's Event
	Muggs Bakery in Roanoke
Sun-8/10-10am	Sermon: Grounding Your Family
Noon-1pm	Family Lesson: Bible Reading
Sun-8/17-10am	Sermon: Talking in Faith
1pm	Family Lesson: Faith Talks at Roanoke Senior Center for BBQ
Sun-8/24-10am	Sermon: Sharing the Faith
11:30-NOON	Family Lesson: Faith in Action
12:30pm-2pm	Union Gospel Mission
Sun-8/30-TBA	Keller Oaks Healthcare Center

On-Line Survey:
Church Zip Code: 76262
www.AreTheKidsAlright.com



Pretest Survey Letter

Dear friend in Christ:

Whether you have children or not, raising up children to be Christ followers is a primary task for a church. We know a church can only do so much, so helping parents and other caregivers to strengthen children in the faith is critical.

On August 3rd our church will kick off a four-week series *“Are The Kids Alright?”: How To Strengthen Your Family*. While this worship and teaching series is geared towards families with children, it will benefit all of us as we are challenged to live the faith in our homes each and every day.

God promises blessing on families who live out the faith in the home (Deut. 11:19-21). Now, I know it is not always easy with hectic schedules, child induced chaos, and adolescent attitudes to carry out faith activities in the home. So we want to help equip you through this worship and teaching series. Each week during worship we will explore the role of faith in the home and a specific faith forming habit. Then after worship, we will teach more in-depth about how to make faith happen in your home. We will give you deeper insights, practical suggestions, useful tools, and hands-on experiences for implementing specific faith forming habits with your family. These teaching sessions are for all generations to participate in.

This “Are The Kids Alright?” worship and teaching series is the doctoral dissertation project for Pastor Douglas Schoelles. For this reason, a survey is taken before and after the project to measure the effect of the project. Here is how you can help:

1. Complete the questionnaire. It will take you 15 minutes. Log onto www.AreTheKidsAlright.com. The survey closes after August 2nd.
2. Attend as many of the worship and teaching events as you can.
3. Complete the questionnaire after the worship and teaching series is over.

We want both fathers and mothers to fill out the survey. There will be a gift for each family who participates in the survey, given during one of the teaching sessions. Please fill out the gift coupon from the “Thank you” webpage.


Your participation is needed before and after to assess whether such a program helps families deepen their spiritual lives. This research will help other congregations. Our pledge to you is that your responses will remain anonymous. No attempt will be made to match questionnaires to individuals in the congregation.

All responses are vital to this research. Every questionnaire will be gratefully received and included in the study.

May the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we may know him better. (Eph 1:17)
Pastor Douglas Schoelles


Pretest Bulletin and Newsletter Announcements



Just a reminder to fill out the online questionnaire before we begin the “Are The Kids Alright” project. You can go to www.AreTheKidsAlright.com. It won’t take you long. 



Just a reminder to fill out the online questionnaire before we begin the “Are The Kids Alright” project. You can go to www.AreTheKidsAlright.com. It won’t take you long.

We want both moms and dads to fill out the survey. Don’t forget to fill out the gift coupon from the “Thank You” webpage. 

Pretest.

E-mail sent separately July 30.

Title: Are The Kids Alright Survey

THANK YOU for completing the questionnaire for the “Are The Kids Alright” research project. Your participation is invaluable and we appreciate it very much.

If you have not yet gone online to www.AreTheKidsAlright.com, it is not too late to do so. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey online before it closes on Saturday, August 2nd. Your response will make the study much stronger and help the ministry of our church.

We want both moms and dads to fill out the survey. Don’t forget to fill out the gift coupon from the “Thank You” webpage.

Blessings,

Pastor

Letter to Teenagers

July 28, 2008

Dear younger brother or sister in Christ:

In a week we are going to start a new worship and teaching series called “Are The Kids Alright?” The purpose of the series is to equip adults, especially parents, to live their faith out at home.

I believe faith in Christ Jesus needs to be a genuine transformer of our lives. You know it is hard to have a faith that impacts you and strengthens you all the time. So you know that living a genuine faith is not always easy for adults either.

So, I am asking that you will help out with this project. I need you to help guide your parents to the four Sunday worship services and the four teaching sessions. I am also asking you to let your parents practice their faith habits with you. That means I need to you help them do their homework, by reminding them they have homework to do and to do the faith habits homework with them so they can grow in their confidence.

I believe if you will help your parents to learn these faith practices and do them regularly, you will help shape your parents for the better. I also believe that if you help your parents do this homework to live a more genuine faith it will improve their relationship with you. I can promise you will be blessed by this (Deut 5:16).

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please feel free to contact me.

Pastor Douglas Schoelles

Letter to Fathers

July 28, 2008

Dear Brother in Christ:

Our church is going to embark on a worship and teaching series to help equip moms and dads to be the spiritual leaders in their homes.

I am inviting you to session just for men. As men we have a vitally important role to play in the lives of our sons and daughters and other children our lives influence.

So join us for breakfast at 8 am on Saturday, August 2 at Judge Roy Beans at the corner of Keller-Hicks and US 377.

Pastor Douglas Schoelles

Letter to Mothers

July 28, 2008

Dear Sister in Christ:

Our church is going to embark on a worship and teaching series to help equip moms and dads to be the spiritual leaders in their homes.

I am inviting you to session just for women. As a woman you are concerned about what kind of adults our kids grow up to be. We will talk about how to increase your impact as a mother, grandmother or aunt. We will talk about how to make our homes faith incubators.

So join us for coffee and dessert at 7 pm on Monday, August 4th at Mugs Bakery, located next to Teresa's Resale, 500 N Highway 377 in Roanoke.

Pastor Douglas Schoelles

Posttest Survey Letter

September 5, 2008

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your participation in the “Are The Kids Alright?” project. Now all four sermons have been preached and all the learning events for the project have been conducted. With the completion of worship and teaching series, “*Are The Kids Alright?*”: *How To Strengthen Your Family*, I write to ask for your assistance once again.

Here is how you can help:

1. Complete the questionnaire online at www.AreTheKidsAlright.com. It will take no more than 15 minutes to finish. Note some additional questions regarding your participation in the project are included.
2. Please complete your questionnaire by September 21.

Your responses are important to determine if this effort to helped make a difference. Our pledge to you is that no attempt will be made to match questionnaires to individuals within the congregation. Because all responses are vital to this research, all completed questionnaires are gratefully received and included in the study.

We want both fathers and mothers to fill out the survey. Even if you did not fill out the survey before the series, you can still fill out the survey. The survey will close by, so please complete the survey before then.

We hope you were blessed by this series. Thank you for your participation.

May the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. (Eph 1:17)

Pastor Douglas

Posttest Bulletin and Newsletter Announcements



Just a reminder, now that we are done with the “Are The Kids Alright” project, to fill out the online questionnaire before it closes September 21st.

You can go to www.AreTheKidsAlright.com. It won’t take you long.

We want both moms and dads to fill out the survey. 

Posttest. E-mail sent separately Sept 19

Title: Are The Kids Alright Survey AGAIN

THANK YOU for participating in the “Are the Kids Alright?” learning project. Thank you also for completing the questionnaire after the project.

If you have not yet gone online to www.AreTheKidsAlright.com, it is not too late to do so. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey online before it closes after Sunday, September 21. Your response will make the study much stronger and help the ministry of our church.

We want both moms and dads to fill out the survey. Even if you did not fill out the survey at the beginning, you can fill it out now.

Blessings,

Pastor

APPENDIX C

Research Instruments

Introduction to Survey

Are The Kids Alright?

How to strengthen your family

Are The Kids Alright? Project

Whether you have children or not, raising up children to be Christ followers is a primary task for a church. We know a church can only do so much, so helping parents and other caregivers to strengthen children in the faith is critical.

Your church will be kicking off a four week series “Are The Kids Alright?”: How To Strengthen Your Family. While this worship and teaching series is geared towards families with children, it will benefit us all as we are challenged to live the faith in our homes each and everyday.

God promises blessing on families who live out the faith in the home.(Deut. 11:19-21) Now, we know it is not always easy with hectic schedules, child induced chaos, and adolescent attitudes to carry out faith activities in the home. So we want to help equip you through this worship and teaching series. Each week during worship we will explore the role of faith in the home and a specific faith forming habit. Then after worship, we will teach more in-depth about how to make faith happen in your home. We will give you deeper insights, practical suggestions, useful tools, and hands-on experiences for implementing specific faith forming habits with your family. These teaching sessions are for all generations to participate in.

Purpose of the survey and the Reason for Your participation

This “Are The Kids Alright?” worship and teaching series is my doctoral dissertation project. For this reason, a survey is taken before and after the project to measure the effect of the preaching and teaching project. Here is how you can help.

4. Complete the questionnaire. It will take you 15 minutes or less. Click below on “Take Survey”.
5. Attend as many of the worship and teaching events as you can.
6. Complete the questionnaire after the worship and teaching series is over.

Your participation is needed before and after to assess whether such a program helps families deepen their spiritual lives. This research will help other congregations. All

responses are vital to this research. Every questionnaire will be gratefully received and included in the study.

Each family that participates in the survey will receive a gift, a \$25 value. You will fill out a coupon at the end of the survey to receive this gift.

Terms of anonymity and how results will be used

My pledge to you is that your responses will remain anonymous. No attempt will be made to match questionnaires to individuals in the congregation. You will use the last four digits of your social security number so your responses before and after the project can be compared, but your name will not be asked of you.

Take Survey.

As you answer the questions, we recommend you click on the answer phrase rather than the button.

Thank you again.

May the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. (Eph 1:17)

Pastor Douglas Schoelles
Church of the Resurrection

Pre- Project Survey

About You

1. The last four digits of your Social Security number. .1111

2. Which church are you attending?
 - Church of the Resurrection, Roanoke, Texas
 - Our Redeemer Lutheran, Grand Prairie, Texas
 - Rejoice Lutheran, Coppell, Texas
 - Trinity Evangelical Lutheran, Miles, Texas

3. Are you female or male?
 - Female
 - Male

4. How do you describe yourself? (Mark all that apply to you.)
 - African American, Black, or African
 - American Indian or Native American (including Alaska Native)
 - Arab or Arab American
 - Asian or Asian American
 - Hispanic, Latino, or Latina American
 - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - White or European American

5. How old are you?

Age 18-24	Age 50-59
Age 25-29	Age 60-69
Age 30-39	Age 70-79
Age 40-49	Age 80 and older

6. Which of the following best describes you?
 - Single and never married
 - Living with someone in a committed relationship
 - Married
 - Divorced, now single
 - Divorced and remarried
 - Widowed, now single
 - Widowed and remarried
 - Separated

7. My interaction with children
 - Occurs as the parent or primary caregiver
 - Occurs as extended family who spends significant time with children
 - Occurs as a member of the congregation relating to children.

Is limited.

8. If you have children, what are their ages? Check all that apply. Include all children for whom you are a legal parent or guardian as well as any other children for whom you have parenting responsibility.

I am not a parent

I have children who are birth to 4 years old

I have children who are 5 to 12 years old

I have children who are 13 to 18 years old

I have children who are older than 18

9. What is your relationship to this congregation?

Occasional visitor

First-time or second time visitor

Attend regularly

Family Faith Formation Survey**About Your Faith, Your Perspective and Your Household**

We want to know how you think and feel about your faith and how you put that into practice. How true are each of these statements for you?

1. I believe my child needs to know God's story in order to shape his or her own life story.
 - 1) Strongly agree
 - 2) Agree
 - 3) Disagree
 - 4) Strongly Disagree
2. As a parent, I am responsible for involving my child in the church's ministry programs for children and youth.
 - 1) Strongly agree
 - 2) Agree
 - 3) Disagree
 - 4) Strongly Disagree
3. I feel confident about praying with my child to God.
 - 1) Strongly agree
 - 2) Agree
 - 3) Disagree
 - 4) Strongly Disagree
4. I know how to guide my child in prayer.
 - 1) Strongly agree
 - 2) Agree
 - 3) Disagree
 - 4) Strongly Disagree
5. I typically attend worship services at my congregation.
 - 1) Once per week or more.
 - 2) Two or three times per month
 - 3) Once per month
 - 4) Special occasions or rarely
6. As a parent, I am responsible for ensuring my child attends worship regularly.
 - 1) Strongly agree
 - 2) Agree
 - 3) Disagree
 - 4) Strongly Disagree

7. I pray by myself alone.
[scored in negative]
- 1) Rarely
 - 2) Once in a while
 - 3) Fairly Often
 - 4) Frequently
8. I feel able to give my child the proper spiritual experience at home.
- 1) Strongly agree
 - 2) Agree
 - 3) Disagree
 - 4) Strongly Disagree
9. I encourage my child to find ways to serve other members of the family.
- 1) Strongly agree
 - 2) Agree
 - 3) Disagree
 - 4) Strongly Disagree
10. I believe my child needs me to be praying with them.
- 1) Strongly agree
 - 2) Agree
 - 3) Disagree
 - 4) Strongly Disagree
11. Religious faith is important in my life.
- 1) Very Important
 - 2) Fairly Important
 - 3) Somewhat Important
 - 4) Not very Important
12. I believe the church has primarily responsibility for nurturing the spiritual life of my child.
[scored in negative]
- 1) Strongly agree
 - 2) Agree
 - 3) Disagree
 - 4) Strongly Disagree
13. I read from the Bible to myself alone.
[scored in negative]
- 1) Rarely
 - 2) Once in a while
 - 3) Fairly Often
 - 4) Frequently

14. I feel comfortable reading a Bible story or passage with my child.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

15. I invite people to come to worship at my church with me.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

16. I know how to engage my child in thinking about a Bible story or passage.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

17. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

18. I believe the church and home must work together to enhance the spiritual experience at home.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

19. Some parents pray for their child, and others do not. I myself pray for my child.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

20. I feel comfortable about taking my child with me to go help other people.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

21. I make meal times an opportunity for my child to talk about how they see God working in their lives.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

22. It is difficult for me to know how to respond to my child's spiritual questions.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

23. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

24. As a parent I am responsible for teaching my child the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

25. When praying with my child, I encourage them to pray for others and their concerns.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

26. Praying with my child makes me feel restless.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

27. Together as a household we help other people.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

28. I believe my child needs me to serve and help others with them.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

29. I give significant portions of time and/or money to help other people.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

30. Much of my child's spiritual learning will take place in the home.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

31. I pray with the people in my household.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

32. I enjoy having faith conversations with my child

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

33. I encourage my child to invite their friends to come to worship with us.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

34. I believe my child needs me to be reading a Bible story or passage with them.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

35. How important is your religious faith in providing guidance in your own day-to-day living?

- 1) Very Important
- 2) Fairly Important
- 3) Somewhat Important
- 4) Not very Important

36. My child's spiritual learning occurs mostly from watching how our family lives out our faith.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

37. I read or study a Bible story or passage with the people in my household.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

38. When reading a Bible story or passage with my child, I feel impatient.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

39. I talk about my faith experience with the other people in my household.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

40. I know how to involve my child in sharing their faith through their deeds.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

41. My life is committed to God.

- 1) Rarely true
- 2) True once in a while
- 3) Often true
- 4) Almost always true

42. As a parent, I have the greatest influence on my child's spiritual life.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

43. When reading a Bible story or passage with my child, I ask them questions about the reading.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

44. I feel comfortable getting my child to talk about God and their faith.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

45. People in my household invite other people to come to worship with them.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Rarely
- 2) Once in a while
- 3) Fairly Often
- 4) Frequently

46. I know how to give my child the proper spiritual experience at home.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

47. I feel comfortable teaching my child how to talk about their faith and God with other people.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

48. I believe telling others about our faith builds my child in their faith.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

49. I find it difficult to start faith conversations with my child.

[scored in negative]

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

50. I believe my child needs me to be sharing my faith stories with them.

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly Disagree

Post-Project Survey

After “Are The Kids Alright?” Project

The next few questions are to measure how much of the project you participated in.

How many of the sermons on Family Faith Formation were you able to hear?

- 1) One
- 2) Two
- 3) Three
- 4) Four

If you heard only one or two of the sermons, why?

- 1) Work
- 2) Sick
- 3) Vacation / out of town
- 4) Did not feel it applied to me
- 5) Didn't want to attend
- 6) Other.

How many of the teaching sessions on Family Faith Formation were you able to attend?

- 1) One
- 2) Two
- 3) Three
- 4) Four
- 5) Five (includes sessions for men or for women)

If you made only two or less of the teaching sessions, why?

- 1) Work
- 2) Sick
- 3) vacation / out of town
- 4) Did not feel it applied to me
- 5) Didn't want to attend
- 6) Other.

Did you and your family participate in the servant project?

- 1) No
- 2) Yes

Which take-home teaching tool did you use at home? (Check all that apply)

- 1) The Prayer Card
- 2) The Bible Bookmark
- 3) The FaithTalks kit
- 4) The Faith Active in Love magnet / card
- 5) None

Survey Questions Grouped by Category

C-1 Cognitive Response to Role Construct: General Perspective

2. As a parent, I am responsible for involving my child in the church's ministry programs for children and youth.
6. As a parent, I am responsible for ensuring my child attends worship regularly.
12. I believe the church has primarily responsibility for nurturing the spiritual life of my child.
18. I believe the church and home must work together to enhance the spiritual experience at home.
24. As a parent I am responsible for teaching my child the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments.
30. Much of my child's spiritual learning will take place in the home.
36. My child's spiritual learning occurs mostly from watching how our family lives out our faith.
42. As a parent, I have the greatest influence on my child's spiritual life.

C-2 Cognitive Response to Role Construct: Perspective of Competency and Faith Habits

1. I believe my child needs to know God's story in order to shape his or her own life story.
4. I know how to guide my child in prayer.
10. I believe my child needs me to be praying with them.
16. I know how to engage my child in thinking about a Bible story or passage.
22. It is difficult for me to know how to respond to my child's spiritual questions.
28. I believe my child needs me to serve and help others with them.
34. I believe my child needs me to be reading a Bible story or passage with them.
40. I know how to involve my child in sharing their faith through their deeds.

- 46. I know how to give my child the proper spiritual experience at home.
- 48. I believe telling others about our faith builds my child in their faith.
- 50. I believe my child needs me to be sharing my faith stories with them.

A Affective Response to Role Construct

- 3. I feel confident about praying with my child to God.
- 8. I feel able to give my child the proper spiritual experience at home.
- 14. I feel comfortable reading a Bible story or passage with my child.
- 20. I feel comfortable about taking my child with me to go help other people.
- 26. Praying with my child makes me feel restless. [impatient]
- 32. I enjoy having faith conversations with my child
- 38. When reading a Bible story or passage with my child, I feel impatient.
- 44. I feel comfortable getting my child to talk about God and their faith.
- 47. I feel comfortable teaching my child how to talk about their faith and God with other people.
- 49. I find it difficult to start faith conversations with my child.

I wonder if many people did not know the meaning of “restless” because such a high number gave an affirmative answer that they felt “restless” when their child prayed.

B-1 Behavioral Response to Role Construct: Prayer and Bible Reading

- 7. I pray by myself alone.
- 13. I read from the Bible to myself alone.
- 19. Some parents pray for their child, and others do not. I myself pray for my child.
- 25. When praying with my child, I encourage them to pray for others and their concerns.
- 31. I pray with the people in my household.

- 37. I read or study a Bible story or passage with the people in my household.
- 43. When reading a Bible story or passage with my child, I ask them questions about the reading.

B-2 Behavioral Response: Faith Talk and Faith Action

- 9. I encourage my child to find ways to serve other members of the family.
- 15. I invite people to come to worship at my church with me.
- 21. I make meal times an opportunity for my child to talk about how they see God working in their lives.
- 27. Together as a household we help other people.
- 33. I encourage my child to invite their friends to come to worship with us.
- 39. I talk about my faith experience with the other people in my household.
- 45. People in my household invite other people to come to worship with them.

FM Adult Faith Maturity

- 5. I typically attend worship services at my congregation.
- 11. Religious faith is important in my life.
- 17. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.
- 23. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.
- 29. I give significant portions of time and/or money to help other people.
- 35. How important is your religious faith in providing guidance in your own day-to-day living?
- 41. My life is committed to God.

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Standard ground rules

(5 minutes)

- The moderator's role
 - o Maintaining control of the conversation
 - o Keeping the conversation on track
- Recording the conversation
- Speaking clearly and one at a time
 - o "Hold on to that thought"
- No right or wrong answers
- Need for active participation
- Introductions, breaking the ice

1. BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE TO ROLE CONSTRUCT

(30 minutes)

1.1. What worked well? What are some positive experiences that took place in your families during this family faith formation project?

How did it go in carrying out the faith practices?

1.2. Tell me stories about praying with your kids?

1.3. Tell me stories about reading the Bible with your kids?

1.4. Tell me stories about talking about the faith with your kids at dinner or in the car?

1.5. Tell me stories about putting your faith in action with your kids either by inviting someone to church or doing a service project?

1.6. What did you find most helpful of the tools pastor provided?

1.7. How could these tools be made more helpful?

1.8. What were some activities that just did not work well in your family?

1.9. What are some changes we could make to improve this?

2. COGNITIVE RESPONSE TO ROLE CONSTRUCT (10 minutes)

2.1. How did you see yourself as spiritual leader to your children before and what changes have you seen? Can you give me examples of that?

3. AFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO ROLE CONSTRUCT (15 minutes)

Think about before this all began and how you look at things now.

3.1. Before this project began, how competent did you feel being a spiritual leader to your children? What changes have you seen?

3.2. Before this project began, how comfortable did you feel acting as spiritual leader to your children? What changes have you seen?

3.3. What hindered your efforts to taking on the role of being the spiritual leader?

4. CLOSING COMMENTS (15 minutes)

4.1. What were eye openers? What surprises did your family experience?

4.2. Has this project affected you in the living out of your own faith?

4.3. Do you have examples of how these practices affected the way you relate

4.3.1. to each other as a family?

4.3.2. to God?

4.3.3. to the church?

4.4. Do you have anything else about how this project affected your family?

APPENDIX D

“Are the Kids Alright?” Sermons Outlines

Week 1: Blessing Your Family

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Psalm 127

Matthew 19:13-15

- 1) Are The Kids Alright? Psalm 127; Matthew 19:13-15
 - a) 16 yr old murderer: He’s not my kid
 - b) Question: How do we help kids to grow up well?
 - c) Toxic society
 - i) dominant attitude of society toward children is indifference.
 - ii) Children are often treated as a means to an end.
 - iii) Physical sign: 17 percent of children are obese.
 - (1) increases in mental illness and emotional problems; high rates of related behavioral problems
 - d) Lack of faith
 - i) Many are dropping out of church
 - ii) one in four adults, ages 18 to 29, claim no religious affiliation
 - iii) “Fewer church families are producing youth committed to Jesus Christ.”
(Strommen and Hardel)
 - e) Religiously active families equal better functioning kids
 - i) NASCAR: 10 to 30 percent head start, would you take it?
 - ii) Have good relationships with their fathers and mothers
 - iii) Possess more positive attitudes
 - iv) Less likely to be involved in delinquent and self-destructive behavior.
 - f) Psalm 127; Matthew 19
 - i) Children are spiritual. They are a gift from God.
 - ii) They belong to God.
 - iii) How does Jesus look at children?
 - iv) What happens to us if we block them from faith?
- 2) Who Can Transform Your Kids? Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Eph 6:4
 - a) Many parents think it is the church’s job; Sunday School
 - i) Hours of TV, School vs. Church
 - ii) Hours and influence of parents
 - iii) Sunday school program to teach faith to children not biblical
 - iv) Biblical expectation: parents pass on the faith. Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6:4
 - b) Parents feel unsure
 - i) One more burden, feel overwhelmed.
 - ii) A choice to spend our time differently.
 - c) Many Parents feel uncomfortable
 - i) Not well-versed in the faith.
 - ii) Feel incompetent.
 - iii) Don’t know how to do spiritual practices with their kids.

- d) Parents feel unworthy.
 - i) Some guilty about their own spiritual standing.
 - ii) Do you and I deserve the blessings of God? No way in Hell, but Christ is your savior!
 - iii) Because Jesus has claimed you as his own, we teach the Word of Faith
- e) Do not have to be a spiritual teacher
 - i) God will bless His Word
 - ii) Holy Spirit does the teaching
 - iii) We can relax and trust that God will use our humble, muddled efforts.
- f) What is your calling?
 - i) God has a calling for parents and grandparent
 - ii) We make baptismal promises to help raise the children in the faith
 - iii) Your role as pastor
 - iv) Luther said, "Every parent a pastor and bishop."
- g) Why should you do this?
 - i) All authority begins with spiritual authority.
 - ii) Family functions better
 - iii) Deuteronomy 6:4-9
 - (1) Impress upon Your children
 - (2) Talk about the faith-at-home and on the road
 - (3) Occurs in the familiar, every day events where we ask God to be present.
 - (4) Bind the word to hands and forehead.
 - (5) Let the WORD of God guide what they did and what they thought.
 - (6) Write on frames and gates: God's word the foundation of your family.
- 3) How You Can Bless Your Kids: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Matthew 19:13-15
 - a) Tap into God's Promises
 - i) Praying for your kids: providing a spiritual covering over them?
 - ii) Praying with your kids: modeling prayer.
 - iii) Blessing your kids: speak God's future into them.

Week 2: Grounding Your Family

Judges 2:8-13

2 Timothy 3:10-17

Matthew 7:24-29

1) What's Their Story?

- a) Who are we familiar with?
 - i) Children know cartoon characters
 - ii) Do they know biblical characters?
 - iii) What decorates our children's rooms? (Deut. 6)
 - iv) How frequently are children bombarded with commercial images?
 - v) Adults know pop culture and sports figures.
 - vi) Do adults know biblical characters?
- b) Countercultural Living:
 - i) We live in a post-Christian society: a hostile, inhospitable place for discipleship.
 - ii) To truly live as a Christian family is to live fully counter to the culture.
 - iii) Media is filling the unintentional vacuum with the cultural meta-narrative.
 - iv) What is the cultural story? Outward appearance, wealth and individual pleasure.
 - v) Many families are totally immersed in this entrancing and digitally altered story
 - vi) Which culture is defining and developing your children?
 - vii) May be forming monocultural kids
 - viii) Children are so comfortable with the world's culture that a Christian culture is foreign to them.
 - ix) Raising children in the faith is a difficult and demanding.
 - x) Train children to live a bicultural life: in the world, but not of the world. John 15:19
 - xi) While they live in the world they will be defined by the Christian culture.
 - xii) Requires much intentionality
 - (1) Primary culture has to be the culture of their home.
 - (2) Requires frequent exposure to biblical characters and their stories.
 - (3) Requires families to read, study and reflect upon the message of the Bible.

2) Guiding Your Kids

- a) The principle of passing on the faith: Moses mentored Joshua.
 - i) Goes everywhere Moses goes. (Exod. 24:13-18; 32:17)
 - ii) Serves as special aide to Moses. (Exod. 17:8-15; Num. 13:16; Num. 14:6)
 - iii) Enjoys special privileges (Ex 33:7-11; Deut. 3:28)
 - iv) Even is corrected by Moses.(Num. 11:26-29)
 - v) Moses prepares him for leadership. (Num. 13:16; Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 31:1-8; Josh. 1:16-18)
 - vi) Joshua mentored no one. This next generation grew up not knowing the Lord. (Judg. 2:8-13)
- b) The importance of passing on the faith:
 - i) German Lutheran Pietist: earliest spiritual formation of children can only be accomplished in the home.

- ii) Responsibility of parents to teach the faith was abandoned during past fifty years
 - (1) Steady increase of two income and single parent families
 - (2) Development of the Sunday school ends up supplanting the parents.
- iii) Spiritual activity in the home creates healthier family relationships and healthier children.
 - (1) Actively Religious, five to seven times per week exhibit significantly better measurements
 - (2) 15 percent of all families engage in daily spiritual activity
- iv) What are your kids building on?
 - (1) Teenage girls test messaging photos of their body parts
 - (2) Building our households on the rock: Matthew 7:24-29
 - (3) Know they are created by a loving God, self-worth an inborn value as daughters and sons of God
 - (4) Know they are saved by the cross of Jesus
 - (5) Know there are eternal consequences for choices and behaviors
- 3) Grounding in Scripture and Grounding Your family
 - a) 2 Timothy 3:10-17
 - i) Look at my example
 - ii) Recognize the spiritual difficulties
 - iii) Learn the Scriptures
 - b) Teaching children to live into “the Story”:
 - i) Story defines us.
 - (1) God intends for the biblical story to shape children,
 - (2) God intends that children meet God in His Story, and
 - (3) God intends that His story would become our story.
 - ii) Being a guide and mentor in the Word.
 - (1) Dependent upon whether parents live in the biblical story. 2 Timothy 3:10-15
 - (2) Don’t have to be a biblical scholar.
 - c) Faith Habits of Living the Story:
 - i) Integrate God’s story with all of daily life
 - ii) Youth are most likely to imitate their parents practicing regular faith-forming habits
 - iii) Scripture Reading:
 - (1) Being in the word.
 - (2) You simply need to share the story of God.

Week 3: Talking About Real Matters

2 Kings 21: 1-6

1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12

Matt 18:1-6, 10-14

1) Raising Your Kids for What?

- a) Teenager died early in life. Parents grieving loss.
- b) Preparing your kids for this life in this world, what have you prepared them for?
- c) Our society is so consumed with success.
 - i) Corporations don't reward employees who don't sacrifice their families.
 - ii) For you who work at home, do you work more or less?
- d) Manasseh, king of Israel. 2 Kings 21: 1-6
 - i) Fifty-five yr successful governing career.
 - ii) 2 Kings said he did evil in the eyes of the Lord.
 - iii) Manaseh didn't believe in God, he believed in Luck.
 - iv) Sacrificed his own son in fire.
 - v) Hellish bargain claiming that Molech would make them successful.
 - vi) God condemned such heinous acts. (Lev. 18:21; 2 Kings 23:10; Jer. 32:35)
- e) Many parents today are doing the same thing
 - i) The Spirit spoke into my spirit on 2 Kings 23
 - ii) For success and prosperity they are sacrificing their children.
 - iii) Also sacrificing their children's spiritual upbringing.
 - iv) Martin Luther (*Luther's Works* 44: 83)
 - (1) What else is it but to sacrifice one's own child to an idol and burn it when parents train their children more in the love of the world than in the love of God,
 - v) Barna: 85 percent of parents recognize the primary responsibility for teaching spirituality
 - vi) Yet, only 14 percent of families have an active faith life at home.

2) Raising Spiritually Aware Kids *Takes a Parent.*

- a) What I am saying is uncomfortable
- b) Have an opportunity to listen for a word of hope and promise.
- c) Luther: fathers and mothers are pastors and bishops to your kids.
- d) Bringing out their significance
 - i) American society doesn't value children.
 - (1) Children: poverty, Obesity, failing education, health coverage, fatherlessness, sexual activity.
 - (2) In our adult society, despite the hype, children are not significant.
 - ii) Jesus said kids were significant. Matthew 18:1-6, 10-14
 - (1) Who is the greatest? Jesus placed a little child among them.
 - (2) When your child stands before the Lord, what will become of boasting
 - (3) Humility is a child's status because of their powerlessness and vulnerability.
 - (4) Child is the model of faith: *a totally unmerited, unearned gift.*
 - (5) Jesus tells his disciples they must change to be childlike. Significant like them.
 - iii) Whoever welcomes a child, welcomes me.
 - (1) If you hinder kids from the kingdom, you're gonna swim with da fishes.

- (2) When this world passes away, will you make sure they have what lasts forever?
- iv) When Jesus says to such as these children belongs the kingdom,
 - (1) Not the Magic kingdom, the kingdom of far far away, a nursery rhyme
 - (2) This kingdom Jesus ushers in.
 - (a) Promises peace and forgiveness
 - (b) Opposed by the kingdom of this world.
 - (c) Paid for with a price: the blood and suffering of his cross.
- v) Your child's significance.
 - (1) They have been created and redeemed by God.
 - (2) *Imago Dei*, the image of God, bursts within them.
 - (3) Parents act as artists sculpting children helping to restore the image of God in them.
 - (4) Natural imitation of God's *unselfish* love is the love of parents for their children
- vi) Children need to be incorporated into the faith community,
 - (1) To learn how live with other Christians,
 - (2) Benefit from the nurture and discipline of spiritually mature adults
- e) How we deal with our children's significance says a lot about us.
- 3) Talking about Real Matters
 - a) What are we prioritizing for our kids?
 - i) Children are a gift from God *for God*.
 - ii) We are to be faithful with earthly treasures.
 - b) Parents understand their primary task is to raise up Christ disciples. (1 Tim. 3:4-5,12)
 - (1) Called to be a guide. A spiritual leader must lead his family. guide your kids.
 - (2) "See to it that his children obey." Do they follow him?
 - (3) Top factors for children having faith are what the parents say and do.
 - (4) Faith more caught than taught: More important than carrying out spiritual exercises is children seeing parents engaging spiritual practices.
 - (5) Makes faith a priority in the home. (Deut. 6:6-9)
 - ii) Daily events: Put your child's day to day life in the context of God's blessing.
- c) Welcoming children's faith
 - i) Encourage faith discussions; let them express what is within them.
 - ii) Your own faith displayed: Hearing their parent's faith stories is one of the most important influences on the faith of children and teenagers.
 - iii) Talking about REAL matters: If you can talk about faith, you can talk together about anything.

Week 4: Sharing Outward

Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28

Psalm 127

Luke 4:18-20

- 1) Making It Real: Living the faith. Deuteronomy 11:18-28
 - a) Lynne grew up in a Christian home.
 - i) Lynne believes in Jesus, its just that her actions tell another story.
 - ii) Lynne is my sister.
 - b) Children easily recognize hypocrisy
 - c) Lord has called upon parents to live the faith out. (Deut. 11:18-28)
 - i) God's story, God's relationship with them is to make up the core of their being.
 - ii) Not enough that the parents know the Lord. The adults are commanded to teach them to their children.
 - d) Promise:
 - i) Our days will be better. Would any one like their family life to be better?
 - ii) Days of your children living in the blessings of God will be multiplied.
 - e) A curse for breach of contract if parents do not teach the faith.
 - f) Actively religious families function healthier in every aspect by ten to thirty points.
 - g) Lease contract idea. Children are a blessing on loan from God.
 - h) To the children, we become teachers.
 - i) Those who teach will be judged more strictly. (Jas. 3:1)
 - ii) You will be accountable for those we teach.
 - i) Parents are Watchman for their children. (Ezek. 33:1-7)
 - i) John Chrysostom, not enough for parents to be satisfied with their own apparent righteousness, but that they are also responsible for the virtue and righteousness of our children.
 - ii) If civil law holds us responsible for our kids, why should God's law be any less?
 - j) The most effective way you teach the Faith is to live it out. (Deut. 11)
 - i) Faith is more caught than taught.
 - ii) When you make the faith real, you give them a faith that is real.
- 2) It's Not Just about Us. Luke 4:18-20, Matthew 18:20
 - a) When you model living out the faith in a real and authentic way,
 - i) You are modeling living in the promised blessings of God.
 - ii) You are modeling what it means to live in God's future.
 - b) Jesus gave His mission statement. Luke 4:18-20
 - i) Jesus came to usher in God's time, God's future.
 - ii) Through his suffering on the cross and his resurrection, Jesus came to redeem humanity.
 - iii) Jesus came to redeem us from poverty, broken-heartedness, bondage and blindness, and being beat up.
 - iv) Jesus invites everyone to be joined to his body, the Church.
 - (1) We are invited to belong to Jesus.
 - (2) We are called to do Jesus' mission
 - v) The family constitutes the "domestic church"

- (1) “Where 2 or 3 are gathered there I am in the midst of them.” (Matt. 18:20)
- (2) The family is the smallest organic cell of the church.
- (3) In the NT, “house church” were clan or extended family spiritual gatherings.
- (4) We see in Acts where whole households came to faith.
- c) The Christian family is to be engaged in the spiritual disciplines to live out holiness.
 - i) Growth in holiness occurs through Faith lived in the midst of the day to day.
 - ii) Grace is experienced within actual family life with its ups and downs is where.
 - iii) Learning to love the neighbor happens in daily experience of domestic life
- d) Called to be Missional; be outward looking.
 - i) Easy for Christian families to turn inward in a difficult world.
 - ii) The focus of Jesus’ mission statement is Everyone *out in* the world.
 - iii) Each family is a potential agent of transformation in society.
 - iv) As the baptized, Christ’s mission statement is your household mission statement
- e) Change in congregational orientation:
 - i) Our congregation is made up of each “house churches.”
 - ii) The front door of our congregation is the front doors of your homes!
 - iii) The frontline of our ministry is in your homes, with neighbors, with coworkers and fellow students.
- 3) Sharing the Faith James 2:17
 - a) Faith without works is dead. James
 - b) Luther: Faith is to be active in love
 - c) How can we be living our faith active in love?
 - i) With words: The most ethical activity we can engage is to bring people from darkness to light.
 - ii) Witness: It is powerful when we simply tell what God does in our lives.
 - iii) With deeds: Small deeds done with great love make a difference.
 - iv) At home, in the family: Find ways to serve one another in the home.
 - v) In the community: The hospitality is a critical expression of charity and love towards neighbor.

APPENDIX E

Curriculum

Lesson Plans Outlines

Are The Kids Alright?

Teaching Session.01

Duration: Estimated time of instruction 40 minutes.

Goals:

1. To increase parents recognition of their role as spiritual leaders to lead their children in prayer.
2. To motivate parents to take the initiative to pray with their children
3. To teach specific skills and strategies that enable parents to lead prayer with their children.

Objective: The parents and children who attend the prayer session will

1. understand parents are the pastors of the house responsible for teaching the faith.
2. learn that actively religious families have better relationships.
3. to recognize that the Holy Spirit teaches and inspires faith
4. to give them ideas for implementing prayer with their families.

Materials: Prayer Cards

Teaching:

- 1) Opening Scripture reading: Psalm 143:1, 8; Luke 18:1; Colossians 4:2; Jude 1:20
- 2) My own experience of prayer in the home.
- 3) Role of Parents: Cognitive Understanding
 - a) Parents learn to see their role as the primary faith instructor.
 - b) The Lord will bless families whose parents take on their role.
- 4) Luther
 - a) Every father of a family is a bishop in his house and the wife a bishopess.
 - b) Luther was blunt: If you are not diligently concerned that your children and servants learn piety, then it serves you right if your children are disobedient.
 - c) "For when the family fears and trusts God you will be able to deal well with every external situation."
- 5) Homework: Work of the Household:
 - a) "Right thinking and right-living people were in large part the products of disciplined, hard work." (Strohl 144)
 - b) We expect to do homework and to practice
 - c) We expect that relationships require effort.
 - d) When it comes to a friendship with Jesus Christ, we put all the responsibility in his side.
- 6) The Life of Prayer:
 - a) The Christian life of prayer grows out of the new relationship God establishes with believers.

- b) The relational context of Christian life is the context of prayer.
- 7) Prayer and Ritual Devotions:
 - a) “Of all the Spiritual Disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father” (Foster 33).
 - b) Studies show that people who have regular devotional practices of prayer and Bible reading demonstrate a higher faith maturity.
 - c) Prayer, as worship of God, is certainly a key discipline for children.
 - d) Children benefit from involvement in the discipline of prayer and spending time with God.
 - e) Children need to be taught how to express themselves to God.
 - f) Your child needs to see you praying in your own life and in theirs.
- 8) Prayers of ACTS: Kinds of Prayers
 - a) Adoration.
 - b) Confession.
 - c) Thanksgiving.
 - d) Supplication/
- 9) Creating a Spiritual Environment:
 - a) Display symbols of faith in your home at a level children can see
 - b) Frame Bible verses
 - c) Establish a home altar.
 - d) Keep a family prayer list.
 - e) The heart must be ready for prayer
 - f) Keep prayers meaningful.
 - g) Establish critical times of the day for prayer and devotions.
 - h) Creating the Concentration
 - i) Physical Posture of Prayer. Kneel over lying down
 - j) Try out children’s devotional and prayer books.
 - k) Prayer Card: meant to be a tool for beginners
- 10) Meal Prayers
- 11) Morning or Out the Door Prayers:
 - a) Before taking on the stress of a new day, wake your family with a prayer.
 - b) Luther’s morning prayer on the card.
- 12) Bedtime Prayers:
 - a) Make going to bed a time of personal attention and rich conversation.
 - b) Great time to reflect on the day, pray for concerns, and send children to sleep with a blessing.
- 13) Spontaneous and Free Prayers:
 - a) Becoming comfortable with spontaneous prayer and public praying just takes a practice.
 - b) Children are helped and encouraged when they hear and observe parents praying.
- 14) Silence
 - a) Silence is an essential part of the spiritual life.
 - b) Children are also good at silent prayer.
- 15) Blessing Your Kids
 - a) Write words of affirmation on self-adhesive notes
 - b) Voice mail and e-mail messages with words of encouragement.

- c) Incorporate blessings into daily practices
 - d) Make the sign of the cross.
- 16) Teenagers:
- a) This effort will fall flat if parents just try to impose it.
 - b) How this will benefit not just the family, but how the youth will benefit directly.
 - c) Healthy relationships are based on trust.
 - d) Having a common language builds trust.
- 17) Assessment and Evaluation.

*Are The Kids Alright?*Teaching Session.02

Duration: Estimated time of instruction 40 minutes.**Goals:**

1. To increase parents recognition of their role as spiritual leaders to lead their children in reading the Bible.
2. To motivate parents to take the initiative to read the Bible with their children
3. To teach specific skills and strategies that enable parents to lead Bible reading with their children.

Objective: The parents and children who attend the Bible reading session will

1. Understand parents are the pastors of the house responsible for teaching the faith.
2. See the need for the biblical story in children's lives
3. Recognize that the Holy Spirit teaches and inspires faith
4. Learn to initiate Bible reading
5. Give them ideas for implementing Bible reading with their families.
6. Learn why the teenagers and parents should participate in this.

Materials:

- Bible Bookmarks.
- Bible Recommendation sheet

Teaching:

- 1) Opening Scripture: Isaiah 55:10-11; John 20:30-31; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Galatians 6:6
- 2) My own experience of Bible study in the home.
- 3) Spiritual Role of Parents.
 - a) Research shows that positive parental involvement has a direct influence on children that results in fewer behavioral problems.
 - b) A positive indicator of the nature of the family environment is the number of times family members read to children.
 - c) The primary evangelical task of the church is to pass on faith in Christ Jesus.
 - d) Commanded to impress the Word of God upon your children. (Deut. 6)
 - e) Made the baptismal promise you will raise your children in the faith.
 - f) The adult's function is necessary in evangelization, but not to be overvalued.
 - g) The important gift you bring to faith instruction is your own faith.
 - h) What will catch fire with kids is faith lived in their parents.
 - i) Bible reading with your kids will help you know this narrative better.
- 4) Your Child's Need for the Biblical Story
 - a) Storyline is the fundamental way we make meaning for our lives.
 - b) As children are trying to make sense of human relationships, stories aid children in finding patterns that explain the social world.
 - c) Telling faith stories provides children with a linguistic immersion experience and gives them a language to speak about what they experience and perceive.
 - d) Meta-narratives are grand, overarching stories that define whole societies.
 - e) If you do not provide a meta-narrative, the cultural media waiting to fill the void.
- 5) Amount of TV Viewing and the Cultural Meta-narrative.

- a) The U. S. Dept of Ed.: children average three to five hours of TV every day.
- b) During formative years, children spend more time in front of a TV than in classrooms.
- c) What are the cultural characters your children are familiar with?
- 6) Biblical Meta-Narrative
 - a) The Bible has the primary role in the content that we teach children (Krych 7)
 - b) Purpose of reading the Bible is not to get them into the Bible, but to get the Bible story into their lives.
 - c) When we enter into the story of the Bible, God is revealed to us.
 - d) We also find we are called to share in God's purposes and work for his creation.
 - e) Children are capable of working through very complex concepts.
 - f) Even the unpleasant stories in the Bible need to be shared with children.
 - g) Without explaining away, sugar coating, or going abstract, children will listen to the biblical story.
 - h) Telling faith stories provides children with a linguistic immersion experience.
- 7) The Role of Reading in the educational field
 - a) Educational studies have repeatedly shown one of the primary factors in academic success of children is parental involvement.
 - b) This is also true for children's spiritual formation.
 - c) The most effective forms of parent involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the home.
- 8) The Blessings of Bedtime
 - a) Time to draw a close to the end of the day and connect.
 - b) When a child engages the Bible story in an illustrated book while sitting in the lap of a loved one, the feelings surrounding the experience of that story make it possible that the content of the story is more likely to sink in.
- 9) How to Read the Bible to or with your children
 - a) Often people are reductionistic saying that telling the biblical story is only story telling.
 - b) Scripture is an invitation into the larger reality where deep identity is formed and ethical action
 - c) Good stories claim the attention and imagination of the adult doing the reading.
 - d) How we engage the text communicates itself to the children listening.
 - e) Rather than telling children what the story means, we should begin an open ended dialogue with children
 - f) Bible Bookmark: Ask open-ended questions.
- 10) Practical Suggestions for Reading the Bible with your children
 - a) Set aside a time to read an age-appropriate Bible
 - b) Choose age appropriate devotion books
 - c) Set aside special days to reflect upon what God has done for your family.
 - d) Set a location for your Family Bible Study.
- 11) Bible Reading with Teens
 - a) Different approach is required for older children
 - b) Don't think it is too late.
 - c) Bible practices with older kids
- 12) Assessment and Evaluation

Are The Kids Alright?

Teaching Session.03

Duration: Estimated time of instruction 40 minutes.

Goals:

1. To increase parents recognition of their role as spiritual leaders to talk with their children about the faith.
2. To motivate parents to take the initiative to talk about the faith with their children
3. To teach specific skills and strategies that enable parents to lead faith discussions with their children.

Objective: The parents and children who attend the Faith Talks session will

1. understand role of family and parents in developing the faith.
2. see the need for the faith conversations in children's lives
3. learn to initiate faith discussions: teachable moments
4. to give them ideas for implementing Bible reading with their families.

Materials: FaithTalk kits

Teaching:

- 1) Opening Scripture reading: Psalm 145:10-11; 71:24a; 2 Corinthians 4:13; Deuteronomy 6:7
- 2) My own experience of faith discussions in the home.
- 3) Developmental Role of Family
 - a) The family is the first and most basic association of civil society.
 - b) The most permanent and formative relationships are found in healthy families
 - c) The fact that dysfunctional and deforming family connections have such an adverse effect on the development of children demonstrates the normative function of family.
- 4) Role of Parent:
 - a) The vocation of the parent was understood and elevated through Luther's theology of the cross
 - b) Luther: Father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel.
 - c) Parents are ordained as pastors of their children through baptism; are called to exercise a servant leadership role for their children.
 - d) Leadership is influencing other people to accomplish a certain purpose or task.
 - e) Young people admit to being highly influenced by their role models and to be actively seeking more such examples. (Barna, *Transforming Children* 24)
- 5) Getting into a Groove: developing patterns and habits
 - a) Parents have the power to shape children spiritually both positively and negatively.
 - b) Parents are not spending as much effort advancing their children's spiritual development as their physical, social or cognitive development is shallow and ignorant.
 - c) Whether families are intentionally passing on faith or not, children will be absorbing a spiritual perspective through the family

- d) The faith is made irresistible by the people who live it out with authenticity.
 - e) Faith is more caught than taught. We do not use lecture to teach our kids what it means to be a member of our family. Our children catch our values simply by watching and being part of the everyday life of the family.
 - f) If faith-forming habits can be embedded in the daily routines of family life, then the frequency of religious activity will form the informal curriculum.
 - g) *Embedded routines* are regular family rituals; frequent in childhood help form the narrative structure of religious meaning in family life.
 - h) “Once established in a home, [family patterns of religious rituals] are long retained even if church participation declines, and they tend to be passed from one generation to the next” (Moberg 561).
- 6) Faith Conversations
- a) Only one in ten of our *churched* families ever talk about faith outside of church.
 - b) The most powerful factor for developing faith maturity in youth: parental spirituality.
 - c) When it comes to spiritual development, the top four factors for whether children will have faith are (1) what the mother says, (2) what the father says, (3) what the mother does, and (4) what the father does.
 - d) “Hearing their parent’s faith stories” is one of the most important influences on the faith of children and teenagers” (Roehlkepartain; *Teaching Church* 174).
 - e) Deut 6: says parents are supposed to be talking about the faith with their kids from the time they get up to the time we go to bed.
 - f) *Caring conversations* are being available to talk with and especially to listen to one another.
- 7) Spiritual Conversations:
- a) Parents need not fear having religious conversations where they have to be an expert.
 - b) Spiritual dialogue with children is not unidirectional dogma download, but a reciprocity where both parents and children are mutually participating.
 - c) Children typically turn to parents first with questions about spirituality.
 - d) When adults are open to listening to children, it “demonstrates the power of talking with children, rather than just to” or at them (Hood 246).
 - e) Parents also realize through these discussions that they often arrive at deeper understandings of spiritual truths.
 - f) Boyatzis: spiritual conversations were not prompted by religious activities, but with “the natural ebb and flow of family life.”
 - g) Parents can prepare for spiritual conversations by exercising their own curiosity by reading books that explore our faith tradition, engaging in conversations with other adults about the faith questions children raise.
- 8) Meal Times: A Sacred Time still for most children.
- a) Eating together is a government measurement of the quality of a child’s life.
 - b) Still a majority of kids eat with their families.
 - c) More than half of all children under 6 years old ate breakfast with one or both parents seven days a week
 - d) Religiously active families with teenagers are far more likely to eat dinner together than nonreligious families.

9) Practical Suggestions:

- a) What are Your Conversation patterns: When and where do you talk?
- b) How to ask them to categorize their day in terms of theological themes
- c) The Youth and Family Institute's *FaithTalk* Card kit

10) Assessment and Evaluation.

*Are The Kids Alright?*Teaching Session.04

Duration: Estimated time of instruction 30 minutes.

Followed by servant projects on this day or another time.

Goals:

1. To increase parents recognition of their role as spiritual leaders to lead their children in living the faith in their words and deeds.
2. To motivate parents to take the initiative to serve and witness with their children
3. To teach specific skills and strategies that enable parents to serve and witness with their children.

Objective: The parents and children who attend the Faith in Action session will

1. Understand the influence families and parents have in modeling the faith.
2. See the need for the service and witness in children's lives
3. Learn to initiate service and witness in their children's lives.
4. Give them ideas for implementing faith action with their families.

Materials: "Faith in Action" Magnets**Teaching:**

- 1) Opening Scripture reading: Luke 8:21; 1 John 3:18; James 2:18
- 2) My own experience of faith in action in the home.
- 3) The Role of the Family: the place where we learn to serve
 - a) The family is "a centrally important example of what should be an authoritative community" (Commission on Children 40).
 - b) For children and adults, the family is the first and foremost authoritative community.
 - c) Families teach standards of conduct that cannot be enforced by law.
 - d) Committed to love one's neighbor as oneself, authoritative communities are devoted to certain principles about virtuous living.
 - e) God places us in families where we can learn how to serve others.
- 4) Role of Parent:
 - a) Luther taught the Christian is free from sin and slave to none through faith in God, yet servant of all bound by love to serve his neighbor.
 - b) Luther: We are inherently social where everyone is someone's child,
 - c) Every arena of this earthly life is an area of Christian service.
 - d) The home is the foundation of all other societal arenas.
 - e) Parents can contribute to faith by becoming Gospel-oriented parents.
 - f) Our children catch our values simply by watching and being part of the everyday life of the family.
- 5) Domestic Church: Mission field is next door:
 - a) In spite of its imperfections, the family constitutes the basic unit of the church.
 - b) "Where two or three are gathered in Christ's name" (Matt. 18:20).
 - c) The priesthood of all believers, we should be pushing the faith outward into daily life, rather than trying to focus it towards Sunday.

- d) The front door of the congregation may very well be the front doors of your homes (Sharpe 16).
- e) Your families have missional opportunities for their faith all around them, up and down your block.
- 6) Faith Active in Love
 - a) Filled with God's love and loving relationships, we are free to pour ourselves out in service.
 - b) Giving ourselves in acts of compassion, kindness, and service to others has a remarkable effect upon ourselves and others who share those activities, particularly our children,
 - c) Children and youth have indicated that faith inspired service to people in the church and wider community allowed them to develop positive qualities.
- 7) Sharing the Faith in Word And Deed:
 - a) "The most significant and fundamental form of learning is experience."
 - b) Children need ways of becoming history makers; people whose words and actions contribute to a more just and compassionate society.
 - c) Children need to opportunities outside the home to serve in God's world.
 - d) In teaching our children to do little deeds of love and service in the world, we are teaching our children to lay their lives before the Lord in a tangible way.
 - e) If we are going to teach our children about living a life with Jesus, then sharing Jesus by talking with others and serving others will have to be a real part of that dynamic faith.
- 8) In Words:
 - a) Children often are more eager and less self-conscious in speaking the WORD
 - b) Sharing the gospel in word emerges from the same impulse of sharing the Gospel in action.
- 9) In Deeds:
 - a) The beginning life of serving Christ is serving our family in practical ways first.
 - b) As parents and children together learn how to serve one another, they then can begin to do small deeds of service for others.
 - c) Dealing with so many problems of their own, many families have no energy or inspiration to go help other families.
 - d) When it comes to mission and service projects, children get more out of them when they are geared to their age and comprehension.
 - e) Servant acts give hope to the children that the small things they do really do make a difference.
 - f) Servant projects where the whole families participate increases their sense of connection with the church and the other families (Anderson and Hill 157).
- 10) Teenagers:
 - a) Mission projects are popular with teenagers because it speaks to a deep need within them to know that they have a purpose.
 - b) When parents can invest time with teenagers working on mission projects, they will be connecting with their kids at a deep level.
- 11) Practical Suggestions.
- 12) Assessment and Evaluation.

*Are The Kids Alright?*Teaching Session.Dads

Duration: Estimated time of instruction 20 minutes.**Goals:**

1. Increase their awareness of the importance of their role as spiritual leaders in the life of their children.
2. Motivate fathers to attend the preaching and teaching sessions.
3. Encourage the fathers to carry out the faith practices they will be learning over the next four weeks.

Objective: The men who attend the breakfast will

1. Understand that fathers have a great influence upon children retaining the faith.
2. Learn that actively religious teenagers have better relationships with their fathers.
3. Recognize their own unique spiritual skills
4. Learn ideas for working with their wives on family faith formation.

Teaching:

- 1) Opening Scripture reading: Psalm 78:5-8; Proverbs 1:8, 22:6; Isaiah 38:19
- 2) If you don't lead them in the faith, who do you think will? Won't happen by osmosis.
 - a) In natural world, fatherlessness is devastating.
 - b) In the spiritual world, fatherlessness is also devastating.
- 3) Children follow Father more than Mother
 - a) Father's influence upon their children's spirituality is substantial.
- 4) Religiously active teenagers have a better relationship with their fathers.
 - a) Enjoy being with their Father.
 - b) Admire Father
 - c) Want to be like Father
- 5) Sons need a Leader, not a program
 - a) Anyone can be a biological father, a spiritual father is a living example, someone to follow.
 - b) Spiritual father does not require perfection, but participation and patterning.
 - c) Boys imitate their dads.
 - d) The data shows committed Christian men who take on the role of being the spiritual leader, the spiritual example, have a positive impact on their families.
- 6) Practical Suggestions: Why Domestic Church is right for you.
 - a) It is about doing faith every day.
 - b) How to pray simple prayers?
 - c) Why reading to your kids will be one of the coolest things you can do?
 - d) Liturgical wrestling; part of the bedtime ritual
 - e) Talking about the faith; being real, not holier than thou
 - f) Doing Faith: your area of expertise is putting faith in action. Do something.
- 7) Working with your wives for spiritual leadership in the home.
- 8) Involving Teenagers.
 - a) It is not too late to start. Your effort can still make an impact.
 - b) Be encouraged to simply apologize and ask for their help.

*Are The Kids Alright?*Teaching Session.Moms

Duration: Estimated time of instruction 30 minutes.**Goals:**

1. Increase their awareness of the importance of their role as spiritual leaders in the life of their children.
2. Motivate mothers to attend the preaching and teaching sessions.
3. Encourage the mothers to carry out the faith practices they will be learning over the next four weeks.

Objective: The women who attend

1. Understand that mothers have a great influence upon children retaining the faith.
2. Recognize their own unique spiritual skills
3. Learn ideas for working with their husbands on family faith formation.
4. Learn a strategy for approaching their teenagers to participate in this.

Teaching:

- 1) Opening Scripture reading: Psalm 78:5-8: Proverbs 22:6: Isaiah 38:19
- 2) If you don't lead them in the faith, who do you think will? Won't happen by osmosis.
- 3) Affirm role of women as teachers of the Faith from biblical perspective
- 4) Role of Mothers:
 - a) Women are the domestic engineers. You set the tone in your home.
 - b) Women are more predisposed towards spirituality.
 - c) Often it is mothers who lead the family to a church.
 - d) Mothers speak more often with their children than fathers.
 - e) Educational research found mothers were more likely than fathers to be involved in their children's schooling.
- 5) Role of Fathers:
 - a) A church that is not evenly men and women is unhealthy.
 - b) Many men are uncomfortable talking about their emotions, interior life or faith.
 - c) One of the key elements of male mentality is competency.
 - d) Don't think you can just avoid having the men in your home being spiritual leaders.
 - e) Children are more likely to retain the faith if their father engages them in faith.
 - f) Critically important for men to be the spiritual leaders to their boys and girls.
 - g) In natural world, fatherlessness is devastating.
 - h) Saying this blunt truth so we can be in solidarity with those single moms and dads.
 - i) Spiritual Mother: cannot be born without a mother.
 - j) In the spiritual world, fatherlessness is also devastating.
 - k) Religiously active men are more engaged as husbands and fathers and that their religious expression has a positive effect on their parenting. (Wilcox)
 - l) Father's influence upon their children's spirituality is substantial.
- 6) Working with your Husbands for spiritual leadership in the home.
 - a) One of the places men excel is the spiritual gift of doing things, activity.

- b) Let your husbands lead. Help them lead.
 - c) Help create the setting and environment to let him do his thing in his own way.
 - d) Don't correct your husband during devotions
 - e) The more your husband takes on this role, the easier it will be for you.
- 7) Practical Suggestions: Why Domestic Church is right for you.
- a) It is about doing faith every day.
 - b) How to pray simple prayers?
 - c) Why reading to your kids will be one of the coolest things you can do?
 - d) Mealtime with family: More likely to eat with Mom
 - e) Talking about the faith is about being real, not holier than thou
- 8) Involving Teenagers.
- a) It is not too late to start. Your effort can still make an impact.
 - b) Be encouraged to simply apologize and ask for their help.
 - c) Negotiate with your teens.

Learning Tools

Blessing Card

Biblical Blessings On Your Kids

Goodnight, you Royal Priests
of The Most High God!
You sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty
(cf. Revelation 1:5)

May the God of peace be with you. (Philippians 4:9)

May Christ dwell in your hearts. (Ephesians 3:17)

“Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him,
and he will act. (Psalm 37:5)

May the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation
so that you may know him better. (Ephesians 1:17)

For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice,
but rather a spirit of power and of love
and of self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7)

In the name of the Father, and of ✠ the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Biblical Blessings On Your Kids

May the LORD bless you and keep you.
May the LORD make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you.
May the LORD look upon you with favor,
and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)

Now may God, the source of hope,
fill you up with all joy and peace as you believe,
so that you may overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

May you live a life worthy of the Lord,
and may you please him in every way;
bearing fruit in every good work,
growing in the knowledge of God,
being strengthened with all power
according to his glorious might
so that you may have great endurance and patience
and joyfully give thanks to the Father.
(Colossians 1:10-12)

Prayer Card

GRACE AT MEALS

How Parents Can Teach Their Family To Offer
Blessing And Thanksgiving At Meals

BLESSING BEFORE EATING

When your family gathers at the table, they
should respectfully fold their hands and say:

"The eyes of all look to you, Oh LORD
and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing."
(Psalms 145:15-16)

(Teach your family that "satisfying the desire of every
living thing" means that all creatures receive enough
to eat to make them joyful and of good cheer. Greed
and anxiety about food and other needs prevent such
satisfaction.)

Then say this prayer:

"Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us,
and bless these gifts of Your abundant
goodness You have given us. We pray this
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

or

"God is great and God is good,
And we thank Him for our food.
By His hand we all are fed.
Give us LORD our daily bread."

THANKSGIVING AFTER EATING

After eating, likewise, they should fold their
hands reverently and say:

"The LORD gives to the beasts their food,
and to the young ravens which cry.
His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the legs of a man;
but the LORD takes pleasure

in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love."
(Psalms 147:9-11)

You could also decide to recite a bible verse your
family wants to memorize for a week

Then this prayer should be said:

"We give You thanks, Lord God,
our Father, for all your blessings,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns forever. Amen."

Recommended use:

- Place on family table.
- Through repeated use this will become familiar.
- Use this to teach your family to pray and make
your mealtime together meaningful.

What was a blessing from God today?

LIVING

A LIFE OF

PRAYER

Practicing Principles to Shape
a Passionate Faith



Sundays at 10:07 am
at Trinity Springs Middle School
(817) 491-3590
www.WhereNewLifeBegins.org

Bible Recommendations from Church of the Resurrection

For very young children to hear and early readers

Read and Share Bible

By: Gwen Ellis

Tommy Nelson / 2007 / Hardcover

CBD: \$9.99

Pros: Easy to understand. Good illustrations.

Cons: Too much Old Testament

MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS

How Parents Can Teach Their Family To Say Morning and Evening Prayers

MORNING PRAYERS

In the morning, when you rise, make the sign of the cross and say, "In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Then, kneeling or standing, say the Lord's Prayer. Then you may say this prayer:

"We give You thanks, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that through the night you have protected us from all danger and harm."

We ask You LORD to preserve and keep us this day too, from all sin and evil, that in all our thoughts, words, and deeds we may serve and please You.

Into your hands we commend our bodies and souls and all that is ours. Let Your holy Spirit have charge of us, that the wicked one may have no power over us. Amen."

After singing a praise song or whatever your devotion may suggest, you should go to your day's task joyfully.

Recommended use:

- Could use at the breakfast table.
- May even use in car on way to work or school.
- Through repeated use this will become familiar.

What is a concern you have for today?

EVENING PRAYERS

In the evening, when you retire, make the sign of the cross and say, "In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Then, kneeling or standing, say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Then you may say this prayer:

"We give You thanks, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have graciously protected us this day."

We beg You to forgive us all our sin and the wrong which we have done. By your great mercy, protect us from all the perils and dangers of this night.

Into Your hands we commend our bodies and souls and all that is ours. Let Your Holy Spirit have charge of us, that the wicked one may have no power over us. Amen."

Then lie down and sleep in peace.

Recommended use:

- Keep this near the bed.
- Use it to teach your family to pray and make your going to bed routine meaningful.
- Through repeated use this will become familiar.
- We also recommend reading a Bible story to your children.

Is there any one you want God to bless?

What do you want thank God for?

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord. He was conceived by power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day He rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

- catholic means universal.
- Making the Sign of the Cross is an excellent reminder of who we are: baptized children of God who have been redeemed by Christ the crucified.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Day By Day Kids Bible

By: Karyn Henley

Tyndale Kids / 2002 / Hardcover

CBD Price:

\$16.99

Pros: Covers much of the Bible. Readings for every day. Full-color pictorial time line. .**Cons:** Few illustrationsFor reading to children and confident readers***The Children's Bible in 365 Stories***

By Mary Batchelor

David C. Cook / 1998 / Hardcover

CBD: \$16.99

Pros: Covers much of the Bible. Quick reads. Many good illustrations.**Cons:** Sometimes too much explanation.***The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name***

By: Sally Lloyd-Jones

Zonderkidz / 2006 / Hardcover

CBD: \$12.99

Pros: Great telling of passages. Vibrant graphics. Shows Jesus as the focus of the Bible.**Cons:** Extensive explanation of the passages. Limited number of stories.***Egermeier's Bible Story Book***

By Elsie Egermeier, illus. Clive Uppton Warner Press / 1969 / Hardcover

CBD: \$15.99

Pros: A classic still enjoyed by many. 312 stories.**Cons:** Older illustrationsFor young readers (2nd grade and up)**New International Readers Version (NIRV):** Based on the New International Version.

Understandable to early readers and can be read by a typical 4th grader. Actually is a translation of the original texts and not a paraphrase.

NIRV - The Adventure Bible for Young Reader Zondervan / 2000 / Hardcover. CBD: \$14.99**Pros:** The text, colors, and format are visibly appealing.**God's Word Translation:** Readable, but a less literal translation of the original biblical text.

Seeks to read like contemporary American literature

God's Word for Girls

Baker / 2003 / Hardcover

CBD: \$15.99

Pros: Specially designed for the unique needs and interests of girls aged 8-12.***God's Word for Boys***

Baker / 2003 / Hardcover

CBD: \$15.99

Pros: Specially designed for the unique needs and interests of boys aged 8-12.* CBD is Christian Book Distributors: www.christianbook.comCriticism of Most Children's Bibles

Most children's Bibles suffer from one or more of the deficiencies named below.

1. Not multicultural.

The illustrations are mono-cultural, mono-racial. They do not represent the cultural context of the Bible or our mission to reach people from every tribe, tongue and nation.

2. Not enough of the Bible is covered.

The most common problem is the limited number of stories. It is understandable since many children's Bibles include illustrations and large print. Probably the best is the classic *The Children's Bible in 365 Stories* by Mary Batchelor. I think, however, there could easily be a 465 story collection.

3. Too Much Old Testament.

Because so much of the Old Testament is in narrative form it lends itself to fill up children's Bibles. Since it is the foundation of the New Testament there is a need to tell all that story. But half of one children's Bible was just Genesis and Exodus. Even with the predominance of the Old Testament, there is a lack of stories drawn from the prophets.

4. Not Enough New Testament

While the stories of Jesus are easily told to children, the story of Acts is often not told fully. There is always a lack or no narratives drawn from the epistles. What is especially missing are stories drawn from the Book of Revelation. Why editors don't think children cannot handle this material is counter to our experience with children and their vivid imaginations. Moreover, children need to hear how God's story ends. We win.

5. Too Much Exegesis—Explanation.

The very nature of the brevity or conciseness of the biblical text should lend itself towards simpler translations that initial readers can manage. The brevity of the biblical text is encumbered with explanations and worse, childish ideations. Of course, when there is too much explanation they often are telling the child how to interpret the text, and therefore speak from a specific theological perspective. With too much explanation, the implication is that these Children Bibles do not trust the Biblical story to speak for itself. Too much explanation also says these Bibles don't trust the Holy Spirit and the parents to teach. Considering the oral tradition which taught these faith stories to the young and old, I believe children's Bibles should strive for a minimum of explanation.

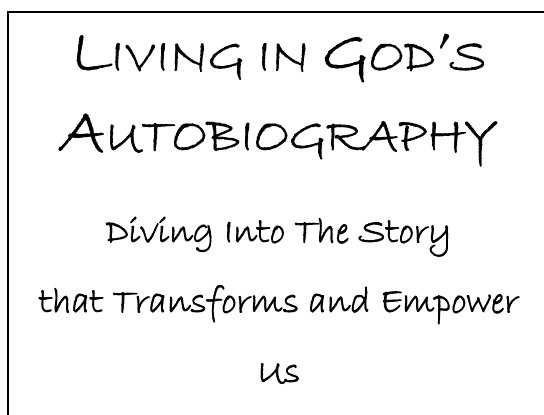
One Bible that does explain too much, but is a delight to read, is *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones. Its selection of Scripture passages guides readers to see Jesus as the culmination of Scripture.

6. Readable for Children

Finding a Bible young readers feel confident reading is important for them to absorb the biblical story on their own. Finding the right Bible for your young reader may mean a few strike outs. It is important and parents' promised responsibility to find a Bible their children can read.

Perhaps there is a struggle between knowing a story and understanding a story. While understanding God is a nice bonus, complete understanding is unachievable. As God's word is an extension of God, we cannot understand the Infinite One. But we can know God. While there is much of the Bible we can and need to understand, more critical is knowing the story. Knowing God loves us and that we belong to God.

Bible Bookmark



God's Call to Parents to be Spiritual Guides

"You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise."
Deuteronomy 11:18-19

When you read to children under 7 yrs old, remember how you read the story invites them into the story.

When reading to children who can read, we encourage you to take turns reading, or even read together.

With older children, especially teenagers, we realize it can be scary to do spiritual exploration with them. But you can still walk with them in this journey.

BIBLE BOOKMARK

Keep this with your Bible
so you can let the Holy Spirit teach your child
to enjoy God's story.

Starter Question:
What was a blessing from God today?

QUESTIONS TO KINDLE FAITH

What is God doing in this passage?

What are God's people doing?

How did you feel about the main character?

Have you ever done anything like that?

What would you say to God?

What does this story tell us about God's plan
for his people / creation?

How do you fit in this story?

How does God fit into your life – like in the story?

So, what does this mean for us? (Luther)

Directives for using the questions

- Trust that the Holy Spirit is present to teach y'all. Let the Holy Spirit teach.
- Trust your child has a great capacity to enter into these stories.
- Not all questions will apply to every story.
- Ask at least 2 or 3 of the questions. Mix it up.
- The questions are meant to stimulate wonder and imagination about God, not extract only correct answers
- It is okay for y'all to be silent and ponder.
- It is okay not to be able to explain everything.

Faith Talk Kits

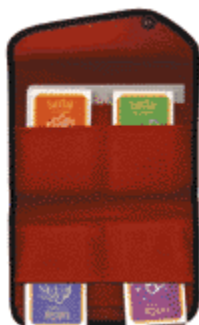
Faith Talk Kits Are published by the Youth and Family Institute

The Faith Talks Kit is designed for families to talk about faith when they are home and when they are away from home, and in their ups and downs. The kits are designed either for young children or older children.



FaithTalk® Cards by Merton P. Strommen, Ph.D., and Charles Bruning, Ph.D.

The set designed for families with children 12 and older has 192 sharing cards comes in a canvas carrying case. From four areas—Memories, Values, Etchings, and Actions—people will share stories of God’s faithfulness.



FaithTalk® Cards with Children, By Dick Hardel and Deb Stehlin, The Youth and Family Institute

The kit designed for parents and other adults and children between the ages of 3 and 11 has a set of 128 cards. The faith sharing cards focus on four areas: Memories, Actions, Growing Together, and Wonder.

Faith in Action Magnets

For Ages 3 to 5 Years Old

OUR FAITH ACTIVE IN LOVE

Children Can Serve In Many
Ways At Home With Their
Families.



3 TO 5 YRS OLD

Teaching Kids How To Serve.

- Trust that the Holy Spirit teaches us through acts of faith and love
- Trust your child is eager to serve Christ by serving others
- Remember the faith is more caught than taught.
- Your actions speak louder than your words.
- Kids learn better by doing, esp. boys
- Kids will learn if you help guide them through it
- Part of the learning is that you do it with them, especially at first.
- Recognize this is a daily process.
- Strive to do at least once per week

FOR ALL CHILDREN:

- Have a designated service time in your family when everyone pitches in and shares the load of chores.
- Create shared family experiences.
It's easier for children to clean their rooms when everyone works together.
- Give children a voice in how to do chores and service projects.
- Break large tasks (such as cleaning a bedroom) into smaller tasks, such as picking up the floor, putting clothes in the laundry chute or basket, making the bed, and so on.
- Make service and helping times fun.
- Volunteer together as a family to do a service project.

IDEAS FOR 3- TO 5-YEAR-OLDS:

- Put a napkin at each place setting.
- Stir the cookie dough batter.
- Pick one to three favorite toys to put away when a friend comes to play and share the rest of the toys.
- Help choose a gift for a family member.
- Save energy by turning off lights and the television.
- Put bathtub toys in a bucket after the bath.
- Pick up sticks in the yard.
- Wipe up spills on the floor.
- Get diapers for a younger sibling.
- Tear lettuce or bread chicken cutlets.
- Carry plates and silverware to the sink after a meal.

IDEAS FOR SERVING OTHERS

– Service projects:

- Volunteer together as a family to do a service project.
- Drop off canned goods for a food drive.
- Bake cookies for a sick family member, friend, or neighbor.
- Make cards to send to sick or lonely people.
- Earnestly pray for specific individuals.
- Take in garbage cans for a neighbor
- Do lawn work for an elderly or sick person
- Visit someone who is sick or shut-in.
- Visit people in the nursing home.
- Help serve meals at a soup kitchen together

For Ages 6 to 9 Years Old

OUR FAITH ACTIVE IN LOVE

Children Can Serve In Many
Ways At Home With Their
Families.



6 TO 9 YRS OLD

Teaching Kids How To Serve.

- Trust that the Holy Spirit teaches us through acts of faith and love
- Trust your child is eager to serve Christ by serving others
- Remember the faith is more caught than taught.
- Your actions speak louder than your words.
- Kids learn better by doing, esp. boys
- Kids will learn if you help guide them through it
- Part of the learning is that you do it with them, especially at first.
- Recognize this is a daily process.
- Strive to do at least once per week

IDEAS FOR 6- TO 9-YEAR-OLDS:

- Pick up toys and put them away after using them.
- Put dirty laundry in laundry basket or clothes chute.
- Wipe dishes after someone older washes them.
- Vacuum.
- Help fold laundry and put them away.
- Dust furniture.
- Straighten up the bed.
- Take out trash.
- Empty the dishwasher.
- Mix juice, lemonade, or Kool-Aid.
- Check items off a shopping list during family shopping trip.
- Plant seeds in a garden.
- Make and send birthday cards

FOR ALL CHILDREN:

- Have a designated service time in your family when everyone pitches in and shares the load of chores.
- Create shared family experiences.
It's easier for children to clean their rooms when everyone works together.
- Give children a voice in how to do chores and service projects.
- Break large tasks (such as cleaning a bedroom) into smaller tasks, such as picking up the floor, putting clothes in the laundry chute or basket, making the bed, and so on.
- Make service and helping times fun.
- Volunteer together as a family to do a service project.

IDEAS FOR SERVING OTHERS

- Service projects:
- Volunteer together as a family to do a service project.
 - Drop off canned goods for a food drive.
 - Bake cookies for a sick family member, friend, or neighbor.
 - Make cards to send to sick or lonely people.
 - Earnestly pray for specific individuals.
 - Take in garbage cans for a neighbor
 - Do lawn work for an elderly or sick person
 - Visit someone who is sick or shut-in.
 - Visit people in the nursing home.
 - Help serve meals at a soup kitchen together

Some ideas taken from - Jolene Roehlkepartain. *Teaching Kids to Care and Share*. Abingdon Press, 2000,

For Ages 10 to 12 Years Old

OUR FAITH ACTIVE IN LOVE

Children Can Serve In Many
Ways At Home With Their
Families.



10 TO 12 YRS OLD

Teaching Kids How To Serve.

- Trust that the Holy Spirit teaches us through acts of faith and love
- Trust your child is eager to serve Christ by serving others
- Remember the faith is more caught than taught.
- Your actions speak louder than your words.
- Kids learn better by doing, esp. boys
- Kids will learn if you help guide them through it
- Part of the learning is that you do it with them, especially at first.
- Recognize this is a daily process.
- Strive to do at least once per week

FOR ALL CHILDREN:

- Have a designated service time in your family when everyone pitches in and shares the load of chores.
- Create shared family experiences.
It's easier for children to clean their rooms when everyone works together.
- Give children a voice in how to do chores and service projects.
- Break large tasks (such as cleaning a bedroom) into smaller tasks, such as picking up the floor, putting clothes in the laundry chute or basket, making the bed, and so on.
- Make service and helping times fun.
- Volunteer together as a family to do a service project.

IDEAS FOR 10- TO 12-YEAR-OLDS:

- Collect used clothing to give away.
- Write a letter to a grandparent or other family member.
- Set the table.
- Make one's own bag lunch for school.
- Straighten up the bed.
- Take out trash.
- Help fold laundry and put them away.
- Put dishes into the dishwasher.
- Clean the bedroom.
- Rake the leaves.
- Unpack groceries.
- Set food on the table.
- Change bed linens.
- Clip coupons out of the newspaper for items the family frequently buys.

IDEAS FOR SERVING OTHERS

– Service projects:

- Volunteer together as a family to do a service project.
- Drop off canned goods for a food drive.
- Bake cookies for a sick family member, friend, or neighbor.
- Make cards to send to sick or lonely people.
- Earnestly pray for specific individuals.
- Take in garbage cans for a neighbor
- Do lawn work for an elderly or sick person
- Visit someone who is sick or shut-in.
- Visit people in the nursing home.
- Help serve meals at a soup kitchen together

For Ages 13 to 18 Years Old

OUR FAITH ACTIVE IN LOVE

Children Can Serve
In Many Ways
At Home With Their Families.



13 TO 18 YRS OLD

Teaching Kids How To Serve.

- Trust that the Holy Spirit teaches us through acts of faith and love
- Trust your child is eager to serve Christ by serving others
- Remember the faith is more caught than taught.
- Your actions speak louder than your words.
- Kids learn better by doing, esp. boys
- Kids will learn if you help guide them through it
- Part of the learning is that you do it with them, especially at first.
- Recognize this is a daily process.
- Strive to do at least once per week

FOR ALL CHILDREN:

- Have a designated service time in your family when everyone pitches in and shares the load of chores.
- Create shared family experiences.
It's easier for children to clean their rooms when everyone works together.
- Give children a voice in how to do chores and service projects.
- Break large tasks (such as cleaning a bedroom) into smaller tasks, such as picking up the floor, putting clothes in the laundry chute or basket, making the bed, and so on.
- Make service and helping times fun.
- Volunteer together as a family to do a service project.

IDEAS FOR 13- TO 18-YEAR-OLDS:

- Babysit for free for a family in need.
- Go door to door in teams to invite people to church.
- Mow the lawn.
- Make dinner.
- Do your own laundry
- Clean and dust a room
- See a need, do something about it without being asked.
- Always check in with your parents.
- Post a positive message about someone on myspace
- Send a text message to your siblings or parents.
- Lead the prayer or bible devotion for your family.
- Go on a mission trip.

IDEAS FOR SERVING OTHERS

– Service projects:

- Volunteer together as a family to do a service project.
- Drop off canned goods for a food drive.
- Bake cookies for a sick family member, friend, or neighbor.
- Make cards to send to sick or lonely people.
- Earnestly pray for specific individuals.
- Take in garbage cans for a neighbor
- Do lawn work for an elderly or sick person
- Visit someone who is sick or shut-in.
- Visit people in the nursing home.
- Help serve meals at a soup kitchen together

Some ideas taken from - Jolene Roehlkepartain. *Teaching Kids to Care and Share*. Abingdon Press, 2000,

WORKS CITED

- “Americans Agree: Kids Are Not Being Prepared for Life.” *Barna Group*. 26 Oct. 2004. 25 May 2008 <<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=173>>.
- Andersen, William, David Cohen, Peter Morpew, Lynette Scott, and Wendy Strachan. “Theology of Childhood: A Theological Resource Framed to Guide the Practice of Evangelizing and Nurturing Children: A Summary.” *Journal of Christian Education* 47.1 (2004): 5-16.
- Anderson, David W., and Paul Hill. *Frogs without Legs Can’t Hear: Nurturing Discipleship in Home and Congregation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003.
- Atkinson, Joseph C. “Family as Domestic Church: Developmental Trajectory, Legitimacy, and Problems of Appropriation.” *Theological Studies* 66.3 (2005): 592-604.
- “Augsburg Confession.” Tappert 23-96.
- Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. London: Penguin, 1961.
- Barna, George. *Revolutionary Parenting: What the Research Shows Really Works*. Carol Stream, IL: BarnaBooks, 2007.
- . *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003.
- Bartholomew, Craig G., and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.
- Barton, Stephen C. “Living as Families in the Light of the New Testament.” *Interpretation* 52.2 (1998): 130-43.

- Batchelder, David. *All through the Day, All through the Year: Family Prayers and Celebrations*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000.
- Beckwith, Ivy. *Postmodern Children's Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Benson, Peter L., Michael J. Donahue, and Joseph A. Erickson. "The Faith Maturity Scale: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Empirical Validation." *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 5 (1993): 1-26.
- Benson, Peter L., and Carolyn H. Eklin. *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations—A Summary Report on Faith, Loyalty, and Congregational Life*. Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990.
- Berryman, Jerome. *Godly Play: A Way of Religious Education*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1991.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics*. New York: Macmillan, 1955.
- Bourg, Florence Caffrey. *Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Christian Families as Domestic Churches*. Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame, 2004.
- Boyatzis, Chris J. "The Co-Construction of Spiritual Meaning in Parent-Child Communication." Ratcliff 182-200.
- Boyatzis, Chris J., David C. Dollahite, Loren D. Marks. "The Family as a Context for Religious and Spiritual Development in Children and Youth." *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*. Ed. Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Pamela Ebsteyne King, Linda Wagner, and Peter Benson. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006. 297-309.
- Bozeman, Jean. "Keeping the Faith." *Lutheran Partners* 13.4 (1997): 15-17.

Brueggeman, Walter. "The Covenanted Family: A Zone for Humanness." *Journal of Current Social Issues* 14.5 (1977): 18-23.

Bunge, Marcia J., ed. *The Child in Christian Thought*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

---. "Education and the Child in Eighteenth-Century German Pietism: Perspectives from the Work of A. H. Francke." Bunge, *Child in Christian Thought* 247-78.

Bushnell, Horace. *Christian Nurture*. New York: C. Scribner, 1863. Rpt. New Haven, CT: Yale, 1953.

Cahill, Lisa Sowle. "Families Offer Way to Transform Society." *National Catholic Reporter* 8 Mar. 1996: 10-12.

Catsambis, Sophia. *Expanding the Knowledge of Parental Involvement in Secondary Education: Effects on High School Academic Success*. Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk. Baltimore: John Hopkins U and Howard U, 1998.

Cavalletti, Sofia. *The Religious Potential of the Child*. New York: Paulist, 1983.

"Childhood Overweight and Obesity Prevention Initiative Fact Sheet." *Office of the Surgeon General, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services*. 29 Mar. 2008 <<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/obesityprevention/factsheet/>>.

Christiansen, Duane L. *Deuteronomy*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001.

Chrysostom, John. "Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children." *Christianity and Pagan Culture in the Later Roman Empire*. Trans. M. L. W. Laistner. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1967. 77-122.

- . *A Comparison between a King and a Monk; Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life: Two Treatises*. Ed. David G. Hunter. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1988.
- . *On Marriage and Family*. Trans. Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson. Crestwood, NY: St. Valdimir's Seminary, 1986.
- Clapp, Rodney. *A Peculiar People*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.
- Commission on Children at Risk. *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*. New York: Institute for American Values, 2003.
- Cotton, Kathleen, and Karen Reed Wikelund. *Parent Involvement in Education*. School Improvement Research Series. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1989.
- Dearman, J. Andrew. "The Family in the Old Testament." *Interpretation* 52.2 (1998): 117-29.
- Deere, Jack S. "Deuteronomy." *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*. Ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985. 259-324.
- Demographic ZIP Code Report*. 2008. Research and Evaluation. *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. 29 June 2008 <<http://archive.elca.org/ScriptLib/RE/ZipNet/ZipResults.asp>>.
- DeVries, Dawn. "Be Converted and Become as Little Children." Bunge, *Child in Christian Thought* 329-49.
- Dye, Jane Lawler, and Tallese D. Johnson *A Child's Day: 2003 (Selected Indicators of Child Well-Being)*. Washington, DC: U. S. Census Bureau, 2007.
- Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations*. Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990.

Epstein, Joyce L. *School and Family Partnerships*. Report No. 6. Washington, DC: Dept. of Health and Human Services, 1992.

Family Involvement in Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches. Abr. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 2001.

Ford, Victoria, and Esther Wong. "Narrative and the Moral Education of the Christian Child." Ratcliff 309-23.

"The Formula of Concord." Tappert 463-636.

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. San Francisco: Harper, 1978.

Frambach, Nathan. Keynote Addresses. ELCA Northern Texas Northern Louisiana Synod Assembly. Longview, TX. 25-26 Apr. 2008.

---. "The Ministry of Children in Congregations." Krych, *Ministry of Children's Education* 243-64.

Grolnick, Wendy S., Corina Benjet, Carolyn O. Kurowski, and Nicholas H. Apostoleris. "Predictors of Parent Involvement in Children's Schooling." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 89.3 (1997): 538-48.

Gundry-Volf, Judith M. "The Least and the Greatest: Children in the New Testament." Bunge, *Child in Christian Thought* 29-60.

Gurian, Michael. *The Wonder of Boys*. New York: Tarcher-Putnum, 1997.

Guroian, Vigen. "The Ecclesial Family: John Chrysostom on Parenthood." Bunge, *Child in Christian Thought* 61-77.

- Hardel, Dick, and Deb Stehlin. *FaithTalk with Children*. Minneapolis: Youth and Family Institute, 1998.
- Hauerwas, Stanley, and William H. Willimon. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.
- Haug, Werner, and Phillipe Warner. "The Demographic Characteristics of Linguistic and Religious Groups in Switzerland." Ed. W. Haug, P. Compton, and Y. Courbage. *The Demographic Characteristics of National Minorities in Certain European States*. Population Studies 2.31. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2000. 115-67.
- Holmen, Mark A. *Building Faith at Home*. Ventura, CA, Regal, 2007.
- . *Faith Begins at Home*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2006.
- . "Home as First Church." *Lutheran Partners* 13.4 (1997): 18-21.
- . Telephone interview. 26 Nov. 2008.
- Holt, Debra J., Pauline M. Ippolito, Debra M. Desrochers, and Christopher R. Kelley. *Children's Exposure to TV Advertising in 1977 and 2004*. Federal Trade Commission, Staff Report. 1 June 2007.
- Hood, Dona Kennamer. "Six Children Seeking God: Exploring Childhood Spiritual Development in Context." Ratcliff 233-48.
- Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen V., and Howard M. Sandler. "Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education?" *Review of Educational Research* 67 (1997): 3-42.
- Hughes, Mary E. "Family Ministry." Krych, *Ministry of Children's Education* 102-25.
- Hunter, George G., III. *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.

John Paul II. *Familiaris Consortio: On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern*

World. Vatican. 22 Nov. Nos.1-86. 1981. 28 Apr. 2009 <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/ht_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html>.

Joiner, Reggie. "Explore: The Big Picture of Family Ministry." Willowcreek Promiseland Conference 2005. Barrington, IL. 9-11 Mar. 2005.

Kelly, Gerard. *Retrofuture: Rediscovering Our Roots, Recharting Our Routes*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998.

Kreider, Rose M., and Jason Fields. *Living Arrangements of Children: 2001*. Washington, DC: U. S. Census Bureau, 2005.

Krych, Margaret A., ed. *The Ministry of Children's Education: Foundations, Contexts, and Practices*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2004.

---. "Theology of Christian Education for Children." Krych, *Ministry of Children's Education* 2-28.

Luther, Martin. "The Large Catechism." Tappert 357-461.

---. *Luther's Works*. Ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-1966. 55 vols.

---. "The Smalcald Articles." Tappert 287-318.

---. "The Small Catechism." Tappert 337-56.

Mann, Thomas W. *Deuteronomy*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox, 1995.

Marriage Promotion in Low-Income Families Fact Sheet. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations, 2003.

- Martinson, Roland. "The Role of Family in the Faith and Value Formation of Children." *Word and World* 17.4 (1997): 396-404.
- May, Scottie, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse, and Linda Cannell. *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Melheim, Rich. "Sunday School Is Flawed." *Lutheran Partners* 13.4 (1997): 22-23.
- Moberg, David O. "Religious Practices." *Research on Religious Development: A Comprehensive Handbook*. Ed. Merton P. Strommen. New York: Hawthorn, 1971. 551-98.
- Murrow, David. *Why Men Hate Going to Church*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Parent Involvement in Education: A Resource for Parents, Educators, and Communities*. Des Moines: Iowa State Department of Education, 1994.
- Pitkin, Barbara. "'The Heritage of the Lord': Children in the Theology of John Calvin." Bunge, *Child in Christian Thought* 160-93.
- Pritchard, Gretchen Wolff. *Offering the Gospel to Children*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1992.
- Ratcliff, Donald, ed. *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Application*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004.
- Reed, Eric. "Shifting Family Values." *Leadership Journal* 27.1 (2006): 35
- "Response Rates." *Instructional Assessment Resources*. U. of Texas at Austin. 16 July 2007. 18 Mar. 2009 <<http://www.utexas.edu/academic/diia/assessment/iar/teaching/gather/method/survey-Response.php?task=research>>.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene C. *Building Assets, Strengthening Faith: Results from a Field Test Survey of Youth and Adults in 15 US. Congregations*. Minneapolis: Search Institute, 2003.

---. *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1993.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Peter C. Scales, Jolene L. Roehlkepartain, and Stacey P. Rude. *Building Strong Families: An In-Depth Report on a Preliminary Survey on What Parents Need to Succeed*. Minneapolis: YMCA of the USA and Search Institute, 2002.

Roehlkepartain, Jolene L. *Teaching Kids to Care and Share: 300+ Mission and Service Ideas for Children*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.

Sandberg, John F., and Hofferth, Sandra L. "Changes in Children's Time with Parents: A Correction." *Demography* 42.2 (May 2005): 391-95.

Sanders, J. Oswald, *Spiritual Leadership*. Chicago: Moody, 1994.

Sanders, Mavis. "Community Involvement in Schools: From Concept to Practice." *Education and Urban Society* 35.2 (2003): 161-80.

Schwadel, Phil, and Christian Smith. *Portraits of Protestant Teens: A Report on Teenagers in Major U. S. Denominations*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Study of Youth and Religion, 2005.

Sharpe, Marilyn. "Youth and Family Ministry: What Is It? How Do We Begin?" *Lutheran Partners* 23.1 (2007): 14-17.

Sjogren, Steve, and Dave Ping. *Outflow: Outward Focused Living in a Self-Focused World*. Loveland, CO: Group, 2006.

- Smith, Christian, and Robert Faris. *Religion and American Adolescent Delinquency, Risk Behaviors and Constructive Social Activities*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Study of Youth and Religion, 2002.
- . *Religion and the Life Attitudes and Self-Images of American Adolescents*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Study of Youth and Religion, 2002.
- Smith, Christian, and Phillip Kim. *Family Religious Involvement and the Quality of Family Relationships for Early Adolescents*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Study of Youth and Religion, 2003.
- . *Family Religious Involvement and the Quality of Parental Relationships for Families with Early Adolescents*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Study of Youth and Religion, 2003.
- Stonehouse, Catherine. *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- Stonehouse, Catherine, and Scottie May. "The Story and the Spiritual Formation of Children in the Church and in the Home." *Nurturing Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices*. Ed. Holly Catterton Allen. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008. 366-79.
- Strohl, Jane E. "The Child in Luther's Theology: For What Purpose Do We Older Folks Exist, Other than to Care for ... the Young?" Bunge, *Child in Christian Thought* 134-59.
- Strom, Robert D. *Parent as a Teacher Inventory Manual*. Bensenville, IL: Scholastic Testing Service, 1995.

Strommen, Merton P., and Charles Bruning. *FaithTalk Cards*. Minneapolis: Youth and Family Institute, 1995.

Strommen, Merton P., and Richard A. Hardel. *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*. Winona, MN: St. Mary's-Christian Brothers, 2000.

Strommen, M. P., M. L. Brekke, R. C. Underwager, and A. L. Johnson. *A Study of Generations*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973.

Tappert, T. G., ed. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. 1959. Philadelphia: Fortress, 2000.

Texas Education Code. Section 25.081. 30 May 1995. Amended 30 June 2003. 6 Mar. 2009 <<http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/html/ed.002.00.000025.00.htm>>.

Thompson, Marjorie J. *Family: The Forming Center*. Nashville: Upper Room, 1996.

Tozzi, Eugene Vincent. *Parent and Family Religious Education: A Case Study Based on an Ecological Theory of Human Development*. Diss. Fordham University, 1994. DAI 55/11 (1995): 3464. 10 June 2008 <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&sid=1&srchmode=2&vinst=PROD&fmt=2&startpage=-1&vname=PQD&did=741368981&scaling=FULL&pmid=66569&vtype=PQD&rqt=309&TS=1236743305&clientId=51647>>.

U. S. Religious Landscape Survey. Washington, DC: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008.

Von Rad, Gerhard. *Deuteronomy*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966.

- Wangerin, Walter. *The Orphean Passages: The Drama of Faith*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986.
- Westerhoff, John H., III. *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Rev. ed. Toronto: Morehouse, 2000.
- Wiersma, William. *Research Methods in Education: An Introduction*. Boston: Allyn, 2000.
- Wilcox, William Bradford. *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2004.
- Witte-Townsend, Darlene L., and Emily DiGuilo. "Something from Nothing: Exploring Dimensions of Children's Knowing through the Repeated Reading of Favorite Books." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 9.2 (2004): 127-42.
- Yust, Karen Marie. *Real Kids Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

